

Old Testament Survey—1 & 2 Chronicles

The Bible uses repetition and a lot of it. The Bible repeats many stories and events. For instance, God gave the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and then repeated the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5.

Discuss: What other accounts/stories/events are repeated in the Bible? Sennacherib's threat on Jerusalem is a good example. You can read about it in 2 Kings 18, 2 Chronicles 32, as well as in Isaiah 36. One of the most significant is the resurrection of Christ (the story is repeated in all four gospel accounts).

Discuss: As forgetful human beings, we often repeat ourselves, but that's due often to our inability to remember what we've already said. The Bible is God's perfect, inspired Word. There is no *forgetting* that would prompt repetition by a subsequent human author. So a follow-up question is this. What are some reasons why the Bible might repeat itself? For emphasis. Another would be because the same event/events can be used to teach a different application for a different audience. This seems to be the case with 1 & 2 Chronicles.

Discuss: What comes to mind when you think of the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles?

Guidelines for our Survey of the Old Testament:

1. As a general rule, we will devote one week to one book.
2. Read (or scan) the book prior to our study, looking for the big picture.
2. Our aim is to discover and remember the following details about each book:

Who wrote the book?

When was the book written?

Why was the book written?

What is the outline of the book?

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

1 & 2 Chronicles:

Q: According to 1 Chr 1:1, with what event does Chronicles begin? The Beginning! A genealogy that goes back to "Adam"

Q: On what note does Chronicles end in 2 Chr 36:23? Return from Babylonian captivity (this is the last verse in the Hebrew Bible).

Note: the final two verses of 2 Chr are repeated to begin Ezra.

Key Observations:

--The name Chronicles stems from Jerome's suggestion (AD 400) that the book be called a "Chronicle of the Entire Sacred History." (LHB, 630)

--The Hebrew title is "the accounts of the days." This reveals the design of the book, for Chronicles reviews the history of Israel from the dawn of the human race to the Babylonian captivity and the edict of Cyrus.

--The LXX calls it "Paraleipomena" which means "The Omitted," and may suggest that Chronicles includes material omitted from 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings.

--In the Hebrew canon Chronicles is the last book of the Writings, following Ezra and Nehemiah.

Who wrote the book?

Unknown, perhaps Ezra

When was the book written?

By 400 B.C.

Why was the book written?

L.H.B. observes (631-2), "The Hebrew Chronicler is not a historian in the strict western sense. To him Israel's history was pregnant with spiritual and moral lessons, which he brought to birth through a kind of historical midwifery. He is not concerned so much with the bare facts of Israel's history as with their meaning."

That doesn't mean that Chronicles is inaccurate. It does mean it is very selective.

By the way, any historian is selective because no one could record (and who would want to read) everything that happened in a several hundred year period. The historian singles out and highlights what he considers to be significant in light of his purpose.

LaSor states (630), "Far from being Samuel and Kings warmed over, Chronicles has a freshness and flavor all its own and, when its purposes are understood, furnishes rich nourishment for theological thought."

Discuss: What purpose did the Chronicler have in mind for writing this book? What was happening to God's people in 400 B.C.? What needs did they have?

They had been battered by the harshness of a 70 year exile (LHB, 633). They had gone through the emotional transition of resettlement. They wrestled, no doubt, with questions like, "Who are we now? What is our identity? Are we still the people of God? Does God still have a purpose for us? Did the disobedience of our forefathers cancel out the Messianic hopes?"

Chronicles takes a fresh look at the history of God's people in a way that says, "Take heart! God is still on the throne, and His plans will not fail. Be loyal to Him!"

See: 1 Chr 9:1, a commentary on Israel's history tucked away in the genealogy

Q: Why was Judah carried into captivity? "Because of their unfaithfulness" ["For their transgression", AV?]

We see the selectivity when we compare Kings and Chronicles.

Compare: Kings and Chronicles

Note: There are many similarities. (B.K.C.)--"Second Chronicles, of course, records the history of almost the same period as 1 and 2 Kings."

There are several key differences (see B.K.C.).

1. The kings of Judah were of more interest to the author of Chronicles whereas both the Israelite and Judean monarchs occupied the interest of the author of 1 and 2 Kings.

2. The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles emphasize especially the priestly elements in the nation's history, such as the temple and worship, while 1 and 2 Kings give attention to the royal and prophetic elements. (see major chunks of material in Chronicles dealing with the Temple)

3. In 2 Chronicles the kings of Judah after David are evaluated in reference to David and the worship of Yahweh; in 1 and 2 Kings the rulers of both kingdoms are evaluated in reference to the Mosaic Law.

4. Chronicles gives much attention to the good kings of Judah : David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. He doesn't focus on their faults, but highlights their virtues and the blessings resulting from their obedience to God.

What is the outline of the book? (L.H.B. 631)

I. Genealogies from Adam to David (1 Chr 1-9)

II. Reign of David (1 Chr 10-29)

III. Reign of Solomon (2 Chr 1-9)

IV. Reign of David's sons to the Exile (2 Chr 10-36)

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

Chronicles demonstrates the faithfulness of God to the plan He made with His people, namely the Davidic covenant.

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

1. *Chronicles uses the past to illustrate the present.*

Example: What made Solomon such a great king? See 2 Chr 1:7-10 He asked God for the right thing,

wisdom.

Example: See Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 19:1-3; What happens when God's people disobey God? What if they obey?

2. *Chronicles helps us to see that "history" is "His story."*

Chronicles emphasizes the direct activity of God. From the Chronicles' perspective, battles were not won and lost because one side had a bigger army or more valiant warriors, but because of the will of God. At times we even see God intervene miraculously. For example:

War between Judah and Israel (2 Chr 13:15-18)

The fear of the Lord affected the nations (2 Chr 17:10)

Jehoshaphat's victory (2 Chr 20:22)

God has a purpose in history. Things don't just "happen" with a sovereign God.

Discuss: What are some practical implications of this truth? What are some things we can do to keep this truth in our thinking as we move through life?

E.g.—a great prayer by Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 20:12, “We do not know what to do but our eyes are on You.”

3. *Righteousness exalts a nation.*

God rewards His people for their actions, both bad (e.g. Saul) and good (e.g. David).

4. *The Chronicler emphasizes the authority of Scriptures.*

He cites and quotes from other Old Testament texts: from the prophets, the law, and the historical books. For example (L.H.B., 636):

2 Chr 19:6f. draws from Deut 1:17; Zeph 3:5

2 Chr 20:15-17 quotes from Exod 14:13; 1 Sam 17:47

Key: The Chronicler did not view the stories from Samuel-Kings merely as stories from history, but as revelation from God that applied to the contemporary circumstances.

Discuss: Explain the difference of seeing biblical historical accounts “merely as stories from history” and seeing them “as revelation from God.”

5. *Chronicles, in looking back to the glory days of David and Solomon, also causes us to look ahead to the coming glory days of the Son of David.*

Discuss: What places in the Bible develop this theme