



1 and 2 Chronicles

A Mentor Commentary

Richard L Pratt, Jr.



MENTOR





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Richard L. Pratt, Jr.





Figure List

Figure 1.....	Page 10	32	411
2	16	34	439
3	76	35	443
4	84	36	481
5	86	37	486
6	92	38	488
7	90	39	497
8	127	40	501
9	139	41	504
10	141	42	505
11	144	43	530
12	153	44	532
13	170	45	545
14	172	46	546
15	202	47	558
16	204	48	559
17	214	49	563
18	219	50	565
19	225	51	583
20	250	52	584
21	282	53	591
22	284	54	608
23	306	55	627
24	366	56	639
25	369	57	648
26	370	58	650
27	376	59	659
28	387	60	663
29	395	61	664
30	396	62	686
31	408	63	700





Introduction

The book of Chronicles (1 and 2 Chronicles) is one of the most neglected portions of Scripture. Many students of the Bible find its complex history unfamiliar and assume that it is irrelevant for contemporary life. Despite these widespread assessments, Chronicles offers much to the Church today by providing perspectives on our Faith that we seldom consider.

To grasp the significance of Chronicles for our times, we must first understand its original meaning, the meaning intended for its first Israelite readers. Legitimate Christian applications must accord with the purposes for which the Holy Spirit first inspired this book. In this introduction, we sketch the contours of the original meaning of Chronicles by focusing on five issues: 1) *Authorship and Date*, 2) *Historical and Theological Purposes*, 3) *Outline*, 4) *Major Themes*, and 5) *Translation and Transmission*. Two appendices follow these topics.

Authorship and Date

The Holy Spirit inspired the book of Chronicles, but he spoke through the personality and purposes of a human writer. Chronicles does not explicitly identify this human instrument, but clues appear that help us limit possibilities.

Early Jewish traditions designated the scribe Ezra as the primary author of Chronicles (as well as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). At least two considerations support this view: 1) The book was composed after Israel's return from exile to Babylon, near the time of Ezra's ministry. 2) Many passages in Chronicles have theological affinities with the focus of Ezra's ministry (see *Major Themes* below).

Other considerations, however, cast doubt on this traditional viewpoint: 1) The date of Chronicles' composition cannot be limited to Ezra's lifetime (see below). 2) Chronicles ties kingship and temple worship together in ways that do not appear in the teachings of Ezra. 3) Chronicles largely avoids



a central issue in Ezra's ministry, intermarriage between Israelites and foreign women (Ezra 9:10-12; see Deut. 7:2-4; Neh. 10:30; 13:23-31).

For these reasons, most contemporary scholars remain unconvinced of the traditional outlook on the identity of Chronicles' human author. Ezra's ministry was certainly in harmony with this book. Moreover, he may have contributed to its composition or transmission in some unknown manner. Nevertheless, neither historical nor Scriptural evidences demonstrate that Ezra wrote Chronicles. As a result, we will follow the custom of most contemporary interpreters and simply refer to the inspired human author as 'the Chronicler'.

When did the Chronicler write? It is not possible to establish a precise date, but upon reflection a limited range of possibilities emerges.

The final verses of Chronicles provide us with the *earliest possible date* for final composition (2 Chr. 36:21-23; see Ezra 1:1-4). These verses record the edict of the Persian emperor, Cyrus, in which he ordered the return of Israelite exiles from Babylon. These events occurred in c. 539/8 BC.

The *latest possible date* for Chronicles is less certain. One important clue is that the style of Hebrew in the book gives no indication of influence from the Greek language. This evidence suggests that the book was written before Alexander the Great took control of Palestine in c. 330 BC.

The specific circumstances of Chronicles' composition become clearer in the light of the major events which took place in Palestine between these earliest and latest possible dates of composition (c. 538–c. 330 BC). We will summarize several crucial events which took place in this period (see Figure 1).

Composition of Chronicles

539/8	536	520	515	458-430	330
Return	Altar	Haggai	Completion	Ezra	Alexander
from	and	and	of	and	the
Exile	Foundation	Zechariah	Temple	Nehemiah	Great
	of Temple				

Major Post-Exilic Events (figure 1)

A number of Israelites returned from exile to Jerusalem following the Cyrus Edict (Ezra 2:1-64). A descendent of King David named Zerubbabel led the people in erecting an altar and a foundation for the new temple (Ezra 2:2; 3:2-3, 8-10). Nevertheless, disappointment, economic hardships, and trouble from foreigners quickly halted the reconstruction effort (Ezra 4:1-24).

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah preached in Jerusalem during this time (Ezra 5:1-2). They exhorted Zerubbabel and the people to continue the work on the temple. The returnees eventually complied with the prophetic word and completed the temple with great celebration in 515 BC (Ezra 6:14-15).

A generation later, however, the number of returnees remained few. Moreover, many men had intermarried with foreign women who served other gods (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:23-31; Mal. 2:11). These intermarriages led to widespread religious apostasy (Deut. 7:3; 1 Kgs. 11:1-13). Ezra (c. 458 BC) and Nehemiah (c. 445 BC) came to Jerusalem to call the people to repent of their failures and to conform to the Law of God.

