

Book of 2 Chronicles

See 1 Chronicles for more info on the introduction page there.

“Title”:

The Book of 2 Chronicles was originally one book with 1 Chronicles in the Hebrew text.

They were divided by the translators of the Septuagint and were entitled “Things Left Behind” (i.e., details not included in Samuel and Kings).

he Hebrew title, “Daily Matters” like the English title, implies an important and detailed narrative account.

Written by the priests of Israel, the books of Chronicles view Israel’s religious institutions, the temple, priesthood, offerings and feasts, as the essential elements of her national life.

“Authorship”:

Many believe that Ezra, a Levitical priest and teacher, answered those questions by writing 1 and 2 Chronicles as a history of the monarchy for the returning exiles.

The case for Ezra’s authorship is well established in Jewish tradition.

He was of priestly descent and Levitical training, as well as being the spiritual leader of the new state of Judah after the return from Babylonian captivity.

Thus, he would have had access to the records of state and other official documents (compare 16:11; 20:34; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32; 35:27; 36:8; see also the note on 1 Chronicles 29:29).

Critical arguments for a third century B.C. date are totally unwarranted.

Besides, the need for such a book to establish national credibility was much more crucial for Ezra’s community than for the Hasmonean leaders in the second century B.C.

“Historical Setting”:

The individual reigns of the descendants of David are featured, from the time of Solomon until the fall of Jerusalem under Zedekiah (in 586 B.C.).

A concluding note concerning the edict of Cyrus the Great permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem is added at the end.

Throughout 1 and 2 Chronicles the emphasis is strictly on the southern kingdom of Judah, whose fortunes are viewed in light of her faithfulness to God's commandments and the institutions of Israel's religious faith.

The political fate of Judah is also seen against the rising power of Babylon and Persia, although the book's major theme is that Judah is falling because of internal weaknesses brought about by her failure to remain faithful to God.

Returning to their homeland after 70 years of captivity, the Israelites were the very definition of an unsettled, transitioning people.

Guides might be able to lead them 900 miles to Jerusalem, but who would help them understand the implications of that journey?

Who would give them a context for what it meant to be the people of God?

The temple of the LORD in Jerusalem is a thread throughout 2 Chronicles, beginning with the construction and dedication of the first temple, built by Solomon and ending with a decree by the king of Persia to rebuild that temple after it lay desolate for 70 years.

In between these two events, 2 Chronicles records the temple's fate throughout the history of the monarchy.

“What it Says”: The terms temple, house of God, and house of the Lord occur 139 times (in 2 Chronicles), indicating what was on the author's mind as he wrote.

That concern can be summarized under six headings:

“Solomon's Temple”:

The first nine chapters are about Solomon.

His accession to power over the united nation proved God's promise to establish David's throne with great blessing.

But six of those chapters pertain to Solomon's greatest and most important achievement, building a “house” for the LORD in Jerusalem.

The earthly dwelling place of God.

Nothing symbolized God's presence among His people more than the temple (chapters 1-9).

“Hezekiah’s Rule”:

After the kingdom divided, all the rulers of the northern kingdom (Israel), and most in the southern kingdom (Judah), defied the LORD's commands.

The worship of God in the temple was compromised, and the temple fell into disrepair.

The eleventh king of Judah, Hezekiah, repaired and purified the temple and reinstated worship in Jerusalem according to the instructions given by God through Moses (chapters 29-32).

“Josiah’s Rule”:

The two kings who followed Hezekiah, Manasseh and Amon, allowed Judah to lapse into idolatrous worship again.

But when Josiah became king, he destroyed the idols, repaired the temple again, and led the people to a renewed devotion to the covenant and to God (chapters 34:1 – 36:1).

“Desecration and Destruction of the Temple”:

The three kings who followed Josiah allowed the temple to again be desecrated (36:14).

God sent the Babylonian armies to destroy Jerusalem and burn its temple during the reign of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah.

“Decree to Rebuild the Temple”:

After 70 years in Babylon, which became the Persian kingdom, God moved the Persian king Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the temple (36:23).

As much as the destruction of the temple was a sign of God's absence among His people, so the decree to rebuild it was a sign of His enduring care for His people.

“What it Means”:

The destruction of the temple was a devastating consequence of Israel's sin.

But the hope and challenge of 2 Chronicles is that despite the pervasiveness of sin (6:36), repentance and restoration will win the day.

“The Temple”: Many who were taken captive probably died in Babylon, wondering what the destruction of the temple meant for the future of Israel.

Ezekiel, in Babylon with the captives, saw in a vision the glory of the LORD filling the temple again (Ezek. 43:4; 44:4).

But the temple had been left in rubble.

To rebuild it, Israel would need to repent.

The hope for rebuilding was fulfilled when Cyrus decreed the return of the Jews.

“Purity”:

Both Hezekiah and Josiah took steps to purify the temple and undertook major repairs to prepare it for proper use (chapters 29, 34).

In both cases, God's holy dwelling place had been misused and made common, a storage and living space.

“Word of God”:

God had spoken through Moses and the prophets.

He expected that His people would pay attention to His Word and obey it.

Anyone who either perpetually ignored it or stubbornly disobeyed it would reap the consequences.

Anyone who listened and obeyed would find blessing.

And those who disobeyed but repented would know God's deliverance and restoration (as did Manasseh in chapter 33).

“What it Means for You”:

God no longer dwells in a physical temple of stone, but the New Testament says a believer’s very body and spirit are together a temple where He truly, literally, resides.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you ... you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Some estimate that Solomon’s temple cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build in today’s money.

But God purchased each of His children with the more costly and precious, priceless blood of Jesus.

Just as the Lord paid careful attention to how His people treated His temple, so He takes note of the choices we make, our priorities, and the directions we pursue.

They are no longer “our own” because we no longer belong to ourselves but wholly and completely to God.

This is the single most important truth about our lives.