

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 15 – 1 and 2 Chronicles
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Introduction

Like the books of Samuel and Kings, the books of Chronicles were originally one unit. The Hebrew title refers to "the chronicled events of the period in history," very close to our present day "Books of the Chronicles." The Greek scholars at Alexandria, working on the Septuagint, divided the book into two parts and called them, "The Things Omitted", thinking that they were a supplement to the books of Samuel and Kings. Actually, our present day title comes from the Latin Vulgate translation, which chose to call it "The Chronicles of the Whole Sacred History."

As we enter our study of the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles they appear to be a rehashing of the Books of 1 and 2 Kings, but there is one great difference. Kings present the Hebrew history from the view of the Kings and Prophets. Chronicles looks at that same history from the view of the Priests. That is why they only deal with the kingdom of Judah. In a sense, Kings presents Hebrew history from man's view, while Chronicles presents God's divine point of view. To illustrate this: The revival led by Hezekiah is reported in three verses in Kings, but takes up three chapters in Chronicles. ALSO ... Kings describes, in detail, the building and furnishing of the temple, but Chronicles emphasizes the details and organization of worship.

Even though the author is not known for certain, Jewish tradition assigns the writing to Ezra. All we can know for certain is that the author was probably a Levite, perhaps a priest closely associated to the temple since it focuses on worship in Jerusalem. The Books of Chronicles didn't originally follow the sequence of the Old Testament books as they appear in our Bible today. According to the Hebrew Canon they are at the conclusion of the Old Testament. Many Christian scholars believe this is because the genealogies in Chronicles lead into the genealogies in Matthew, bringing us all the way from Adam to Jesus. They feel that they deal only with the nation Judah because they are leading up to the ultimate King from the tribe of Judah, on the Throne of David, the Messiah!

An original remnant had returned under Zerubbabel to begin the re-building of the temple, but did not have permission to rebuild the palace. This was typical of the Persian style of rule. But, many preferred their new life of luxury as they were assimilated into the Babylonian and Persian lifestyles, as opposed to a life of re-pioneering the land, and did not return. The Chronicles were written after the Babylonian captivity ended as the returning Jews found their cities laying in rubble, their temple destroyed, their land devastated, still surrounded by hostile neighbors, and – worst of all – the Throne of David had vanished.

1 and 2 Chronicles present three major facts:

1. The Throne of David Remains

Even though the physical throne of David was gone, God had protected the line of David. We know this because of the genealogies at the beginning of the books. It lists the line from Adam to Zedekiah, touching on Adam, Abraham, and David, thus covering the Adamic, Abrahamic, and Davidic Covenants through the line of Judah. God never allowed the line of David to be taken or lost. In the brightest of times, under David and Solomon, or in the darkest, under evil kings, God kept His covenant promises and pursued His master plan for His chosen people. All through the captivities by Assyria and Babylon, the thread remained. Through the intertestament period of silence, the thread remained. Then the Messiah came and will one day come again. Then the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Messiah will sit on that throne fulfilling the last of God's covenant promises to His people. No promise of God is ever broken.

2. The Temple of God is Rebuilt

Chronicles show that the temple had a vital part to play in the history and spiritual life of the people of God, Israel. A new temple was built on the very foundation of the old to serve as a visible witness that God wishes to dwell among His people and to provide a place for them to worship Him as a nation. It reminds them that He wishes to dwell among them and have a personal relationship with them which is still one of the purposes of worship today.

The writer carefully reviews the temple's history: David's dream (vision); Solomon's crowning achievement; local kings contaminating or cleansing; foreign kings desecrating, stripping, and destroying; Israel's abandoning and apostasy; and remnant's rebuilding. It is interesting that a Persian king was the one God used to instigate His re-building program.

³²Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!' 2 Chron 36:32

3. The Troubles of Israel Recalled

It is made crystal clear that Israel's problem was apostasy. We are seeing the history of God's people from God's view. He is warning His people, once again, not to forsake Him and His Temple where they can create and keep a personal relationship with Him. Since Chronicles begins with Adam and ends with the decree of Cyrus, it represents the longest period of history in any Bible book. The kingdoms of David through Zedekiah are covered as well as the times of captivity under several world empires. It just reminds us that God will act out His will regardless of the power or plans of nations and rulers, regardless of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of His own people. God cannot be dethroned and His will cannot be thwarted.

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles:

1. Bring order and continuity to a study of God 's plan.

Retelling the story of Israel should encourage Jew and Gentile alike since it illustrates: 1) God has chosen to be personally involved with his created beings; 2) God keeps every one of His promises even though, because of our disobedience, it can sometimes take a long time; and 3) Men and nations cannot thwart His plans.

2. Emphasize how to worship.

Even though God insists that obedience is more important to Him than worship He still, as part of that obedience, wants us to worship in spirit, truth, sacrifice, and service.

3. Clarify God's desire to use man.

God will fulfill His plan for His people with or without any individual or national obedience. God eagerly uses obedient, worshipful, and prayerful people to fulfill His will on earth. God would rather work through us than go around us. Wouldn't we rather He would, also?

