

ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



A PRIESTLY VIEW OF HISTORY

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

A fascinating fact about 1 and 2 Chronicles is that in the Hebrew Bible, Chronicles is at the very end of the book instead of near the beginning, as it is positioned in our Bible. So, instead of the book of Malachi being the very last book in the Hebrew Bible, 2 Chronicles is the very last book.

It is intriguing to think about scripture in those terms. As far as a catalog of Israel's history is concerned, the point which links the Old Testament and the New Testament is technically 2 Chronicles. Even more interesting is the fact that the first words you become acquainted with in Chronicles is a list of genealogies, and the first words you become acquainted with in the New Testament in Matthew is a list of genealogies.

Additionally, we need to keep in mind that the doublet books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are synoptic portions of Israel's history. Therefore, much of what you read in Chronicles, you have already read in the previous two doublet books. The reason for this is that Chronicles presents you with the same material, but with a different perspective.

If you can get a hold of this, something fun to think about while reading through Chronicles is that it has been said that the books of Samuel and Kings are books written from a prophet's view of Israel's history. In other words, it was written just like a history book from a human standpoint and lists out certain historical facts regarding different people.

However, in contrast to the prophet's point of view, when you read the book of Chronicles, it is said to be written from a priestly point of view. This is a perspective of history given after the captivity of God's people, and from this view, it is believed that Chronicles is said to highlight Israel's history from a divine standpoint.

The reason for this belief is because in Chronicles it appears to be written in such a way to underscore the fact that even though Israel had completely failed God, God never failed Israel. And that is certainly true. In this book, God puts His power on display and allows it to be known to all who read it that He was not hindered at all by the operation of man; that it is God and God alone who turns and orders history in such a way that every single portion always bends to His sovereign will.

How to Think About 1 & 2 Chronicles

Sifting through these books can be a bit of a challenge, especially at first, since you are immediately confronted with nine chapters of genealogies. But, if like our other books, we can section off different portions it will make for a far greater experience.

The Rule of the Royal Line (1 Chronicles 1-9): In these chapters what you have cataloged is a selective history that shows the reader how the human race has progressed to this point.

1 Chronicles 1-2— You will read the names of the generations from Adam all the way to the line of David.

1 Chronicles 3— Information is given about the sons of David and of Solomon.

1 Chronicles 4-8— In these chapters, you read the related lines from the 12 tribes of Israel.

1 Chronicles 9— In this last chapter of genealogies you find out a bit more information regarding the remaining line of King Saul.

Note: If you are like me, you have a tendency to read or even skim over this information very rapidly, but in this case, if you slow down a bit, you'll find something that will really bless your heart. In the middle of all of these names, in **1 Chronicles 4:9-10** the flow is interrupted and you're suddenly introduced to a man named Jabez. And what you learn about Jabez is that he was an honorable man and a praying man, and the reason we know that is that this is what we read about him:

And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

When God does something like this, we need to pay attention. This means that there is something here that we really need to stop and consider. And in this case, we learn that even in the midst of trouble and sorrow, God can work through your life in a powerful way. What we learn from these verses is that you are not at all bound by your circumstances. You're only bound by what you allow yourself to be chained to.

Jabez was born in sorrow and named after that sorrow by his own mother (Jabez means sorrow). But he decided not to stay chained to any of that and instead be chained to God. And while in fellowship with God, he asked for God's blessings; and do you know what happened? God blessed him.

This truly is a jewel of the genealogies. But if you read it too fast, you'll never catch it.

The Rule of the Davidic Line (1 Chronicles 10-29): In these chapters, you find a highlighted narrative about the life of King David. In chapter 10, you'll read an account of the death of Saul, and then the remaining chapters are as follows:

1 Chronicles 11-12— David is made king and is able to conquer Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 13-17— Through David's leadership the Ark of God is recovered and given its rightful resting place.

1 Chronicles 18-20— A catalog of the different victories of David.

1 Chronicles 21-27— The denial of God allowing David to build God a temple, but allowing him to gather the supplies.

1 Chronicles 28-29— A description of the final days of David and the anointing of his son Solomon as king.

This then moves us on to 2 Chronicles. This section moves much faster, especially after Solomon moves off the scene.

There are two major divisions you need to be able to identify in 2 Chronicles, and those are the kingly reign of Solomon, and then the reign of kings after Solomon, all inside the Davidic line (the kings of Judah). Let's briefly highlight these chapter divisions.

The Rule of Solomon (2 Chronicles 1-9):

2 Chronicles 1— Solomon begins to rule.

2 Chronicles 2-7— The building of the temple.

2 Chronicles 8-9— The accomplishments of Solomon's reign.

The Rule of Kings After Solomon (2 Chronicles 10-36):

2 Chronicles 10-12— The reign of Rehoboam.

2 Chronicles 13— The reign of Abijah.

2 Chronicles 14-16— The reign of Asa.

2 Chronicles 17-20— The reign of Jehoshaphat.

2 Chronicles 21— The reign of Jehoram.

2 Chronicles 22-24— The reign of Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash.

2 Chronicles 25— The reign of Amaziah.

2 Chronicles 26— The reign of Uzziah.

What to Look for in 1 & 2 Chronicles

As stated before, much of what you will read in 1 & 2 Chronicles has been covered in 1 & 2 Samuel and Kings. And, who knows, this may tempt you to not read this book as carefully as you should. "Why would I be given the same information?" you ask. Well, understand, it's not repetition simply for repetition's sake. God knows what He is doing. He wasn't confused and accidentally gave you the same information twice.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Hindsight is 20/20?" Well, 1 and 2 Samuel and Kings were written before, and up to, the captivity of God's people. But 1 & 2 Chronicles seems to have been written after the captivity (as mentioned in the introduction). And what you get here is a historical narrative from a completely different perspective that makes the picture all the more clear and the spiritual truth all the more weighty.

