



# 2 Chronicles





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# 2 Chronicles

*The Faithfulness of God to His Word  
Illustrated in the Lives of the  
People of Judah*

Cyril J. Barber



Christian Focus Publications





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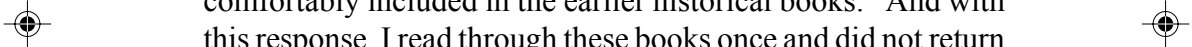
Dedicated to  
DAVID AND SHARON CAHN  
“Twin Pillars” of Plymouth Church  
Whittier, California






## Introduction

Soon after I became a Christian I began reading the Bible. I realized that the church I attended, though it had had a long and enviable history, was in a state of spiritual decline. I did not know why, but I sensed inwardly that I would have to take responsibility for my own spiritual growth. After reading through the New Testament several times, I began to work through the Old Testament. When I came to the Books of Chronicles I found that they contained material similar to what I had just finished reading in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.



I asked my pastor about this unexpected repetition, and received the following answer: “Chronicles contains *things added* (i.e., brought together in one place) that could not be comfortably included in the earlier historical books.” And with this response, I read through these books once and did not return to them until I began my seminary training. Only then did I find that this approach to the Book(s) of Chronicles had a long and misleading history. And I had deprived myself of much blessing as a result of my neglect of this portion of God’s inspired revelation. I now place my former pastor’s answer in the same category as other famous, though incorrect, statements, like the one by Robert Millikan, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, who claimed that “There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom,” or the statement of Charles H. Dell, former director of the U. S. Patent Office who, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, said, “Everything that can be invented has been invented.” The whole canon of Scripture was meant to be studied, not just a few select books that are better known than the others.

In writing this history of the kingdom of Judah, the writer of Chronicles had a special purpose in mind. His emphasis was different from the compiler of the Book(s) of Kings. He used the history of his people to illustrate the *faithfulness of God to*



*Introduction*


*His word* (note Psalm 132:11-12); and, because God is true to His word, He is trustworthy. And so, in interpreting this portion of Scripture, we need to keep in mind the first recipients of this material and the need to continuously remind ourselves of the faithfulness of God.

Those to whom this book was read had returned from captivity in Babylonia. Life for them was hard. Their cities lay in ruins, the wall of Jerusalem had been broken down, Solomon's Temple had been destroyed, their houses were in a state of disrepair, and their fields (that had lain fallow for more than half a century) were overgrown with thorns and thistles. They were in desperate need of assurance that God still cared for them. The Chronicler was aware of this and wrote to illustrate the fact that *God is indeed faithful to His spoken and written word, and He rewards faithfulness on the part of His people.*

Some Bible scholars, however, reject the idea that the *theme* of Chronicles is the faithfulness of God. They believe that the purpose of 2 Chronicles differs from 1 Chronicles in that its primary focus is on the Temple. In support of their thesis they are quick to point out that 2 Chronicles begins with the building of the Temple and ends with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild it. They also affirm that the criterion by which the kings of Judah were deemed to have succeeded or failed is to be found in their attitude toward the Temple and their support of its ministry.

At first glance, this seems to be a very reasonable hypothesis. It is difficult to maintain, however, for a careful reading of the biblical text reveals that it is David who is repeatedly referred to as the standard by which the reigns of other kings are measured (cf. 11:17; 17:3-4; 20:32; 21:6, 12-13; 22:3; 28:2; 34:2).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, prayer is so prominent in the dedication of the Temple and, indeed throughout the book, that the Temple is overshadowed. And let us not forget the words of the Lord Jesus that underscore the importance of prayer (Matthew 21:13; cf. Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

Chapter 7 is central to the message of Chronicles, and verses 12-16 contain one of the best-known portions in the entire Old

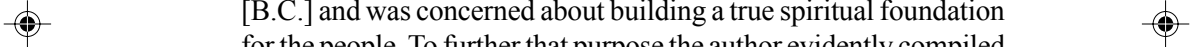


## Introduction

Testament. When these verses are read in light of the experience of the exiles who knew that the Temple had been destroyed, it was only prayer that had kept their hopes alive (cf. Daniel 9:3ff.).