Sadly, the reforms under Ezra and Nehemiah had only temporary effects. The sins of the people grew so great that Israel fell into centuries of spiritual darkness. This period of extended trouble we now call the Intertestamental Period (c. 425–c. 4 BC). Most of God's people remained scattered among the nations. The Israelites in Palestine first suffered under the rule of the Persians and Medes, then beneath Greek dominion, and finally under the iron fist of Rome. Intertestamental darkness continued until the inauguration of the Kingdom of God through the work of Christ and his apostles.

Where did the Chronicler and his book fit within this series of events? Two answers have come to the foreground in recent research. First, some interpreters have proposed that the Chronicler wrote as early as the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah (c. 520–515). At least three evidences support this view:

- 1) The book consistently presents the temple and its personnel in close partnership with the royal line of David

(see *Major Themes* below). This dual emphasis on king and temple suggests that final composition took place near the days of Zerubbabel when expectations of Davidic and priestly partnership were still high (see Zech. 3:1-4:14; Hag. 1:14-2:9, 20-23). By the next generation, there is little evidence for hope of an imminent rise of the Davidic line to the throne of Jerusalem.

2) The Chronicler gave much attention to the details of priestly and Levitical duties (see *Major Themes* below). This concern also suggests a date of composition during the time when Zerubbabel and his priestly partner Joshua (Jeshua) were establishing the new temple order (see Zech. 3:1-4:14).

3) The striking omission of Solomon's downfall due to intermarriage (see 1 Kgs. 11:1-40 and commentary on 2 Chr. 1:1-9:31; 9:29-31) stands in sharp contrast with Nehemiah's appeal to the terrible results of Solomon's foreign marriages (see Neh. 13:26). This omission suggests that the Chronicler may have written in the generation before intermarriage had become a major problem in the post-exilic community.

Second, the majority of recent interpreters have argued that final composition took place during or just after the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah (c. 450–390). The main evidence in favor of this view appears in the genealogy of 1 Chr. 3:17-24. This list extends to a number of generations after Zerubbabel. Some difficulties with interpretation make this evidence less than conclusive, but it would appear certain that the genealogy extends to at least two generations after Zerubbabel (see commentary on 1 Chr. 3:1-24).

In light of the ambiguity of the evidence, a specific date cannot be fixed for the final composition of Chronicles. It seems best to remain satisfied with a range of possibilities from sometime near the days of Zerubbabel to sometime soon after the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah (c. 515–390). As our commentary will show, the emphases of the book fit well within these limits.

Historical and Theological Purposes

The Chronicler wrote to give his readers a true historical record of Israel's past. The historical nature of his book has been noted in the titles which have been attached to it. The traditional Hebrew title may be translated 'The Events of the Times', pointing to its historical quality. Some manuscripts of the Septuagint (ancient Greek versions of the Old Testament) entitled the book 'The Things Omitted', to suggest that it supplements the history of Samuel and Kings. Our English title, 'Chronicles' derives from Jerome and Luther who called the book 'The Chronicle of the Entire Sacred History'. These various titles indicate that even a cursory reading of Chronicles reveals its historical focus.

The Chronicler's careful handling of numerous written sources also points to his concern for historical veracity.

1) As he wrote of Israel's history, he relied primarily on the canonical books of Samuel and Kings for his information. The vast majority of materials in Chronicles comes from these authoritative Scriptures.

2) The Chronicler also referred to the Scriptures of the Pentateuch (e.g. 1 Chr. 1:1-2; [see Gen. 5:1-20]; 1 Chr. 4:24; [see Exod. 6:15; Num. 26:12-14]; 1 Chr. 5:1,2; [see Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4]; 1 Chr. 24:2 [see Lev. 10:1-2]), and the books of Joshua (e.g. 1 Chr. 2:7; [see Josh. 7:1]), Judges (1 Chr. 11:4; [see Judg. 1:21]), Ruth (1 Chr. 2:10-17; [see Ruth 4:18-22]), Psalms (1 Chr. 16:8-22; [see Ps. 105:1-15]), Isaiah (2 Chr. 32; [see Isa. 36:1-39:8]), and Jeremiah (2 Chr. 36:11-21; [see Jer. 52:1-30]).

3) Beyond this, he cited several unknown royal annals: 'the book of the annals of King David' (1 Chr. 27:24), 'the book of the kings' (2 Chr. 24:27), 'the book of the kings of Israel' (1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 20:34), and 'the book of the kings of Judah and Israel' (2 Chr. 16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32), 'the book of the kings of Israel and Judah' (2 Chr. 27:7; 35:27; 36:8).

4) In addition, the Chronicler referred to prophetic writings which have since disappeared: the writings of Samuel (1 Chr. 29:29), Nathan (1 Chr. 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29), Gad (1 Chr. 29:29), Ahijah (2 Chr. 9:29), Iddo (2 Chr. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22), Shemaiah (2 Chr. 12:15), and anonymous 'seers' (2 Chr. 33:19).

