

NAME

The title Chronicles comes from the Vulgate during the time of Jerome (4th Century A.D.) as being “a chronicle of the entire Divine history.”

The Hebrews called them “Journals” or “Diaries.” The title דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים “Dibre Hayyamim” is derived from 1 Chronicles 27:24 and may be translated “the events of the years” or “annals.”

The LXX title was “Book of Omissions” as though these books supplemented the information contained in Samuel and Kings. 1 & 2 Chronicles were originally one book. The LXX translators divided them for utilitarian purposes.

AUTHOR

The author is anonymous and cannot be known with certainty.

The work is a compilation of many sources. There are at least 12 and perhaps 14 sources named in the text which are the extant chronicles of the kings and records of the prophets (1 Chronicles 9:1; 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 20:34; 24:27; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19). Because of the multiple sources the emphasis regarding authorship needs to be on who is the God inspired compiler. As this compiler collected and selected material with a specific theme in view it is evident that the compiler selected his material with great care.

Ezra is the front runner to be considered the author. The reasons are:

1. Hebrew tradition links 1 & 2 Chronicles and assigns them a common authorship.
2. The last verses of 2 Chronicles are the same as the first verses of Ezra.
3. The literary style is very similar to that of Ezra.
4. The point of view is priestly as is that of Ezra.
5. In the post-captivity period no one was more preeminently qualified to compose such a work as Ezra.
6. Jewish tradition names Ezra as the Divinely inspired compiler.

DATE

1 & 2 Chronicles were probably written by Ezra between 445 and 420 B.C. - i.e. after the return to establish worship in the Temple. The remnant had returned and the Temple was rebuilt. While the people waited for the establishment of the promised Messianic Kingdom, sin and defection set in and worship was neglected. The books then form an ecclesiastical history emphasizing the prominence of worship, the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple, and the sovereignty of God over the nation. 1 & 2 Chronicles cover the same historical period as 2 Samuel through 1 & 2 Kings (approximately 1010 - 588 B.C.)

THEME

Mitchell:

Though Chronicles covers the same historical period as 2 Samuel and the books of Kings, the writer's point of view is religious rather than historical. He selects those incidents that are significant from a religious, and particularly priestly point of view. Also, he obviously concentrates upon the southern kingdom. In more than one way, Chronicles may be said to bear a relationship to the earlier historical books akin to the relationship of the “spiritual” fourth Gospel (John) to the Synoptic Gospels. It looks at history from the Temple. This Chronicles gives the Divine view of history.

In Samuel and Kings the place and political events are emphasized. In Chronicles the Temple and religious activities are emphasized. By way of example, very little is given of Saul's reign in Chronicles, rather David's reign is emphasized because from God's perspective that is what was important. Correspondingly, a mass of information is given concerning the temple's construction and worship. Much time is devoted to the great revivals that swept through the land. What is important to God is very different than what is important to man. We need to get God's perspective.

Examples of the Divine View of History:

1. The people of the Lord are traced (1 Chronicles 1-9)
2. The anointed of the Lord are specified (1 Chronicles 10-12)
3. According to 1 Samuel 31:1-15, Saul's death was a suicide, but the Chronicles account informs us that it was really God who killed Saul (1 Chronicles 10:13,14)
4. The Ark of the Lord is emphasized (1 Chronicles 13-16)
5. The covenant of the Lord (1 Chronicles 17-21)
6. The Temple of the Lord (1 Chronicles 22 - 2 Chronicles 7)
7. The throne is called the throne of the Lord (2 Chronicles 9:8)
8. 2 Samuel gives a rather full account of David's great sin, but the Chronicles don't even mention it.

(From WCBS notes)

The theme of the books is the ecclesiastical history of Israel its Divine purpose. There is a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God which is given to God's people during the times of the Gentiles in order to encourage them. The purpose of Chronicles was to meet the need of the post-exilic returned remnant. They looked to the past, tracing God's selection of and faithfulness to Israel and their own apostasy. They also look to the future with the prophetic promises for the Davidic line. Although the throne was vacant, the Davidic line was still intact. The look to the present, pointing to the presence of Jehovah and His readiness to bless when His conditions are met. The purpose is not so much to castigate for past sins but to encourage to present faithfulness for the bright new era ahead.

