

Long Story Short: Chronicles



The Big Picture:

1 Chronicles

1-9 Genealogies
1 Adam to Israel
2-8 Tribes of Israel
9 Returnees from Exile
10-29 David's reign and preparations for the temple

2 Chronicles

1-28 Solomon's reign > the Divided Kingdom
29-33 Hezekiah's reforms and Manasseh's failure
34-36 Josiah's reforms > failure > Exile
Appendix: 36:22-23 Cyrus' decree

How to read 1-2 Chronicles

Chronicles is the book of the Old Testament that suffers an identity crisis: Much of the material in the book you have already read in Samuel and Kings. However, it is not the same: It is a retelling of Genesis through Kings from the perspective of a prophet who has returned from Babylonian exile (1 Chron 9:1). It is the last book of the Old Testament in the traditional Jewish order, and is meant to be a summary of Israel's story that points forward to the future hope of the messiah and the kingdom of God.

Chronicles itself is an interpretation of the Torah and Prophets. As you read, it's important to recognize what he included from his sources (Genesis—2 Kings), and what's he's left out.

Main Themes in 1-2 Chronicles

After exile and return, Israel needs to **humble themselves** and **seek** Yahweh with an attitude of **repentance** in order to experience the renewal of the covenant and its blessings.

- "humble oneself" (Heb. *kana'*) occurs 17x
- "seek" (Heb. *darash*) occurs 38x
- "repent" (Heb. *shuv*, lit. "to turn, return") occurs 11x
- "trust" (Heb. *amen*)

The book is permeated with positive examples of people who cry out to Yahweh in trust, and negative examples of people who turn away from him.

"The Chronicler writes Israel's salvation history from a different viewpoint than the author who wrote Joshua- 2 Kings to accuse the exiles and their ancestors of breaking the covenant. The Chronicler, on the other hand, adapts that history to give the nation new direction during the post-exilic period and aims to answer the burning questions of the Jews returned from Babylon: After the exile, who inherits the covenant promises? After all of Israel's misfortune . . . is God still with them? Will the old institutions of kingship and temple be restored?" Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*.

Themes in 1Chron 1-9: The Genealogies

1. 1 Chron 1:1-3:24 The author shows his interests by breaking up the first part of his genealogy in 4 main parts, each beginning with a key person:
 - 1:1 ADAM > 1:28, 34 ABRAHAM > 2:3 JUDAH > 3:1 DAVID
 - o As the Chronicler looks over all of the world's/Israel's story he sees 4 individuals that are of supreme importance for telling God's story in the world
2. 1 Chron 4:1-7:40 The Tribes of Israel: these lists are meant to give hope for the future
 - o 4:1-21 *Judah* is placed first in the list – Judah/David is the line of the future Messiah
 - o 6:1-81 *Levi* gets the biggest amount of space – Levi is the line of priests of the future temple

Themes in 1 Chron 10–29 – The reigns of David and Solomon

Key Observation:

- o The Chronicler excludes all the negative stories about David (no David and Bathsheba, no Absalom, no family upheaval)
 - o The Chronicler includes 7 chapters of new material showing David's passion and planning for building Yahweh's temple (1 Chron 22-29)
1. Saul's failure and David's rise to the kingship (23 ch's in Sam) is summed up in 15 verses: 10:1-11:4
 - > Stories of Saul's persecution of David from 1 Sam 17-2 Sam 1 are excluded
 2. Yahweh's covenant with David: 1 Chron 17 (compare with 2 Sam 7)
 - The Chronicler wants us to see that God's promise . . .
 - o ...wasn't fulfilled in David or any of the Davidic kings
 - o ...will be fulfilled in a Priest/King who rule (and live) forever.
 3. David becomes the prototype of the coming messiah who will defeat Israel's enemies: 1 Chron 18-20
 - o David conquers Israel's archetypal enemies (Philistia, Moab, Edom) as Balaam Prophesied about the Israel's eschatological king: Numbers 24
 4. David is portrayed as the *primary* leader in the preparation of the temple: 1Chron 22-29
 - o All of chs. 22-29 are new materials included by the Chronicler
 - o David is portrayed as a new Moses: He makes the temple according to the pattern (Hebrew: *tavnit*) shown him by God (28:11,19) just as Moses did (Cf. "the pattern" in Ex 25:9,40)

MAIN IDEA OF THE DAVID NARRATIVES: David is the recipient of the promise of the messianic king, and is himself a prototype of that king:

Themes in 2 Chron 1–36 – Solomon and the Davidic Kings

1. Solomon inherits the responsibility of building the temple: 2 Chr 1-7
 - o Solomon's failure is foreshadowed: 1 Chron 28:6-7
 - o Solomon's failure excludes him from being the fulfillment of the promise to David: 2 Chron 8-9
2. The Split of the Israelite Kingdom: 2 Chron 10 forward
 - o The Chronicler from this point on has excluded the stories about the northern Israelite and focuses on Judah, where David's descendants rule: He is only interested in the line of David
3. All of the Davidic kings are evaluated on whether or not they acted like David: chs. 11-36
 - o Good kings "seek Yahweh" (*darash* Yahweh, repeated 32 times)
 - o Bad kings are "unfaithful to Yahweh" (*ma'al* Yahweh, repeated 33 times)
4. The hope of a future temple builder (and thus a king) is held out in the decree of Cyrus (2 Chron 36:22-23), which ends in mid-sentence...

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up..."