5) The content and style of many passages also suggest that the Chronicler used other unidentifiable sources (see 2 Chr. 9:29-31; 12:15-16; 16:11-17:1; 21:18-20; 24:23-27; 26:22-23; 28:26-27; 32:32-33; 35:20-27; 36:8). The Chronicler's use of these many sources indicates his strong desire to convey a true account of Israel's past.

As a book of history, Chronicles covers a wide range of events. It begins with Adam (1 Chr. 1:1) and traces the history of Israel to the period after return from exile in Babylon (1 Chr. 3:1-24). This historical record is fascinating in itself for it reveals much about the God of Israel whom we serve today.

In addition to informing his readers of the past, the Chronicler also wrote to convey theological perspectives. These purposes become especially evident when Chronicles is compared with the earlier records of Samuel and Kings. As our commentary will show, the Chronicler handled Samuel and Kings in different ways to focus his readers' attention on particular issues. He sometimes quoted long passages with little or no change, but at other times he made modifications, additions and omissions. These variations indicate that the Chronicler composed his history to convey theological lessons as well as historical information.

This commentary will concern itself primarily with the theological purposes of Chronicles. We will occasionally comment on historical issues, but our chief interest will be to discern the guidance Chronicles gave to its first readers. Only when we understand this theological focus will we correctly discern how the book also speaks to us today.

How may we summarize the Chronicler's theological concerns? What were the chief elements of his message? It helps to think of Chronicles' theology in terms of its message for the *Original Israelite Readers* as well as its application for *Contemporary Christian Readers*.

Original Israelite Readers:

In general terms, the Chronicler originally wrote his history *to direct the restoration of the Kingdom during the early*

post-exilic period. In all likelihood, the book of Chronicles was originally directed toward the leaders of the restored Israelite community. The Chronicler himself demonstrated that he had access to many written sources that would have been available only to a few (see above). His references to these sources strongly suggest that he expected his initial readers to have access to these kinds of documents as well. Although his book certainly had implications for the general populace, the leaders of the restored community were his primary audience. As a result, he focused intensely on past leaders of Israel, her kings and priests especially, to indicate how the leaders of the post-exilic Israel were to fulfill their service. The leaders of those who had returned from exile faced many challenges. Although the prophets had predicted that return to the land would be a time of grand blessings (e.g. Amos 9:11-15; Joel 3:18-21; Ezek 34:26), the restoration had not brought about the blessings for which Israel hoped. Instead, the returnees endured discouraging economic hardship, foreign opposition, and domestic conflicts. The Chronicler wrote his history to offer guidance to this struggling community. He provided them with practical directions for attaining a greater realization of the blessings of the Kingdom of God in their time.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The Chronicler's desire to direct the restoration of the Kingdom of God in his day connects the theology of his book to the concerns of the Christian Church today. Although post-exilic Israel's continuing sins brought failure in their day, the Kingdom of God did not fail utterly. As the New Testament teaches, the Chronicler's hopes were realized in Christ. Christ brings to fulfillment and exceeds all of the Chronicler's desires for God's people.

The New Testament also teaches, however, that Jesus did not accomplish this goal all at once. Instead, the restoration of the Kingdom of God comes in three stages. First, the *inauguration* of the Kingdom came through Christ's earthly ministry and the work of his apostles (see Mark 1:14-15;

Luke 4:43; 10:11; Acts 1:3). Second, after the ministry of the apostles the *continuation* of the Kingdom of God extends to all the world through the ministry of the Church (see Acts 28:23; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Third, in the future Jesus will bring the Kingdom to its *consummation* in the New Heavens and New Earth (see Rev. 21:1–22:21).

Christians may rightly apply the Chronicler's perspectives by asking how his message applies to these three phases of Christ's Kingdom. Chronicles presents theological themes which anticipate Christ's first coming, the continuing ministry of the church, and the return of Christ. In the next section we will illustrate how particular themes in Chronicles apply to both post-exilic Israel and to the three phases of Christ's Kingdom.

Outline

The book of Chronicles displays a well-conceived structure. The following outline provides an overview of the large patterns of the book (see figure 2). More detailed patterns are noted at the beginning of each section of the commentary.

Part One: The Identity, Privileges and Responsibilities of God's People (1 Chr. 1:1–9:34)

Part Two: The Ideal United Kingdom (1 Chr. 9:35–2 Chr. 9:31)

David's Reign (1 Chr. 9:35–29:30)

Solomon's Reign (2 Chr. 1:1–9:31)

Part Three: Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chr. 10:1–28:27)

Judgments and Increasing Blessings in Judah (10:1–21:3)

Rehoboam (10:1–12:16)

Abijah (13:1–14:1)

Asa (14:2–16:14)

Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:3)

Northern Corruption in Judah (21:4–24:27)

Jehoram (21:4–20)

Ahaziah (22:1–9)

Athaliah (22:10–23:21)

Joash (24:1–27)

- Half-Hearted Obedience in Judah (25:1–28:27)
- Amaziah (25:1-28)
 - Uzziah (26:1-23)
 - Jotham (27:1-9)
 - Ahaz (28:1-27)
- Part Four: The Reunited Kingdom (2 Chr. 29:1–36:23)*
- Hezekiah (29:1–32:33)
 - Manasseh (33:1-20)
 - Amon (33:21-25)
 - Josiah (34:1–35:27)
 - Final Events (36:2-23)
- Outline of Chronicles (figure 2)*

Major Themes

The post-exilic community faced a variety of challenges as they sought to re-establish the Kingdom of God in their day. These difficulties must have raised many important questions. 'Are we still heirs to the promises which God gave our forebears? What political and religious institutions should we embrace? How may we find the blessings of security and prosperity?' The Chronicler addressed these kinds of questions throughout his book.

