



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

1 & 2 Chronicles

1 Chronicles 1-9

Restoration

The over arching concern of the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles is restoration. The northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah had fallen to exile because of rebellion. With the sacking of Jerusalem in 586 BC, the temple was destroyed and the Davidic monarchy was taken into captivity in Babylon.

The Babylonian Empire fell to the Persian Empire in 538 BC. Under the Persian king Cyrus, many of the captive peoples were allowed to return to their homelands and rebuild their cities. Many of the people of Judah and Israel were allowed to return home.

The writer of Chronicles (who some believe to be the scribe Ezra) was careful to document not only the causes of exile, but also hold out tremendous hope for Israel with the reestablishment of the Davidic covenant. The Davidic monarchy and the temple are the institutional representations of Yahweh's kingdom in Israel. For this reason, the focus in the book is primarily on the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Events and Dates covered in 1 & 2 Chronicles:

Events	Dates	Passages
Establishment of the Davidic Monarchy	c. 1010 - 931 BC	1 Chronicles 10 - 2 Chronicles 9
History of Judah from the division of the Kingdom until its fall	931-586	2 Chronicles 10 - 36:21
Exile in Babylonian Captivity	586 - 538	2 Chronicles 36:17-21
Cyrus decree	538	2 Chronicles 36:22-23

The focus in 1 & 2 Chronicles is on reestablishing the genealogical and institutional ties of a restored people in the land. The original blessings and blueprint from God in the land of promise can be traced back to Noah, Abraham, Israel (Jacob), Moses and David. If the people of God will learn the lessons of the past they will build a better future. Reestablishing the temple worship and the Davidic monarchy is priority one for a restored people of God.



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Structure

The Structure of 1 & 2 Chronicles can be divided into three main parts:

Section	Passages
Genealogy of the Tribes of Israel	1 Chronicles 1-9
United Kingdom: David and Solomon	1 Chronicles 10 - 2 Chronicles 9
The Kingdom of Judah to the Exile	2 Chronicles 10-36

The genealogical section grounds the returning Israelites in their identity as children of Abraham and their heritage as the twelve tribes. The United Kingdom section focuses on the Davidic monarchy and the building of the Temple. The final section recounts the history of the Southern Kingdom with an emphasis on evaluating the monarchy and the people's response in terms of "seeking God" or "forsaking God". To "seek God" means to walk in his commandments, to oppose idolatry, and to center worship at the Temple. To forsake him includes apostasy in the form of idolatry, neglect of the temple, disregard for the word of the prophets and violence.

Genealogy of the Tribes of Israel

The genealogy serves an important role of establishing ethnic and national identity in Abraham, Israel, Moses and David. The importance of tracing one's lineage to the tribes has implications for vocation, property rights, legitimacy among other things. The risk in exile is disconnection and loss of connection to the promises to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) but also the unique and specific kingly role given to the line of Judah through David and the priestly role given to the Levites.



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I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, 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 to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'"

2 Samuel 7:12-16

A Genealogy of the Tribes of Israel -- 1 Chronicles 1-9

Adam to Esau 1:1-54

The Sons of Israel 2:1-2

The Tribe of Judah 2:3-4:23

The Tribe of Simeon 4:24-43

The Transjordan Tribes 5:1-26

The Tribe of Levi 6:1-81

Other Northern Tribes 7:1-40

The Tribe of Benjamin 8:1-40

The Resettlement of Jerusalem 9:1-34

The Genealogy of Saul 9:35-44

The clear emphasis is on Judah, Benjamin, Simeon and Levites. These four tribes form the nucleus of a restored Southern Kingdom centered on the monarchy in David from Judah and the spiritual administration of Temple worship through the Levites. The inclusion of the other tribes underscores that the Chronicler is not uninterested in the Northern tribes or lacks a vision for the restoration of ALL Israel. However the first priority and emphasis is on restoring the capital city of Jerusalem and the administration of the Monarchy and Temple.

Clearly the author emphasizes David's line as the centerpiece of the tribe of Judah (2:3-4:23). But he also highlights key figures such as Achan, the troubler of Israel who "broke faith in the matter of the devoted thing". This will be a key theme for the Chronicler which is introduced here.

The list of the descendants of David appears to extend to Chroniclers day preserving a record of hope for Messianic fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7 in the Davidic covenant.



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Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.

--1 Chronicles 4:10

Immediately following the genealogy of David, the author highlights the genealogy of the tabernacle builder, Bazalel. The Davidic Monarchy and the Temple construction are central themes.

The Prayer of Jabez is a model prayer for a returning people who have been given their land back. From the tribe of Judah, God will bless and enlarge the territory of Israel, if they will "call upon God"

Simeon is given prominence in the genealogy (4:24-43) as their tribe was in the midst of the people of Judah (See Joshua 19:1). They had largely been integrated into the tribe of Judah, yet they had maintained their tribal identity through genealogical record keeping. (4:33) The Chronicler also highlights their faithful conquest of those 'devoted to destruction' from the time of Joshua.

The brief mention of descendants of Northern tribes serves to highlight both the faithfulness in "trusting" God (5:20) in the example of the Gadites and the consequences of those who "broke faith with God" in the negative example of the half-tribe of Manassah (5:25).

The descendants of Levi receive a considerable emphasis. The narrative highlights the Levitical role in Temple worship (6:31-32). The Levites will play a critical role in the rebuilding of the Temple and the reconstitution of right worship of YHWH.

These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD after the ark rested there. ³² They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting until Solomon built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they performed their service according to their order. 1 Chr. 6:31-32

The brief section highlighting the other Northern tribes serves to underscore a larger vision of a completely restored Israel. However, the key concern is clearly on Judah and the Levites. Without the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple there can be no Kingdom of God. The Kingdom will thrive under the Messianic promises to David.