

Introduction to 2 Chronicles

Where is it in the Bible?

2 Chronicles is the fourteenth book of the Old Testament and the ninth of the historical books in Christian Bibles. It follows 1 Chronicles and comes before Ezra. 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 their identity as people of God in a restored community that was part of the Persian Empire.

This book is a continuation of 1 Chronicles. The first nine chapters relate the story of Solomon as he builds that temple that David had made preparations for. This concludes the history of the united monarchy. The rest of the book deals with the story of the kingdom of Judah following the rebellion which divided the kingdom. If at all possible, the northern kingdom of Israel is not even mentioned.

How is it structured?

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1-9:31)
 - a. Solomon Prepares to Build the Temple (1:1-2:18)

- b. Solomon Builds the Temple (3:1-5:1)
 - c. Solomon Dedicates the Temple (5:2-7:22)
 - d. Solomon's Other Activities (8:1-17)
 - e. The Visit of the Queen of Sheba (9:1-12)
 - f. Solomon's Splendor (9:13-28)
 - g. The Death of Solomon (9:29-31)
- II. The History of the Kings of Judah (10:1-36:23)
- a. Rehoboam (10:1-12:16)
 - b. Abijah (13:1-14:1)
 - c. Asa (14:2-16:14)
 - d. Jehoshaphat (17:1-21:1a)
 - e. Jehoram (21:1b-20)
 - f. Ahaziah (22:1-9)
 - g. Athaliah and Joash (22:10-24:27)
 - h. Amaziah (25:1-28)
 - i. Uzziah (26:1-23)
 - j. Jotham (27:1-9)
 - k. Ahaz (28:1-27)
 - l. Hezekiah (29:1-32:33)
 - m. Manasseh (33:1-20)
 - n. Amon (33:21-25)
 - o. Josiah (34:1-35:27)
 - p. The Last Kings of Judah (36:1-14)
 - q. The Fall of Jerusalem and Exile (36:15-21)
 - r. Restoration (36:22-23)

What are some things to look for?

- **David and Solomon:** David and Solomon are the central figures of Chronicles. The Chronicler presents a sanitized picture of them by omitting some of the more unpleasant events related in Samuel and Kings. The promises God makes to David in 1 Chronicles 17:3-15 and to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 "form the theological backbone of the books of Chronicles".¹
- **Retributive Justice:** The idea that obedience leads to blessing and disobedience leads to judgment runs throughout Chronicles. This principle is clearly expressed in 1 Chronicles 28:9b: "If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever."
- **The Temple:** The temple is a focus in both books of Chronicles. David makes extensive preparations for its construction in 1 Chronicles; he also organizes the Levites and makes plans for worship. Solomon carries out the building of the temple. Later kings are evaluated according to their faithfulness with regard to proper worship; thus, Hezekiah and Josiah receive the highest praise.

¹ Mark Throntveit at <http://www.enterthebible.org/oldtestament.aspx?rid=34>