The Chronicler wove together many theological motifs in order to respond to these questions. We will summarize his central theological concerns under the following headings.

- 1-3) *People of God*
 - 1) *All Israel*
 - 2) *Northern Israel*
 - 3) *International Relations*
- 4-9) *King and Temple*
 - 4) *Royal and Levitical Families*
 - 5) *Religious Assemblies*
 - 6) *Royal Observance of Worship*
 - 7) *Divine Kingship*
 - 8) *Music*
 - 9) *Temple Contributions*
- 10-28) *Divine Blessing and Judgment*

- 10-12) *God and History*
 - 10) *Divine Activity*
 - 11) *Name of God*
 - 12) *Divine Presence and Help*
- 13-22) *Israel's Responsibilities*
 - 13) *Covenant*
 - 14) *Standards*
 - 15) *Prophets*
 - 16) *Motivations*
 - 17) *Prayer*
 - 18) *Humility*
 - 19) *Seeking*
 - 20) *Abandoning/Forsaking*
 - 21) *Unfaithfulness*
 - 22) *Repentance*
- 23-28) *Divine Responses*
 - 23) *Victory and Defeat*
 - 24) *Building and Destruction*
 - 25) *Increase and Decline of Progeny*
 - 26) *Prosperity and Poverty*
 - 27) *Disappointment and Celebration*
 - 28) *Healing and Long Life / Sickness and Death*

References to these *Major Themes* appear throughout the commentary.

1-3) People of God

Throughout his history, the Chronicler explained who belonged among the people of God. The identity of God's people posed many difficulties for the post-exilic community. Whom should they count as heirs of God's promises? What geographical hopes were appropriate for the tribes of Israel? How inclusive or exclusive should they be? We will explore the Chronicler's answers to these questions under three rubrics: 1) *All Israel*, 2) *Northern Israel*, and 3) *International Relations*.

1) All Israel

Original Israelite Readers

The Chronicler's concern with clarifying the identity of God's people becomes evident in his frequent use of the terminology 'all Israel' and other closely related expressions (see commentary on 1 Chr. 11:1; 2 Chr. 10:1; 29:24). Six times the Chronicler simply copied this terminology from parallel passages in Samuel and Kings (1 Chr. 18:14; 19:17; 2 Chr. 7:8, 9; 10:16; 18:16). Four times he modified the text of Samuel and Kings to read 'all Israel' (1 Chr. 11:1; 14:8; 15:28; 2 Chr. 10:3). Beyond this, however, the expression occurs nineteen times in passages which are unique to Chronicles (1 Chr. 11:10; 12:38; 15:3; 21:5; 28:4; 28:8; 29:21; 29:23, 25, 26; 2 Chr. 1:2; 12:1; 13:4; 13:15; 24:5; 28:23; 29:24; 30:1; 35:3).

The Chronicler's emphasis on 'all Israel' reflected his deep commitment to including all the tribes of Israel among God's people. To be sure, the representatives of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Levi who had returned to the land were the chosen people (see commentary on 1 Chr. 9:3-9). As such, they played a seminal role in the restoration of the Kingdom.

At the same time, however, the Chronicler believed that God's people included more than the small population of the post-exilic community. He also identified the tribes of Israel who still remained outside the land as the people of God. In his view, the returnees in Judah needed to remember that the restoration was incomplete so long as some of the tribes remained exiled from the land. To express this broad vision of God's people, the Chronicler included both northern and southern tribes in his genealogies (1 Chr. 2:3; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 23; 6:1; 7:1, 6, 13, 14, 20, 30; 8:1). He presented the ideal of all twelve tribes under David and Solomon. He spoke of both the North and South as the people of God (2 Chr. 10:3; 12:1; 13:4, 15; 24:5). He also celebrated the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms in the days of Hezekiah (see commentary on 2 Chr. 30:1-31:1). Finally, the Chronicler was so strongly committed to the return of all tribes to the land that he often pointed to geographical locations that belong to various tribes (see 1 Chr. 4:10, 11-23; 5:23; 6:54-81; 7:28-29; 8:1-7; 8:8-13; 9:1-2; 2 Chr. 31:1b).

After the exile it was easy to settle for small results. Few exiles had returned; few districts of the land had returned to the appropriate tribes. The Chronicler insisted, however, that the blessings of God awaited his readers as they devoted themselves to the goal of re-establishing all the tribes of Israel to their rightful place in the land of promise.

Contemporary Christian Readers

The ideal of 'all Israel' anticipates a number of motifs that run throughout the New Testament. The inauguration of Christ's Kingdom was characterized by an inclusive focus. Jesus was emphatic in ministering to the rich (Matt. 27:57) and poor (Matt. 11:5), the religious and profane (Luke 7:36-38), the noble (John 4:46) and the despised (Luke 5:27; 17:12). From the announcement of the Kingdom to poor shepherds (Luke 2:8, 9) to Christ's ministry to women and children (Luke 8:1-3; 23:55-56), the Kingdom of God included all of God's covenant people.

