

2 Chronicles

The book of Second Chronicles parallels First and Second Kings but virtually ignores the northern kingdom of Israel because of its false worship and refusal to acknowledge the temple in Jerusalem. Chronicles focuses on those kings who pattern their life and reign after that of godly king David. It gives extended treatment to such zealous reformers as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The temple and temple worship are central throughout the book and serve as a reminder that worship of God is central to the nations very survival. The book begins with Solomon's glorious temple and concludes with Cyrus' edict to rebuild the temple more than four hundred years later!

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Second Chronicles provides a topical history of the end of the united kingdom (Solomon) and the kingdom of Judah. Chronicles is more than an historical record; it is a divine editorial on the spiritual characteristics of the Davidic dynasty. Therefore, it focuses on the southern rather than the northern kingdom. Most of the kings failed to realize that apart from its true mission as a covenant nation called to bring others to Yahweh, Judah had no calling, no destiny, and no hope of becoming great on its own. Only what was done in accordance with God's will had any lasting value. Chronicles concentrates on the kings who were concerned with maintaining the proper service of God and the times of spiritual reform. But growing apostasy inevitably led to judgment.

The books of First and Second Chronicles were originally one continuous work in the Hebrew. The title was *Dibere Hayyamim*, meaning "The Words (accounts, events) of the Days." The equivalent meaning today would be "The Events of the Times." Chronicles was divided into two parts in the third century b.c. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint). At that time, it was given the name *Paraleipomenon*, "Of Things Omitted," referring to the things omitted from Samuel and Kings.

AUTHOR

Although the text does not identify the author, several facts seem to support the tradition in the Jewish Talmud that Ezra the priest was the author. The content points to a priestly authorship because of the emphasis on the temple, the priesthood, and the theocratic line of David in the southern kingdom of Judah. The narrative also indicates that Chronicles was at least written by a contemporary of Ezra. Chronicles is quite similar in style to the Book of Ezra, and both share a priestly perspective: genealogies, temple worship, ministry of the priesthood, and obedience to the law of God. In addition, the closing verses of Second Chronicles (36:22-23) are repeated with minor changes as the opening verses of Ezra (1:1-3). Thus, Chronicles and Ezra may have been one consecutive history as were Luke and Acts.

Ezra was an educated scribe (Ezra 7:6), and according to other historical writings, Nehemiah collected an extensive library which was available to Ezra for his use in compiling Chronicles. Scholars of Israel accumulated and compared historical material, and the author of Chronicles was a compiler who drew from many sources under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

DATE & SETTING

Chapters 1-9 cover the 40 years from 971-931 b.c., and chapters 10-36 cover the 393 years from 931-538 b.c.

Ezra probably completed Chronicles between 450 and 430 b.c. and addressed it to the returned Remnant. Ezra leads some of the exiles to Jerusalem in 457 b.c. and ministers to the people as their spiritual leader. During Ezra's time, Nehemiah is the political leader and Malachi is the moral leader. Chronicles spends a disproportionate time on the reigns of David and Solomon because they bring the nation to its pinnacle. The book is written to remind the Jews of their spiritual heritage and identity during the difficult times they were facing.