4. Explain a right human response to His holiness.

Since God is holy it should drive us to: 1) A right view of ourselves; 2) A right view of sin and idolatry; and 3) A right view of obedience and worship.

5. Display the sovereignty of God

As even pagan kings were often forced to acknowledge, God is God: 1) He controls nations whether they acknowledge Him or not; 2) He controls nature as evidenced in contests and battles; 3) He controls events to fulfill His plans and prophetic messages; and 4) He controls His own people, protecting and providing for them.

6. It reinforces the need for spiritual leadership.

In most cases, as the king acts, so acts the nation. Spiritual leadership comes from leaders who have a personal relationship with their King. Judah remained free over 130 years longer than Israel because good kings led them back to God and re-established true worship. The leaders of Judah were not judged on their secular accomplishments, but on their willingness to lead the people back to God and away from apostasy.

7. Sin is serious.

The sins of the people, especially their apostasy, brought punishment to them as individuals but also brought grief to their entire nations. The reaction and repentance of "the remnant" often had a great impact on God's dealing with the nations as a whole

8. Bottom line: God is redemptive!

God punishes sin (destruction of Jerusalem, temple, exile), but judgment is not His final word. 2 Chron ends with the exiles directed to go home and rebuild the temple. God is a God of second chances, giving us sinners a chance to repent and giving us freedom not to sin, but to serve.

Outline of 1 and 2 Chronicles

I. God's Redemptive Plan (1 Chron 1-29)

God gives three significant revelations about His nation's place in His master plan for the world. The fulfilling of that plan through the "line" or genealogy is no less important than His working through David or His Temple. They are all integral parts of His covenant promises.

A. Revealed Through Genealogies (Chapters 1-9)

The genealogies from Adam to Abraham (1:1-27), from Abraham to David (1:28-2:15), and from David to the post exile descendants (3:1-24) show the continuity of God's redemptive plan. God's divine plan, which began before creation:

- intersected with humanity in Adam (Adamic covenant),
- continued through a man of faith, Abraham (Abrahamic covenant), who would bring the blessing to the whole world
- zeroed in on the line of David (Davidic covenant),
- and continued beyond the exile to prove God has not abandoned His plan.

This section details the genealogies from Adam to Isaac's Sons (1:1-54); the Patriarchs and their Descendants (2:1-9:44); special attention is given to the descendants of Levi (6:1-81). The lineage of the high priest is carefully traced in Chapter 6 separating the sons of Aaron from the other Levites who were temple musicians and attendants but could not offer sacrifices. Chapter 8 reminds us that the Lord chose David as opposed to Saul. Chapter 9 details the returning exiles – only the tribes who returned to Jerusalem when freed were listed.

B. Revealed Through David (Chapters 10-20)

1. Saul's death provides the transition into David's kingdom (10). Chapter 10 reminds us that Saul's ultimate defeat and death was due to his own unfaithfulness and disobedience to God.

¹³So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it, ¹⁴and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse. 1 Chron 10:13-14

2. David is crowned king. God is establishing David's rule before the temple can be built. Chapters 11 and 12 detail David's mighty men and their deeds. The climax of this section is when David returned the Ark to Jerusalem (13-16). Here we see the detail of judgment on Uzza for disobedience – **even though he did the right thing, he did it in the wrong way. God is not a pragmatist – God's will must be accomplished in God's way.** Chapter 16 presents David's expressions of praise to God – Psalm 96 and 106. Even though God would not allow him to build his dream temple he did promise him an eternal throne (17). Chapters 18-20 list a series of military battles that God wins for David for which David gives God the credit.

C. Revealed Through Worship – Preparation for the Temple (Chapters 21-29)

Although David's sin with Bathsheba is conspicuous by its absence in 1 Chronicles, two other mistakes of David are recorded. One was the moving of the Ark which involves a wrong method. The other is David being moved by Satan to number the people (21) which involves a wrong motive.

Even though God would not let David build His temple, because he was a man of war, David did make great preparations (22). He organized the Levites and priests for temple worship, organized his army, and appointed Solomon king and Zadok as priest.

David organized the Levites into groups so that all the needs of the temple service would be met (23). Then he organized them into twenty four orders to serve in rotation (24). Next he established three musical guilds under his own direction to provide music for the temple worship which included musicians of all ages and different skill levels (25). David also appoints doorkeepers and treasurers (26) and the captains (27). This work was probably done by David just before his death, after Solomon had already been publicly recognized as king. He finished by charging Solomon in front of the entire nation, delivering his plans for the temple that included plans for a treasury, storage rooms, and even the furniture (28-29). 1 Chronicles ends with the death of David at 70 years old:

⁴David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. 2 Sam 5:4

²⁸Then he died in a ripe old age, full of days, riches and honor; and his son Solomon reigned in his place.

²⁹Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer, ³⁰with all his reign, his power, and the circumstances which came on him, on Israel, and on all the kingdoms of the lands. 1 Chron 29:28-30

II. God's Revealed Temple (2 Chronicles 1-36)

2 Chronicles describes the construction of the temple and the religious life of the nation under Solomon and the other kings of Judah.