Jesus also expected the continuation of his Kingdom in the Church to emphasize the inclusiveness of the New Covenant. As Paul insisted, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). In a similar vein, James forbade any favoritism leading to discrimination in the Church (James 2:1-7).

The totality of God's people comes into focus throughout John's Revelation (see Rev. 19:6, 7; 21:3, 24). The Chronicler's desire that 'all Israel' constitute the restored Kingdom in his day will be fully realized when Christ returns.

2) Northern Israel

Original Israelite Readers

Chronicles gives special attention to the place of northern Israelites in the post-exilic community. The situation of the northern tribes was complex in the Chronicler's day. Most people from these tribes remained outside the land where the Assyrians had exiled them. Some Northerners had stayed in their traditional territories, but were mixed with exiles from other nations (see 2 Kgs. 17). Moreover, on

several occasions in Judah's history, groups of Northerners joined themselves to Judah. Some descendants of these defectors had returned from the Babylonian exile with the first returnees (1 Chr. 9:3-9).

The book of Chronicles offers a balanced assessment on this complex situation. On the one hand, it strongly favors the political and religious structures of the South over those of the North. This loyalty to Judah becomes apparent by comparing the record of Kings and Chronicles. The Chronicler omitted large portions of Kings that dealt exclusively with events in the North. With one exception (2 Chr. 13:1 // 1 Kgs. 15:1-2), he omitted all North-South synchronizations from the book of Kings (see Asa, 2 Chr. 14:2 // 1 Kgs. 15:9; Jehoshaphat, 2 Chr. 17:1 // 1 Kgs. 22:41; Jehoram, 2 Chr. 21:4-5 // 2 Kgs. 8:16; Ahaziah, 2 Chr. 22:1 // 2 Kgs. 8:25; Joash, 2 Chr. 24:1 // 2 Kgs. 12:1; Amaziah, 2 Chr. 25:1 // 2 Kgs. 14:1; Jotham, 2 Chr. 27:1 // 2 Kgs. 15:32; Ahaz, 2 Chr. 28:1 // 2 Kgs. 16:1; Hezekiah, 2 Chr. 29:1 // 2 Kgs. 18:1). This nearly exclusive focus on events in Judah reveals that the institutions and peoples of the South were the heart of the Kingdom of God.

Along these same lines, the Chronicler asserted a strongly negative assessment of certain aspects of life in the North. This outlook appears in a number of ways.

1) Although the Chronicler acknowledged the legitimacy of Israel's initial political separation from Judah (2 Chr. 10:1-11:4), he strongly condemned northern worship practices and other forms of wickedness (2 Chr. 13:4-12; 19:2; 21:6, 12-15; 22:3; 22:10-23:21; 24:7; 25:7; 30:6-9).

2) The book makes it very plain that Judah was not to make political alliances with the wicked from northern Israel. To form such agreements was to reject reliance on God (2 Chr. 19:1-2; 20:35-37; 21:5, 6, 12-15; 22:3-6; 25:7-10).

3) On several occasions, the Chronicler lamented that Judahite kings behaved like Israelite kings (2 Chr. 21:6, 13; 22:4; 28:2-4). These comparisons also indicate a largely negative assessment of the North.

4) 2 Chr. 21:4-24:27 focuses on the corrupting influence of the North on Judah. This period was characterized by

waywardness and the source of this trouble was too much involvement with northern Israel.

On the other hand, however, the Chronicler also sought to broaden the vision of his post-exilic readers to include the tribes of the North among the people of God. This emphasis becomes apparent in a number of ways.

1) Northern tribes appear in the opening genealogies and lists (1 Chr. 4:24–5:26; 7:1-40; 9:3).

2) At least twenty-three times the Chronicler's inclusive terminology 'all Israel' refers to the northern tribes.

3) The Chronicler noted that the division of Israel was by divine design (2 Chr. 11:1-4).

4) He reported approvingly several times that the faithful in the North defected to the southern kingdom (2 Chr. 11:17; 15:4, 8; 30:11, 18, 21).

5) He once contrasted the North and South by pointing out that the Northerners obeyed God's prophet when Judah was in rebellion against God (2 Chr. 28:6-15).

6) Similarly, the Chronicler equated the moral conditions of Judah and Israel in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29:8-9). By this means, he indicated that Judah was not inherently superior to the North.

7) The exemplary religious reforms of three Judahite kings extended into the northern territories (2 Chr. 19:4; 31:1; 34:6-7) and the Chronicler condemned Asa's failure to reform the North (2 Chr. 15:17). These events pointed out that post-exilic Judahites should be concerned with religious reforms in the North.

8) The Chronicler also highlighted Hezekiah's symbolic reunion of the North and South at his Passover celebration (2 Chr. 30:1–31:1). His extraordinary patience toward the Israelites modeled the kind of actions the Chronicler's post-exilic readers were to exhibit toward their northern neighbors.