It is the better part of wisdom, therefore, to see the theme of 2 Chronicles as a continuation of the theme of 1 Chronicles, *viz.*, the faithfulness of God to His word, and the assurance that God both hears and answers prayer.

But is there incontrovertible evidence that the theme of 1 Chronicles is continued in 2 Chronicles? An incidental bit of evidence that is often overlooked comes from the first word of the Hebrew text of 2 Chronicles. It is *waw*, “And,” and points unmistakably to the fact that 2 Chronicles continues 1 Chronicles. Second Chronicles develops a selective history of the southern kingdom from the death of David to the Babylonian Captivity. Dr. Charles C. Ryrie writes:



We know that Ezra led a group of exiles back to Palestine in 458 [B.C.] and was concerned about building a true spiritual foundation for the people. To further that purpose the author evidently compiled the Chronicles in order to emphasize the importance of racial and religious purity, the proper place of the law, the Temple, and the priesthood. Thus he omits detailed activities of the kings and prophets, stressing instead the rich heritage of the people and *the blessings of their covenant relationship to God.*<sup>2</sup>

We often fail to realize the significance of the unconditional, unilateral covenants God entered into with His people. He made different covenants with different people. The most important of these covenants are the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants.<sup>3</sup> The unique importance of these covenants becomes apparent as we construct a rough timeline beginning with the covenant God entered into with Abraham prior to 2090 BC (see Genesis 12:1-3).<sup>4</sup> This covenant was reaffirmed and enlarged, but never cancelled. Then, nearly seven centuries later, in 1407 BC, He instituted the Palestinian Covenant with the people of Israel in which He reassured the descendants of the patriarchs that He was giving them the land of Palestine





### *Introduction*

(Deuteronomy 30:1-10).<sup>5</sup> Again time passed. Then around 1000 BC He made His covenant with David,<sup>6</sup> in which He promised David an enduring dynasty. David's heirs, however, would only enjoy the benefits of this covenant if they obeyed God's revealed will. Speaking specifically of Solomon (though His words applied to all of David's descendants), the Lord said to David:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Though God had said that David's throne would continue "forever," the exiles that had recently resettled in Judah had good cause to question whether the Lord would still honor His word. Hence the need for a book like Chronicles.<sup>7</sup> All of this highlights the fact that each king of Judah stood in the line of the theocracy and was responsible to rule over God's people as His chosen representative. The supreme example of such loyal service was King David. That is why, in reading through the Book of Chronicles, we frequently encounter statements like "He walked in the ways of David" or "He did not walk in the ways of David."

### **Authorship**


A question that is often debated is, Who wrote Chronicles. In the Introduction to volume 1 we advanced the belief that Ezra was the compiler of Chronicles, and though we will refer to the biblical writer as "the Chronicler", we see no reason to question the long-standing tradition that Ezra wrote this important

summary of the history of the people of Judah.

Ezra had been born in Babylonia. He had received his secular schooling as well as his biblical training in that pagan land and, after founding an academy for the preservation and propagation the Scriptures among the Jews scattered throughout the land, he led a group of expatriates back to Judah. By training as well as experience (cf. Ezra 7:10) Ezra was well equipped to compile a work such as the Book of Chronicles. In addition, when he arrived in Judah he had access to Nehemiah's large private library (see the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees 2:13. This library included, among other volumes, the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah [27:7; 35:27; 36:8]; the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel [16:11; 2:26; 28:26; 32:32]; the Book of the Kings of Israel [20:34; 33:18]; the Annals of the Book of Kings [24:27]; the Book of Nathan; the prophecy of Ahijah; and the visions of Iddo [9:29]; the writings of the prophet Isaiah [26:22]; the sayings of Hozai [33:19] and Jeremiah's lament for Josiah [35:25]). If Ezra was not the author, who else had the requisite training and resources to trace Judah's history in such fine detail?

