



2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles picks up the story from the end of 1 Chronicles. Chapters 1-9 complete the telling of the stories of David and Solomon and, in particular, the telling of the story of the building of the temple. The next chapters (10-28) describe what happened when the two nations, North (Israel) and South (Judah), split apart and became independent from each other. In contrast to 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles focuses almost entirely on Judah, only mentioning Israel when its events intersect directly with Judah. The final chapters of the book tell of the reign of the Kings from Hezekiah onwards, after the destruction of Israel, the northern kingdom, and until the exile of Judah to Babylon. The book ends with the proclamation of Cyrus, King of Persia, which ended the exile and allowed the people to return home.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 2 ½ hours
Short of time? Just read 2.1-18; 8.1-16;
 10.1-12.16; 29.1-32.33; 36.2-23



Genre

Theological History



Anything tricky?

Most 'historical' books in the Old Testament tell their history in order to make a theological point but 2 Chronicles does this even more than the rest, raising the question of how historical it really is.



Inspiring quotes

¹¹ God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, ¹² wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like."

(2 Chronicles 1:11-12)

²¹ When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy splendor, as they went before the army, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."

(2 Chronicles 20:21)



About the Author

Jewish tradition states that Ezra wrote all of 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as 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. Though 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 around 598 and then again around 586 bc. In 538 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

1 and 2 Kings



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.



How is it structured?

- 1.1-9.31 The United Monarchy under Solomon
- 10.1-28.27 The Divided Monarchy with concentration on what happened in Judah
- 29.1-36.23 The fate of Judah after the fall of Israel and until the time of the exile



Look out for...

2 Kings told the land as an explanation of why the exile had happened; 2 Chronicles tells it to remind people of how to live and worship God together once they had returned for exile. Look out for this theme as you read.

There are a lot of speeches in 2 Chronicles. Each one of them is important as they reveal significant theological themes. Make sure you notice the keys themes as you read.

As in 1 Chronicles the main theme is worshipping God, notice how the author talks about this as you read through the book.



What could this mean for me?

Just as the best side of David was presented in 1 Chronicles so the best side of Solomon was presented in 2 Chronicles. Reflect on whether just knowing the good things about someone helps or hinders your view of them.



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 what you think a 'good history' is. Do you think that history told with an intention to communicate a point (as 2 Chronicles clearly does) is good history?
- 2 Chronicles returns time and time again to the importance of worshipping God, why do you think this was so important in the telling of this story?
- 2 Chronicles is telling history as a means of giving people hope for the future. Should we do more of this today with our own history?
- 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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