



1 Chronicles

1 and 2 Chronicles tell the story of the Kings of Israel, from the reign of Solomon to the end of the exile in 538 bc. There is a lot of overlap in storyline between Chronicles and 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, though the style of writing is very different. 1 Chronicles begins with nine chapters of genealogies tracing the ancestry of those returning from exile back to David and even as far back as Adam. The 'story' of 1 Chronicles begins with the death of Saul and focusses almost entirely on David's reign, which it presents in even more glowing terms than 2 Samuel does.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 2 hours
Short of time? Just read 10.1-14; 13.1-16.43;



Genre

Theological History



Inspiring quotes

There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

(1 Chronicles 17.20)

The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people; and he resides in Jerusalem forever.

(1 Chronicles 23.25)



Anything tricky?

The genealogies which, in Chronicles, are designed to be encouraging and reassuring to those returning from Israel are to us, boring and hard to read. Think of them as someone's family

tree, important to them but not necessarily interesting to anyone not in the family. Do feel free to skip over them if you find them dull.



About the Author

Jewish tradition states that Ezra wrote all of 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

More recent explorations of the books, however, have concluded that it is more complex than that. All four books seem to have been collected together from a wide variety of sources. If you look carefully while you read, you might be able to notice some of the joins in the text.

What do we know about him?

We know very little about which people finally put all the strands together in these four books; although it does seem as though they had 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings in front of them as they wrote.

The traditional author – Ezra – was a scribe and a priest and is credited with bringing the Torah back to Judah after the exile. Some people have even pointed to Ezra as being influential in bringing the five books of the Torah together in the form they have now.



About the times

This was a tumultuous time in Judah's history. The King and nearly everyone influential from the land had been taken away into exile in Babylon between first around 598 and then again around 586 bc. In 538 bc King Cyrus decreed that everyone could go home. The problem was that they had been away for around 60 years – most of the people 'returning' had never lived there in the first place.

What were people feeling?

The challenges of the return from exile made identity a key question in this period. What did it mean to be the people of God and what did they need to rebuild in order for them to be able to be God's people once more?

Other books set around this time

2 Samuel, 1 Kings



How is it structured?

1.1-9.44	Genealogies
10.1-14	The demise of Saul
11.1-12.40	David becomes the King of Israel
13.1-17.27	David brings the ark to Jerusalem and God promises that his dynasty will continue
18.1-20.8	The wars that David fought and won
21.1-29.30	David prepares for the building of the Temple



What kind of Book is it?

This is a history book but it falls into the category of what you might call theological history – history with a purpose. It is not telling the events solely so that you can know what happened but so that you can understand why they happened. Many of the

historical books of the Bible are like this.

The particular interest of 1 and 2 Chronicles is worship – and how to reconstruct the worship of the Temple after the people returned from Exile.



Look out for...

The key theme in 1 Chronicles is the worship of God and how best to do it. Look out for the theme of worship as you read.

There are a lot of speeches in 1 Chronicles. Each one of them is important as they reveal significant theological themes. Make sure you notice the keys themes as you read.

Some people say that David is idealized in 1 Chronicles – see what you think as you read.



What could this mean for me?

There are a lot of prophets and their speeches in 1 Chronicles. Reflect on what you think prophecy is in 1 Chronicles and why it is so important.



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- Talk about the David you read about in 1 Chronicles. Were you convinced by the account of him in this book?
- In 1 Chronicles, the author rewrote a lot of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings. Why do you think he did this, and why do you think both versions were kept in the Bible?
- Some people think that 1 Chronicles offers hope for the future to the exiles; they argue that the stories about David hold out a vision of a Messiah who would come to save them. Having read the book do you agree?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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