You see, a portion of the people who were led into captivity were able to come back to God's promised land. God had a remnant of people that were able to continue on. That's where we get the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (which will be examined in the next couple of chapters). And when God's people do come back, they come back to destruction, burned cities, wasted towns, and rubble everywhere. And these books were written to show the people what had happened from God's perspective and why it is important to have a moral foundation under God.

Major Warnings:

Carrying the Ark of God— In 1 Chronicles 13 we are introduced to a very exciting narrative. The Ark of God was recovered and David ordered that it be brought to Jerusalem. Now, what David should have done was abide by the laws regarding the Ark that God had put in place and allowed the Levites to take care of this task. However, in his enthusiasm, David decides that he could have the Ark brought to Jerusalem on his own. He opted for ease and speed rather than respect and honor. And because of this, a young man named Uzzah, walking next to the Ark, watches an ox stumble, causing the Ark to fall toward the ground. In a split-second reaction, Uzzah decides that his hands are cleaner than the ground the Ark would fall onto, and God strikes him down right there.

The whole project was halted and David, in his sorrow, learned a valuable lesson: God desires obedience to His word, not our good intentions.

Numbering the People— Interestingly enough, David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah is not listed in Chronicles. Many believe this is because David's sexual and murderous sins were sins committed in his capacity as a man, but his sin in numbering the people was committed in his official capacity as a king. And because Chronicles is focused on the nation as a whole, only this sin in 1 Chronicles 21 was recorded.

Whether this is the case, I cannot tell for certain. But I do know this sin was a great one. It is a tremendous warning to all of those who know God, but choose to live their life as if there is no God, and who like to evaluate their success by their own might. David chose to see how strong he was by counting his battle resources. But God chose to show David how weak he was by cutting down the nation.

The Decline of Kings— After King Solomon, we are met by nine good kings of Judah and eleven wicked kings of Judah. And with every wicked king, the moral compass of the people just went further and further down. You can see why, can't you? If justice cannot be found in leadership, what is the purpose or benefit of doing justice? If unrighteousness is rewarded by your government, then the most tempting thing to do is just follow the path of least resistance. With each wicked king, we watch the nation move further down the path of destruction all the way to its eventual captivity.

This information was Chronicled for the people so that they could always have a record of what happened to them and how to stay away from that kind of danger. The warning of the decline of kings shows us how important the moral integrity of a leader really is.

Major Accomplishments:

Military Victories and Times of Peace— 1 Chronicles 18, 19, and 20 are all about David's military victories. In chapter 18, the ark is brought back and you read conquest after conquest. Just as we saw in the book of Joshua, these victories are symbolic of the victories that we as believers can experience in Christ.

Further, once David is ushered to heaven, Solomon takes the throne and during his reign, the kingdom experiences great peace and prosperity. Starting in 2 Chronicles 9, the beauty and splendor of the kingdom starts to be made known all over the world. It is here where we read of the story of the Queen of Sheba and her amazement at the nation's prosperity and Solomon's wisdom.

Gathering Supplies for the Temple— In 1 Chronicles 22, we see the last major mark of King David's life. He wants to build God a permanent temple. At first, Nathan the prophet tells him to start and that God is with him. But soon God speaks to Nathan and tells him to tell David that his hands are too bloody and that he will not be allowed to build the temple. This had to be incredibly disappointing to David, but what he is allowed to do is gather all of the supplies.

Building the Temple— This is an absolutely awesome portion of Scripture. 2 Chronicles 2 is where we see that Solomon picks up where his father leaves off. He gets to have the honor of building the temple of God. Once you arrive at 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon offers great sacrifices and a compelling prayer. And once the prayer was concluded, in front of everyone, fire came from heaven and consumed the altar's sacrifice, and the entire temple filled with a cloud of glory so thick that the priest could not enter. What an accomplishment!

What to Gain from 1 & 2 Chronicles

The Supreme Authority of God— In these writings, we are ultimately confronted with God's authority. Once again, it is God who is bending this nation's history, and really, all of human history, to His divine purpose. God is absolutely unhindered by the actions of man.

The Importance of the Eternal— Because God is the supreme authority over all, and He reigns from everlasting to everlasting, it only makes sense to be guided by His eternal standard. If you remember, that is why this book was written. It was written to be both an encouragement and a warning to all of those people who would come after this generation. God created and preserved this very word so that His people would always know what works and what doesn't work; that it is only by God's eternal purposes that can bring eternal salvation to individuals, and through individuals, salvation to entire nations.

The Value of Not Romanticizing the Past— We have to understand that when God's people were done with their captivity, it had to have been both an incredibly happy time, and an incredibly sad time. Happy because they were once again free to be God's people on God's promised land, but sad because of all of the destruction that surrounded them. No doubt they looked around them and thought about what all had been lost and what years had been wasted. In many ways, they were starting over and were merely a shell of their former glory from the time of David and Solomon. It would have been easy for them to sit and weep about what they used to be. But Chronicles was to be their book of hope. A history that would forever stand as a testament to God's graciousness and that no matter what, God will see His promises through to the end. They didn't have to stay bound to their past failure and continually dwell on how good things used to be. They could look to their God and know that He was not finished with them.

We can get caught up in the same things. Past failures can be haunting, but God is not hindered at all by your past. There's no use in staying weighed down and romanticizing the past and thinking about what used to be or what could have been. God can meet you right where you are. Since you're still here, He's not done with you.



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