1-2 CHRONICLES

*The history of Israel for the Jews that returned*

SETTING

The kings of Judah from David to the return from Babylon (approx. 1010 - 539 BC)

KEY VERSE

*"Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy."* 2 Chronicles 36:14-16

Last updated May 18, 2023



At first glance, it may appear that 1-2 Chronicles are retelling 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings while adding information that was not included there. But the Chronicles do more than fill in some gaps; they also leave out a lot that the former books included. The Chronicles may have been written around 400 BC, only approximately 150 years after 1-2 Kings. Why did the author feel the need to write this great work?

In the fourth century, we were on the other side of exile in Babylon, and the author wanted to shape the identity of the returned Jews in a critical phase. He goes all the way back to Adam, not just Saul or David, so his purpose is greater than just telling about the kings one more time.

He seems to want to show that:

* Israel has been at the center of God's plan ever since Adam.
* The downfall came because the people turned away from the Lord, and a similar occurrence can be avoided by seeking the Lord (primarily in the temple). Forgiveness is also important to the author (e.g., King Manasseh).
* The existence of the temple indicates that God's promise to David still applies.

The Chronicles can be divided into 4 parts:

* 1 Chron 1-10: From Adam to Saul
* 1 Chron 11-29: David
* 2 Chron 1-10: Solomon
* 2 Chron 11-36: The kings of Judah

The Chronicles are "interpreted history" like all history writing is. The center of gravity is shifted from David's family and kingship to God's "house" (the temple) and God as king - with the Davidic king as God's representative. The author wants to put things in the right perspective to help people seek God (see 2 Sam 7:16, 1 Chron 17:14, 1 Kings 10:9, and 2 Chron 9:8).

Other differences compared to 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings:

* David is portrayed almost exclusively in a positive light.
* The kings of the northern kingdom are only mentioned when they are in contact with Judah.
* Place greater emphasis on the blessings that came from obedience, not just the misfortunes that occurred from disobedience.
* The numbers are greater in the Chronicles (many of which are mysteries).
* *"Israel"* is used for Judah, as the northern kingdom did not exist at this time anyway. *"All Israel"* is used in the hope of future reunification of the north and south.

The main theme is the promise to David as the hope of Israel. Therefore, the author focuses on the kingdom and the temple, both of which came because of David. The temple had been rebuilt, but they still lacked a king. The books of Chronicles are the last in the Jewish Bible and are probably the last to be written in the Old Testament. The Gospel of Matthew, the first book of the NT, presents Jesus as the King of the Jews. He is the underlying hope that runs throughout the books of Chronicles about the promised Davidic King who had not yet come.