A. During Solomon's Reign (Chapters 1-9)

This first section deals with the temple and Solomon's role in it. This time the writer ignored the early struggles for control and focused on the highlight of his career, the building of the temple. The Lord elevated Solomon in the eyes of his people, granted his request for wisdom, and blessed him with riches and power (1). Chapters 2 through 7 detail the arranging for the work of building (2), building and furnishing of the Temple (3-4), the dedication of the sanctuary and the instillation of the Ark (5-7). In chapters 8 and 9 the writer illustrates how God honored His promises, expanded his kingdom, and gave him fame and wealth.

B. During Judah's Kings Reign (Chapters 10-36)

The second part of 2 Chronicles reviews the spiritual life of Judah under a variety of kings. After Solomon's death and the separation of the kingdom, Judah alternates between spiritual decay and religious reformation. This is a very long section and much of what is included was covered in the book of 2 Kings. The history ebbs and flows based mainly on the king's attitude toward the temple and worship of the true God, on the one hand, and compromise and idol worship on the other. When a king brought idol worship into Judah or allowed the "high places" to stand, the nation sank into apostasy, war, and affliction.

- Rehoboam refused to lighten the tax burden on the ten northern tribes causing the split. Jeroboam splits the kingdom and appoints false priests (10-11).
- Once Rehoboam becomes strong, he abandons the law of the Lord, and all the people follow him. The Lord allows King Shishak of Egypt to conquer Judah's fortified cities and plunder Jerusalem. Rehoboam and the people humble themselves and confess their sin. The Lord spares Jerusalem, but he allows Shishak to take all the treasures of the palace (12).
- Abijah fought Jeroboam's apostasy (sermon in chapter 13) and supported worship led by true priests in Jerusalem.
- Asa relied on the Lord and instituted reform, removing idols and rebuilding the altar (14-16). The prophet Asariah brings the word of the Lord to Asa:

¹Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, ²and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. 2 Chron 15:1-2

²¹"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." John 14:21

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Heb 11:6

³²"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Matt 10:32-33

- Jehoshaphat served the Lord by sending Levites throughout the land teaching the Book of the Law (17). Chapters 18-21 recap the reign of Jehoshaphat, his evil alliance with Ahab, the north's most wicked king, giving his son in marriage to Ahab's daughter. He repented and removed pagan objects of worship, but he later joined with Ahaziah, Ahab's son to build a mighty navy to conquer the world, but which God destroyed before it could leave port.
- In the middle of Jehoram's (Jehoshaphat's son) evil reign, Jehu, his military commander was instructed by a prophet to purge the land of Baal worship. He did this by killing all of Ahab's family except Ahab's daughter Athaliah. She grabbed the throne and killed all of the heirs of Judah except Joash (a child) who was hidden in the temple (22).

- The Levites and priests gathered the people together and made him king, killing Athaliah in the process. Joash restored the temple by collecting willing offerings from the people (23-24)
- Uzziah (Azariah) became king at age 16 and, under the tutoring of Zechariah, was blessed by God for fifty-two years. He built a modern mechanized army and expanded the kingdom, but pride, evidenced by his attempt to present his own sacrifices, caused God to afflict him with leprosy (25-26).
- His son Jotham was also righteous and blessed by God (27).
- Ahaz followed, and he was noted for his practice of human sacrifice tied to his worship of Baal. Ahaz's punishment came in the form of military defeat and oppression (28).
- Hezekiah's rule is given a lot of attention because of his work in bringing music into prominence in temple worship as he led an additional restoration. He re-instituted regular sacrifice and planned a great Passover convocation and teaching which brought a revival (29-31).
- In chapter 32 we have the record of God's destruction of the armies of Sennacherib because of Hezekiah's faithfulness and, with Isaiah's help, he was blessed by God (32).
- Manasseh was blamed for the destruction of Jerusalem by the writer of Kings, but here the Chronicler dwells on his capture by Assyria and his repentance which led him back to his throne and gave him an opportunity to restore the temple and renew worship (33).
- Josiah's rule was very exciting as he purged idolatry from the land and the high places throughout Judah. His rule was considered, by the writer of Kings, to be second only to David's in greatness as he re-instituted the Passover again.
- Chronicles gives only a brief account of Judah's last kings – the slide was fast and furious (36).

C. During Cyrus's Reign (Chapter 36)

The end of the book is one of the strongest evidences of God's overpowering sovereignty. Cyrus, the king of the conquering Assyrians, published an edict permitting all conquered people to return to their lands and revive their religious tradition. For the Jews, he ordered the rebuilding of the Temple. Just when it looked like God's promises to Adam, Abraham, and David were abandoned, God used a pagan king to continue His master plan.

The statement which ends the Books of Chronicles also begins the account recorded in Ezra.

Homework:

- Read Ezra
- Particularly read Ezra 7:9-10. What observations can you make from this passage?