Contemporary Christian Readers

The outlook of Chronicles toward Northern Israel is confirmed for the Christian community in the teachings of the New Testament. Jesus inaugurated his Kingdom by ministering not



only to Jerusalem (Luke 19:28), but to the Northern Israelites in Nazareth (Luke 4:16), Galilee (Luke 4:14), and Samaria (John 4:1-42). His commission to his apostles specifically mentioned Samaria (Acts 1:8). Moreover, descendants of northern Israel were among the 'Jews from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:5) who were present at Pentecost.

In many respects, the Chronicler's emphasis on Northern Israel parallels Paul's insistence that every part of the body of Christ is essential to the edification of the Church (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Just as the post-exilic community needed true believers from the North, the Christian Church needs every part of the covenant community to be active and contributing to the work of the Kingdom today.

The inclusion of the northern tribes also appears in the consummation. At the end of this world, the Kingdom of Christ will include '144,000 from all the tribes of Israel' (Rev. 7:4). The Chronicler's desire for the return of the northern tribes will be fulfilled when the names of all twelve tribes are placed on the gates of New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12). Every tribe will be represented in the consummation.

3) *International Relations*

Original Israelite Readers

In an attempt to define the people of God even further, the Chronicler also focused on relations between Israel and other nations. During the early post-exilic period, practical political realities forced the struggling community in Judah to deal with other nations (see for instance Ezra 3:7; Neh. 2:1-10). Questions as to the extent and nature of this involvement were of great importance. Chronicles touches on these matters in two important ways.

First, the book exhibits an openness toward foreigners to demonstrate that the post-exilic community should not entirely isolate itself from other nations.

1) The opening genealogies and lists include non-Israelites among the people of God. Kenites held a rightful place within the tribe of Judah (1 Chr. 2:55). Similarly, there may be Ishmaelite names in the records of Simeon (1 Chr. 4:25).



Foreigners assisting the Levites were known as 'temple servants' (see Num. 31:30; Ezra 8:20); they were among those who first returned from exile (1 Chr. 9:1-34).

2) In much the same way, the Chronicler indicated that his ideal kings, David and Solomon, had economic ties with foreigners. David employed Hiram and foreign masons (1 Chr. 22:2). Solomon had many economic interactions with foreign nations (2 Chr. 8:17-9:26).

3) Beyond this, the Chronicler noted that foreigners were not to be excluded from Israel's religious life. For instance, he repeated material from Kings in which Solomon prayed that foreigners who come to the temple may know the God of Israel (2 Chr. 6:32-33). The amazement of the Queen of Sheba accordingly appears in his history as well (2 Chr. 9:1-12). In these ways, Chronicles displays a very positive outlook on foreign nations; total isolation was not an option for the restored community.

Second, a strong warning balanced these positive outlooks. On several occasions, the Chronicler insisted that Israel should never join in alliances with other nations. To do so was to turn from dependence on God. Dire consequences always followed for those who relied on foreign powers (2 Chr. 16:1-9; 28:16-21). The Chronicler believed that fidelity to God implied an exclusive reliance on him instead of other nations. In line with this belief, Chronicles adds that David did not help the Philistines when he was in their company (1 Chr. 12:19). Moreover, he demonstrated that only trusting in God caused the foreign nations to fear and to cease aggression against God's people (1 Chr. 14:17; 2 Chr. 9:1-12; 17:10; 20:29; 26:8). These passages reminded the post-exilic community to avoid relying on foreign human powers to sustain their newly restored nation; only divine power could secure the Kingdom.

Contemporary Christian Readers

The New Testament portrait of the Kingdom of God shares dual emphasis of openness and caution toward those outside of the covenant community. The faith of the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-13) and the fidelity of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) exemplify this outward focus. Jesus even

rebuked apostate Jews by warning them that people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba will judge them (Matt. 12:39-45). At the same time, however, Jesus warned against the evil influences of Gentile religions (Matt. 6:7).

Paul described the continuation of the Kingdom in terms of reaching foreign nations with the gospel (Acts 14:1, 8; 17:12, 34; 28:31). Paul was quick, however, to condemn any relationship with unbelievers that leads believers into apostasy (2 Cor. 6:14).

The themes of inclusion and separation find their greatest expression in the consummation of Christ's Kingdom. The final stage of the Kingdom will be a gathering of believers from all the nations of the earth. At that time, however, the wicked of all nations will be separated from the righteous and will suffer the eternal judgment of God (Rev. 21:24, 26).

4-9) The King and Temple

Israel's prophets also declared that the end of the exile would entail the restoration of the throne and temple of Jerusalem. Without these institutions, the restoration would certainly fail. For this reason, the institutions of David's throne and the temple in Jerusalem form the Chronicler's second major theological concern. In the Chronicler's view these political and religious structures formed a two sided institutional center for the restored community. We will summarize his outlook by drawing attention to six motifs: 4) *Royal and Levitical Families*, 5) *Religious Assemblies*, 6) *Royal Observance of Worship*, 7) *Divine Kingship*, 8) *Music*, and 9) *Temple Contributions*.