The majority of modern scholars, however, have repudiated the idea that Ezra was the author. They have advanced several alternate theories, even asserting that some of the words used in the Book(s) of Chronicles differ from Ezra's vocabulary in the book of Ezra/Nehemiah. However, they are not agreed as to which words supposedly lie outside Ezra's literary grasp. Others have shown that, inasmuch as Ezra had been born in Babylonia, the words that are not found in Ezra/Nehemiah can be accounted for on the basis of different subject matter.

In this connection, we do well to consider Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. When President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is compared with his Second Inaugural Address (both speeches discussed the war and were delivered only two years apart), the new words found in the Gettysburg Address account for 51 per cent of the content. Are those who reject Ezra's authorship of the Book of Chronicles prepared to apply the same criteria to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address? If so, then who



*Introduction*

delivered it?

Obviously such a view is ludicrous. It does reveal, however, the tenuous nature of the position adopted by Bible critics, and there seems to be no valid reason why we should not accept Ezra's authorship.

**Outline**

In broad outline, 2 Chronicles continues the history of the United Kingdom under Solomon (chs. 1–9). It ignores the Northern Kingdom and provides what some regard as a “divine editorial” on the lives and deeds of succeeding kings who sat on David's throne (chs. 10–36). The emphasis is clear. Only those monarchs who subordinated themselves to the revealed will of God received His blessing.

Originally the Book of Chronicles comprised a single scroll. The division of the single scroll into two scrolls took place in the second century BC when certain Jewish rabbis translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. Hebrew is a consonantal language. Greek, however, contains vowels and this added significantly to the length of the manuscript. It became necessary, therefore, for the Book of Chronicles to be divided into two parts. Ideally, the life of Solomon should have been included on the same scroll with the life of David, for they were both rulers of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. This was not done, for the Chronicler's history was divided roughly at the midpoint, and so the first part of 2 Chronicles deals with the United Kingdom under Solomon. Only after that do we have information on the Divided Kingdom and a summary of the successive reigns of those who ruled over the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Here is a brief outline of 2 Chronicles that continues 1 Chronicles:

III. THE HISTORY OF KING SOLOMON (1:1–9:31)

A. Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom (1:1-17)

B. The Building and Dedication of the Temple (2:1–7:22)

12

C. Solomon's Various Activities and Death (8:1–9:31)

IV. THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH (10:1–36:23)

A. From Rehoboam to Zedekiah (10:1–36:21)

B. The Edict of Cyrus (36:22-23)

**Of Special Importance**

Certain statements give us hints about the things the Chronicler thought important. For example, there is repeated emphasis on the word “all” (e.g., “all the people,” “all Israel”), and there is also frequent mention of words like “forever”(e.g., “I will establish his throne forever”), also the warning not to forsake the Lord or be unfaithful to Him, and the repeated reference to “seeking God.” Of added significance is the fact that the Chronicler sought to show the relevance of the Word of the Lord (no matter how long ago it was given) to the needs of the remnant that had returned to Judah. This was done with a view to strengthening their faith. His intent was to develop an intrinsic spirituality as opposed to a formal adherence to the ritualistic observance of rites and ceremonies (cf. Isaiah 1:11-17; Mark 7:6-8).

However, a question is often asked, “Of what value is 2 Chronicles to us?” The Apostle Paul answered that question for us in Romans 15:4. Though the Chronicler’s material was written for the people of Judah, the events of their lives were instructive for they grappled with the same kinds of tensions we face today. A rich and rewarding experience awaits us, therefore, as we seek to master the truths taught in this greatly neglected book.

In the Introduction to 1 Chronicles I mentioned that, having documented matters of history and grammar, et cetera, in my works on 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, documentation in the Book(s) of Chronicles would avoid unnecessary duplication. I remind my readers of this just in case they wonder why my use of notes is less copious in these books than previously.

I trust that in the gracious providence of God He will use these simple studies to His glory and the edification of His people!