

Aquifer Open Study Notes (Book Intros)

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2 Chronicles

Second Chronicles gives purpose and hope to a people with an uncertain future. God had promised that David's descendants would have an everlasting kingdom, but the people of Judah had been exiled to Babylon. Even after returning to Jerusalem, they now lived as Persian subjects. Judah had no king descended from David and no hope of becoming a kingdom. Yet God's promises are certain, so the Chronicler encouraged the Judeans to hope for the future. The words of King Jehoshaphat capture the spirit of the book: "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed" ([2 Chr 20:20](#)).

Setting

The Babylonian conquest of Judah occurred in 605–586 BC, about two centuries before Chronicles was written (around 400 BC; see 1 Chronicles Book Introduction, “Authorship and Date”).

To address questions about God's purposes and promises, the Chronicler narrated the past of the Israelites from the earliest times until the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. By carefully selecting his material and reworking it to suit his own purposes, he did not intend to replace or supplement earlier historical writings. Instead, he presumed that his readers were already familiar with his main sources and knew the characters in his books. He made his writings vital to his own time: He evaluated the past from his own vantage point and wrote so that his contemporaries could understand their heritage, the Temple and its worship, and the status of God's promises.

Summary

The first nine chapters of 2 Chronicles focus on the reign of Solomon. Much of this narrative pertains to the building of the Temple and to providing for the priests. Solomon's prayer and God's response are central to the Chronicler's account of Solomon ([6:1–7:22](#)). God responded to Solomon's prayer in a vision that articulated the Chronicler's own theological perspective ([7:12–22](#)): God answers the prayers and repentance of his people; he brings judgment upon the disobedient, but he rewards humility and prayer with healing and deliverance.

After recording the division of the monarchy, the Chronicler focused almost exclusively on the southern kingdom of Judah. He associated the continuity of the kingdom and Israel's future with the dynasty of David and the Temple in Jerusalem. However, David's descendants who ruled Judah were not always models of obedience. Meanwhile, the northern kingdom, Israel, sometimes did what was right (e.g., [28:5–15](#)). The Chronicler saw the northern kingdom as a part of Israel that needed to be restored, and he took special interest in contacts between the north and the south. He did not condemn the northerners for the division, but he did blame them for their refusal to return once their grievances were settled, as he considered their future to be closely tied to Judah.

The Chronicler's portrayal of Judah's kings sometimes departs remarkably from parallel descriptions in the book of Kings. Uzziah appears as a minor figure in Kings ([2 Kgs 15:1–7](#)), even though he was a powerful king who ruled for more than fifty years. In Chronicles, Uzziah is a famous reformer and builder. Likewise, although little is said about Jotham in Kings ([2 Kgs 15:32–38](#)), in Chronicles his work is portrayed as extensive ([2 Chr 27:3–4](#)). The Chronicler also expands our understanding of Hezekiah ([29:1–32:33](#)), dealing extensively with Hezekiah's reforms and the restoration of Temple worship, and describing at length how Hezekiah prepared for the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem.

The reigns of Manasseh and Amon follow ([33:1–25](#)); their wickedness and idolatry set the stage for Judah's demise. In Chronicles, unlike Kings, we learn how Manasseh experienced his own exile, repentance, and return to Judah—a microcosm of what the Judeans themselves later experienced.

Josiah's reign ([34:1–35:27](#)) was pleasing to God. But when Josiah died (609 BC), Judah's end soon followed. Within four years, the Babylonians began a series of attacks (605–586 BC) that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the exile of most of the population to Babylon ([36:2–21](#)). The covenant unfaithfulness of the people of Judah had come to fruition.

The account ends with a glimmer of hope: Cyrus's proclamation in 538 BC that allowed the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild Jerusalem ([36:22–23](#)).

Chronicles as History

Chronicles is an ancient work of history with a distinctive approach. The book of 2 Chronicles covers essentially the same time period as 1-2 Kings. And while the Chronicler drew upon the earlier records of Samuel, Kings, and other sources, his own work shows remarkable independence. He gave detailed attention to military, administrative, and geopolitical affairs in times that were already hundreds of years distant. He frequently added detailed information not found in any other surviving sources but evidently available to him.

Archaeology occasionally provides confirmation of administrative and geopolitical reforms discussed by the Chronicler. For example, an inscription has been found in the Siloam Tunnel describing Hezekiah's water project. Most of the time, the evidence has only a broad connection, such as with Uzziah's building activity or agricultural initiatives. The work of the Chronicler is a valuable resource for understanding the history of the times he wrote about.

Meaning and Message

A fundamental question for the restored community in Judea after the Exile was: *What is our relationship to the Israel of the past?* They were no longer an independent nation but a small province of the Persian Empire. Judea had no king, lived under foreign domination, and had only recently rebuilt the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians. What validity did God's promises regarding the Temple and David's dynasty have for the community?

To the Chronicler, David's reign offered a paradigm for his own readers. David moved from being a fugitive from Saul (a condition of exile) to being in the community of God. The postexilic community reading Chronicles had undergone a similar transition from exile and could anticipate similar blessings if they were obedient.

Chronicles presents the period of David and Solomon as an ideal time when all of Israel united in worship ([7:8](#)). The account of David's reign displays much concern for the correct worship of God. The restoration of the Ark to Jerusalem and David's military victories provided for the future Temple, and David made all the necessary arrangements regarding the officials who would serve as worship shifted to Jerusalem.

The Chronicler regards Solomon's reign as equal to David's, because Solomon brought to fruition David's plans for the Temple and for worship there ([3:1](#); [5:1](#); [7:1](#)). In Chronicles, David appoints Solomon to the throne in a public announcement, and Solomon enjoys divine blessing and the total support of the people. The Chronicler does not mention Adonijah's attempted coup or Solomon's sins, and he shifts blame for the schism to Jeroboam ([13:6-7](#)). Solomon's wealth and international influence reflect his glorious, peaceful, and righteous reign.

The division of Israel into northern and southern kingdoms shows the failure of the kingdom to meet its ideals, but it does not mean that all hope was lost. Obedience still results in God's blessing, and disobedience will be punished. Each time a calamity is recounted, the Chronicler provides a cause for judgment, and he emphasizes the blessings that result from faithfulness. Repentance is always a means of averting or at least moderating judgment. Prophetic warnings are always issued before judgment comes, and the possibility of

healing is always present. This pattern provides a primary way that the Chronicler communicates hope for the future in his own time.

The Chronicler also offers events in the reign of Hezekiah as a solution to the problem of the divided monarchy. Previously, the kingdom of Judah under Ahaz had descended to the same level of disobedience as Israel ([28:2, 6](#)), whereas Israel's leaders confessed their sins ([28:13](#)), indicating their readiness for restoration. The Chronicler then introduces Hezekiah, distinctively characterizing him as a second Solomon. Hezekiah invited the north to join in the first Passover of his reign, and many responded ([30:11](#)); a similar celebration had not been held since Solomon's time ([30:26](#)). Hezekiah's Passover provides a model for the restoration of Israel as a unified kingdom.

The Chronicler used his account of Israel's history to teach his readers to maintain hope for a historical restoration of David's kingdom—however remote such a possibility may have seemed—and to maintain holy lives and a righteous community in the meantime. The Chronicler makes it clear that the kingdom of Israel was not a mere human institution subject to the whims of political expediency. It was God's kingdom, and God would ultimately restore it.