4) Royal and Levitical Families

Original Israelite Readers

The Chronicler's dual concern with Judah's throne and temple becomes evident in the detailed attention he gave to identifying the members of royal and Levitical families. His history reveals that God established specific families to fill these services.

1) The genealogies give more attention to David's lineage (1 Chr. 2:10-17; 3:1-24) and the families of the priests and Levites (1 Chr. 6:1-81) than to any other matters.

2) David's permanent dynasty over the nation (1 Chr. 17; 2 Chr. 13:5; 21:7; 23:3b) is described as a benefit, not a burden for Israel (1 Chr. 11:4-8, 10-11a, 18-19; 14:2; 18:14; 22:18; 2 Chr. 2:11; 7:10; 9:8).

3) The specific duties of particular priestly and Levitical families appear in a number of passages (1 Chr. 15:2; 23:28; 26:20; 2 Chr. 19:8, 23:7; 30:27; 31:2; 34:13). At times the instructions are very detailed, even specifying the ages of Levites who served (1 Chr. 23:3-5). These Levitical arrangements were to be observed in the post-exilic community (see 1 Chr. 6:48-53; 9:10-13; 16:39-42; 23:13; 29:22; 2 Chr. 29:34; 34:10).

These motifs spoke directly to concerns that troubled the post-exilic community. Judah's royal family bore a heavy responsibility for the destruction of Judah and the exile of her citizens (e.g. 2 Kgs. 21:10-15; 23:31-25:26). For this reason, at least some returnees must have wondered what role the family of David should play in their day. The Chronicler's focus on David's lineage asserted that David's sons belonged on Jerusalem's throne.

Moreover, disarray among the priests and Levites raised another important issue for the post-exilic community. When the Zadokite priest Joshua returned from Babylon to bring reforms to Levitical arrangements, other Levitical families did not immediately accept his leadership. The Chronicler, however, confirmed the teachings of other prophets by insisting on Zadokite leadership (see Ezek. 40:46; 44:10-16; 48:11; Zech 1-4). In this way, the Chronicler's focus on the priests and Levites had many practical implications for his readers.

Contemporary Christian Readers

The New Testament shares this concern with royal and priestly offices. In the first place, it plainly teaches that both of these offices are fulfilled in Christ.

Countless passages indicate that Jesus was the King of Israel (Matt. 2:2; 27:11; Luke 23:38; John 1:49; 12:13; 18:37; Rev. 17:14). He was acknowledged at his birth as the rightful heir of David's throne (e.g. Matt. 2:2). Beyond this, Christ continues to reign as King while he subdues his enemies and rules his people

through his Word and Spirit (1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 10:12-13). Moreover, at the consummation of the Kingdom every knee will bow to Christ's royal dominion and all people will submit to him (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11). The enemies of the divine King will be punished forever and the followers of the King raised to glory (Rev. 7:14-17; 20:7-15).

Christ's ministry as priest also began at the inauguration of the Kingdom. Belonging to 'the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 5:6), Christ endured the sufferings of this world without sin and graciously sacrificed himself on behalf of his people (Heb. 4:15). Moreover, Christ's priestly role continues throughout our time. He intercedes before the Father on behalf of the redeemed, looking after their interests and pleading their case (Heb. 4:14). Christ remains our advocate and representative before the Father (1 John 2:1). Moreover, priestly images of Christ also appear in association with the consummation. Christ is portrayed as the sacrificial lamb who stands at the center of the celestial throne room (Rev. 7:17). Christ will be exalted as our high priest throughout eternity (Heb. 7:3).

In a secondary way, the New Testament also applies the royal and priestly offices to all believers. As those who are in Christ we have been joined to his resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14). For this reason, we will reign with Christ when he returns (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:5). Moreover, we serve as priests today as well (Rev. 1:6). The body of Christ fulfills the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24). We also form a spiritual temple for sacrifice (1 Pet. 2:1-5). The Church has become 'a royal priesthood' (1 Pet. 2:9). In these ways, the Chronicler's focus on kingship and priesthood not only applies to Christ himself, but to all believers as they are joined to Christ by faith.

5) Religious Assemblies

Original Israelite Readers

The Chronicler's focus on kingship and temple also comes to the foreground in his attention to religious gatherings called by Israel's monarchs. Usually he identified these events by the terminology of 'assemble' or 'assembly' (1 Chr. 13:2, 4-5; 15:3; 28:1, 8; 29:1, 10, 20; 2 Chr. 1:3, 5; 6:3, 12-13; 7:8-9; 20:5, 14,

26; 23:3; 24:6; 28:14; 29:23, 28, 31-32; 30:2, 4, 13, 23-25; 31:18). The NIV occasionally translates related Hebrew expressions as 'summoned' (2 Chr. 5:2), 'came together' (2 Chr. 5:3), 'mustered' (2 Chr. 11:1) and 'community' (2 Chr. 31:18).

The Chronicler stressed religious assemblies as examples of mutual support between the king and temple. A number of assemblies served this function in the United Kingdom.

1) David's assembly to bring the ark into Jerusalem was a model for post-exilic worship reforms (1 Chr. 13:2, 4-5; 15:3).

