

Introduction to 1 Chronicles

Where is it in the Bible?

1 Chronicles is the thirteenth book of the Old Testament and the eighth of the historical books in Christian Bibles. It follows 2 Kings and comes before 2 Chronicles. In the Hebrew Bible, the books of Chronicles are not in the same section as the books in the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). They are in the last section, called the Writings or Kethuvim, and they are the last books in the Hebrew Bible.

Like the books of Samuel and Kings, the books of Chronicles were originally one book that was divided in the Septuagint. In Hebrew, it is called *The Book of the Events of Days*. The Greek name is *Paralipoménōn*, meaning "things left out", and reflects the idea that the books supplemented Samuel and Kings. The name "Chronicles" was suggested by St. Jerome and has been used ever since it was adopted by Martin Luther in his translation.

Who wrote it?

According to Jewish tradition, Ezra was the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as Ezra and Nehemiah. However, scholars have come to recognize that there are differences in outlook and theology, as well as linguistic and stylistic variations, between Chronicles and the other two books. The unknown author (or authors) of Chronicles is referred to as "the Chronicler" and is thought to have been part of a priestly circle who gathered together older traditions and edited them.

When was it written?

In 1 Chronicles 3:19, Zerubbabel, the first governor of the Persian province of Judah after the exile, is included as a descendant of David, and the genealogy continues for six more generations. This means that the book was probably written after 400 BC. Many scholars think that it dates to the mid to late Persian period, sometime between 375 and 325 BC.

What is it about?

Like the books of Samuel and Kings, the books of Chronicles are a theological history and cover much of the same material as the earlier books do; however, they are directed to a different audience. Samuel and Kings were written for people who were in exile and trying to understand what had happened and why. On the other hand, Chronicles is post-exilic and was written for people who were redefining themselves as restored community that was part of the Persian Empire.

David is the hero of 1 Chronicles. He is presented as an example of pious leadership who is concerned about proper worship and makes advance preparations for the temple that Solomon will build.

How is it structured?

- I. Genealogies from Creation to the Restoration (1:1-9:44)
 - a. Adam to the Sons of Jacob (1:1-2:2)
 - b. Genealogies of the Twelve Tribes (2:3-8:40)
 1. Judah (2:3-4:23)
 2. Northern Tribes East of the Jordan (4:24-5:26)
 3. Levi (6:1-81)
 4. Northern Tribes West of the Jordan (7:1-40)
 5. Benjamin (8:1-9:1)
 - c. The Restored Community (9:2-34)
 - d. Saul's Genealogy Repeated (9:35-44)
- II. The Reign of David (10:1-29:30)
 - a. Saul's Death (10:1-14)
 - b. David Becomes King (11:1-12:40)
 - c. David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem (13:1-16:43)
 - d. God's Covenant with David (17:1-27)
 - e. David's Wars (18:1-20:8)
 - f. The Census and Plague (21:1-30)
 - g. David's Preparations for Building the Temple (22:1-19)
 - h. Temple Organization (23:1-26:32)
 - i. Civil Administration (27:1-21)
 - j. Final Preparations (28:1-29:20)
 - k. Solomon Becomes King (29:21-30)

What are some things to look for?

- **Genealogies and Lists:** This book is known for its genealogies (chapters 1-9) and lists of the families of the Levites (chapters 23-27). These seem strange to us, but they would have been important for defining things like social status, social obligations, and territorial rights for the original audience. They also help to establish continuity between the audience and pre-exilic Israel.
- **God and History:** Throughout Chronicles, God is seen working behind the scenes in the history of Israel. In particular, God is responsible for the rise and fall of kings based on their faithfulness. For example, because of his unfaithfulness, God killed Saul and made David king (1 Chronicles 10:10:13-11:2).
- **Huge Numbers:** The books of Chronicles are filled with huge numbers, especially in reference to military campaigns and David's preparations for building the temple. These large numbers should be viewed as rhetorical devices used to emphasize the importance or magnificence of what they are describing. This is similar to saying things like "If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times not to do that!"