Distinctions Between Chronicles and the Books of Samuel and Kings

1. Chronicles is priestly rather than from the prophet's viewpoint - the Levites and priests are very prominent.
2. Chronicles gives the ecclesiastical rather than the political picture
3. Chronicles concerns the Judaic line (and the kingdom of Judah) which was true to the Temple rather than the northern kingdom of Israel which had forsaken the Temple.
4. Chronicles emphasizes the faithfulness of the Davidic line rather than their sins. For instance, David's great sin is not recorded; Solomon's idolatry is omitted; though the great sins of Manasseh are depicted, the chronicler also give his final repentance in captivity and his reform efforts.
5. Whereas the book of Kings is more indictive to guilt (written during the captivity to remonstrate), Chronicles is more incitive to loyalty for the new beginning.
6. Chronicles was completed after the captivity while Kings was written before the captivity.
7. Chronicles concentrates only on the kings of Judah while Kings describes the reigns of both the kings of Israel and Judah.
8. Chronicles clearly emphasizes David and his descendants while Kings does not.
9. Samuel emphasizes political organization. Kings emphasizes the prophetic concentrating on disobedience, idolatry, repentance, reprimand, and revival. Chronicles emphasizes the priestly focusing on future hope.
10. Chronicles emphasizes revivals rather than battles.

1 CHRONICLES:

Type of Literature: History & Government

Halley (page 43): Reign of David

Mitchell: God's view of the Kingdom / God's view of Hebrew history - Mitchell applies these themes to the entire work of 1 & 2 Chronicles.

(From WCBS Notes): The history of David's kingdom with an ecclesiastical emphasis.

Key Word (Nelson's): Priestly View of David's Reign

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for Me, and I will establish His throne forever. I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to Me a Son. I will not take My steadfast love from Him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm Him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and His throne shall be established forever" (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 17 - Pivotal for the Book of 1 Chronicles as well as for the rest of the Scriptures is the Davidic Covenant recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. God promises David that He will *"confirm Him [David's ultimate offspring, Jesus Christ] in my house and in My kingdom forever, and His throne shall be established forever"* (1 Chronicles 17:14).

Outline:

I. The Genealogies From Adam to David 1-9

These first 9 chapters consist largely of genealogical lists. They are referential and not devotional. Admittedly they do not make for the most exciting devotional reading. However, they are important because:

- They record the line of the Hebrew people for approximately 3,500 years (this list is unique among all the peoples of the world - there is nothing comparable among any other nation)
- The key is selection. All through these lists one can trace the sovereign choice of God. This reveals God's purpose in history: To present the family tree of Christ.

II. The History of David's Reign 10-29

Chronicles records the religious aspects of David's reign.

2 CHRONICLES:

Type of Literature: History & Government

Halley (page 43): History of the Southern Kingdom

Mitchell: See above

(From WCBS Notes): The history of Solomon's kingdom and the kingdom of Judah with an ecclesiastical emphasis.

Key Word (Nelson's): Priestly View of Judah - The Book of 2 Chronicles provides topical histories of the end of the united kingdom (Solomon) and the kingdom of Judah. More than historical annals, Chronicles is a divine editorial on the spiritual characteristics of the Davidic dynasty.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 34 - Second Chronicles records the reforms and revivals under such kings as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

Outline:

- I. The History of Solomon's Reign 1-9
Section covers Solomon's Beginning with the Lord, Building for the Lord, being Blessed by the Lord. Emphasis spiritually is on the realization of the Temple.
- II. The History of the Kings of Judah 10-36
About 400 years of history are covered in these chapters. There are 20 kings listed - all descendants of David. Eight of them could be considered "good" in varying degrees. Here we have recorded an account of increasing degeneration despite sporadic revivals (there are 5 of them). The record clearly demonstrates that Judah's judgment was deserved.

RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically the Hebrews...and us.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

Chronicles, with Ezra and Nehemiah, bring to a close the historical section of the Old Testament.

David receives the irrevocable promise of Christ's kingdom.

Preview of what Christ's kingdom will be like (minus all the sin, death, and general mayhem).

What Chronicles demonstrates about God and us:

- God's faithfulness - He backed up His warning
- God's Promises - He restored His people
- God is not defeated by man's failures
- God's values are different than man's values

Why study history (as in why is Chronicles so important):

1. Framework: The study of history gives an historical perspective for God's subsequent work.
2. Theology: The study of history helps us sharpen our focus on God and His person, purpose, and principles
3. Doctrine: The study of history is meaningless unless it relates to doctrine: How we live.

Chronicles gives us God's perspective of history (the above) so that we will know what in history (and the history of our lives) is most important and why.

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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