2) David called assemblies to encourage devotion to the temple (1 Chr. 28:1, 8; 29:1, 10, 20). The Chronicler's readers were to do the same.

3) Solomon received wisdom as Israel's temple builder at an assembly; this event exalted Solomon's construction efforts as an ideal to be imitated (2 Chr. 1:3, 5).

4) The assembly at Solomon's temple dedication spoke explicitly of the importance of the temple in Israel's future (2 Chr. 5:2-3; 6:3, 12-13; 7:8-9).

During the Divided Kingdom a number of religious assemblies took place.

1) Rehoboam halted his unjustified attack on Israel in an assembly (2 Chr. 11:1-4).

2) Jehoshaphat responded to a serious military threat by calling for an assembly (2 Chr. 20:5, 14, 26). This exemplary gathering in worship led to great victory.

3) In addition, the importance of assemblies at the temple is evident in the reign of Joash. His national covenant renewal took place in an assembly (2 Chr. 23:3). Similarly, the exemplary account of Joash's reforms involved an assembly as well (2 Chr. 24:6).

The Reunited Kingdom also demonstrated the Chronicler's concern with religious assemblies by stressing worship events during Hezekiah's reign. The theme of assembly appears no less than eleven times in his largely positive record of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29:23, 28, 31-32; 30:2, 4, 13, 23-25; 31:18). These accounts were designed to inspire the Chronicler's post-exilic readers to emulate Hezekiah's assemblies.

Contemporary Christian Readers

The Chronicler's concern with religious assemblies finds fulfillment in Christ and his Kingdom. Jesus came to earth to build his Church, a sanctified assembly belonging to God (Matt. 16:18). The apostles and prophets of the New Testament age form the foundation of the church for all time (Eph. 2:20).

The New Testament also calls for God's people to assemble with their King throughout the continuation of the Kingdom. Jesus said that he would be present whenever two or three are gathered in his Name (Matt. 18:20). God's people are called to fellowship by gathering as the church (Acts 14:27; 1 John 1:3). Assemblies of Christians are to devote themselves to worship and prayer, singing and giving thanks to the Lord (Eph. 5:19-20). Such assemblies are not to be forsaken (Heb. 10:25).

Religious assemblies in our times are but foretastes of our eternal gathering to God. The consummation of the Kingdom is described in terms of all believers joining countless angels in joyful heavenly assembly (Heb. 12:22). The return of Christ will mark the final call to worship as people from all ages are assembled in praise and adoration for their King (Rev. 21:1-4).

*6) Royal Observance of Worship**Original Israelite Readers*

The Chronicler also pointed to the centrality of David's throne and the temple by frequently noting how honorable kings of Judah devoted themselves to proper observance of temple worship. These notices appear in at least five different ways.

First, the strikingly positive record of David and Solomon draws attention to their exemplary devotion to the temple and its worship. Out of twenty-one chapters devoted to David, seventeen concentrate on his preparations for Solomon's temple (1 Chr. 13-29). In fact, the largest uninterrupted addition the Chronicler made to David's reign is exclusively concerned with his efforts on behalf of temple worship (1 Chr. 22-29).

Similarly, Solomon's principal activity in Chronicles was the construction of the temple (2 Chr. 2–8).

Second, in the Divided and Reunited Kingdom the Chronicler focused on the extensive renovations and reforms of worship. Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 17:3–6; 19:11), Asa (2 Chr. 15:8–15), Joash (2 Chr. 24:4–11), Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29:1–31:1), Manasseh (2 Chr. 33:16–17) and Josiah (2 Chr. 34:3b–35:19) are honored for their extensive worship reforms.

Third, to stress the importance of devotion to proper temple worship the Chronicler highlighted the numbers of sacrifices and offerings which honorable kings made (see 2 Chr. 1:6; 5:6; 7:4–5; 24:14; 29:32–35; 35:8–9). In each case, his intention was to convey that righteous kings enthusiastically supported the temple and its services.

Fourth, the Chronicler drew attention to the ways in which such kings often acknowledged the sanctity of the temple. This motif appears powerfully on many occasions in which kings insisted that temple personnel and the people consecrate themselves before approaching the temple (see 1 Chr. 15:4, 12, 14; 23:13; 29:5; 2 Chr. 5:11; 7:7, 16, 20; 23:6; 26:18; 29:5, 18, 19, 33, 34; 30:2, 3, 14, 17, 24; 35:3, 6).

Fifth, Chronicles also notes the failure of some kings to give proper attention to temple worship. Two kings were not consistent in maintaining their reforms (2 Chr. 15:17; 20:33). Three kings actually built high places to other gods (2 Chr. 21:11; 28:4; 33:3). Beyond this, some kings defiled the temple (e.g. 2 Chr. 16:2) and its services (2 Chr. 26:16–21). The Chronicler condemned these actions in the strongest terms.

These aspects of Chronicles spoke directly to the needs of post-exilic Judah. In the early years of return from Babylon much work had to be done to rebuild the temple. After that task was completed, the worship practices of the post-exilic temple were still in need of reform. The reforms of Judah's kings in the past indicated not only the importance of the temple, but also stressed that proper temple worship was one of the chief responsibilities of the house of David in every age.