



1 & 2 Chronicles

Video Transcript

Introduction

00:00-01:43

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. While they're two separate books in our Bibles, that division is not original. Due to scroll lengths, the book was divided in two, but it was written as one book with one coherent storyline. Now, in our English Bibles, Chronicles comes after the books of Samuel and Kings, and most of Chronicles is actually repeat content from those books. And so most modern readers, when they come to Chronicles, they think, "Wait a minute, I just read all of this," and so they skip it. And that's a shame because this book is really unique and important in the Bible.

In the traditional Jewish ordering of the Bible, Chronicles is actually the last book because it summarizes all of the Jewish Scriptures. The first word in the book is "Adam," the first character at the beginning of the story. And then the last paragraph announces the return of Israel from exile.

Now we don't know who wrote this book, but we can tell from details within it, it was produced by somebody who lived a couple hundred years after the Israelites returned from the Babylonian exile. Now, for this author, Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt some time ago, and as we learned from Ezra and Nehemiah, things were not going well. The great prophetic hope was that the city and the temple would be rebuilt, that God would come to live among his people, the messianic king would come, and all the nations would come live under his peaceful rule. And none of that has happened.

And so the author of Chronicles has reshaped these stories of David and Solomon and the kings of the past in order to provide a message of hope for the future. And we'll see that he has designed this book to emphasize two clear themes: first, the hope of the coming messianic king, and second, the hope for a new temple. Let's just dive in, and you'll see these themes all over the book.

1 Chronicles 1-9

01:44-02:37

1 Chronicles begins with nine chapters of genealogies, long lists of names. And you'll read these and think that this is kind of boring, and that may be true for you. But actually they're very, very important. The author is summarizing here the whole storyline of the Old Testament by naming all of the key characters in the stories. And as he does so, he shapes the genealogies to emphasize two key lineages.

First is the line of the promised messianic king. So lots of space is dedicated to tracing the line of Judah that led all the way to King David, to whom the messianic promise was given. And then from David, the author traces that line up into his own day. The other family line that receives lots of attention here is that of the priesthood, the descendants of Aaron, who of course served in the temple.

And so right from the start, you can see the two main themes: the author's hope of the messiah coming to build a new temple, and it's rooted in these ancient genealogies.

1 Chronicles 10-29

02:38-04:24

Now after that, the author moves into the stories about David, and most of these are going to be familiar to you from the book of Samuel. But again, there are some really important differences. So first of all, the author leaves out all of the negative stories about David where he's portrayed as weak or immoral. So Saul chasing David around the desert and persecuting him, the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba and then murdering her husband, all of that is gone. And what's left are the stories that portray David as a good guy.

And not only that, there's also new, additional material that you won't find in the book of Samuel that shows David in a very positive light. So there's a large block of chapters where David makes preparations for the temple. He arranges resources and builders and Levites and choirs. And not only that, the author also portrays David as a Moses-like figure. God gives David plans for building the temple, just as he gave plans to Moses for building the tabernacle.

So why all this new material about David? The author's not trying to hide David's flaws; he knows that anybody can go read about them in the book of Samuel. Rather, he's trying to portray David as the ideal king in order to make him an image or a type of the future messiah from the line of David. It's very similar to how Jeremiah or Ezekiel spoke of the coming messiah as a new David.

This is most clear in how the author retells the story of God's covenant promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17. When you compare the story with its parallel in 2 Samuel 7,

you'll see that the author of Chronicles is highlighting that neither David, nor Solomon, nor any of the kings from his line were the messianic king. And that when the messiah does come, he will be a king like David. And so for this author, these stories about David from the past are what sustain his hope for the future.

2 Chronicles

04:25-05:42

After David dies, we move into 2 Chronicles, which focuses on the kings that lived in Jerusalem. And again, there's lots of overlap with 1 and 2 Kings, but there are many key differences. So the author has left out all of the stories about the kings of northern Israel, so he can just focus on the line of David. And there's lots of new material about these kings from David's line. He highlights the kings that were obedient to God, and he adds new stories about how their obedience led to success and God's blessing.

But he also adds new stories about kings who were unfaithful to God. They didn't follow the Torah, they led Israel to worship idols, and these kings faced horrible consequences, all leading up to Israel's exile—a mess of their own making. And so this whole section becomes a series of character studies where the author wants later generations of Israelites to learn from their family history, and so become faithful to their God and the Torah.

Now, the book's conclusion is really unique too. At the very end of the book, the king of the Persians, his name's Cyrus, and he tells the Israelites that they can go back home, return from exile, rebuild the city and the temple. And he says, last line of the book, "Whoever there is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him and let him go up" And that's how the book ends, with an incomplete sentence!

Conclusion

05:43-06:26

Now of course the author knows about the first return from exile and the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah. But clearly in his view, the prophetic hopes of Israel were not fulfilled in those events. And so this incomplete ending shows that the author's hope is set on yet another return from exile, when the messiah will finally come to rebuild the temple and restore God's people.

And so the book of Chronicles—it's the final book of the Jewish Scriptures—it ends by pointing forward. It calls God's people to look back in order to look ahead, because the past has become the source of hope for the future. So Chronicles concludes the Old Testament as a story in search of an ending. And that's what this book is all about.