

# INTRODUCTION

First and Second Chronicles were originally one book. It is the longest and last book in the Hebrew Bible. Its Greek translation (LXX) divided Chronicles into two books and placed them after Kings. The LXX titled Chronicles *παρλειπομενων* (*paraleipomenōn*) which means “the things omitted” (the things that remained). The title implies that Chronicles was written to supplement the material found in 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. The name “Chronicles,” however, comes from Jerome (d. 420) who translated the Latin Vulgate. He described 1 & 2 Chronicles as a “a chronicle of the whole of sacred history” (*Chronicon totius divinae historiae*). Thus, English Bibles use the title “1 and 2 Chronicles.”

## HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

The interpretation of Chronicles is a history of neglect (Japhet, “Chronicles,” 1:179-187; Peltonen). Chronicles’s Aramaic targum did not receive its final form till the ninth century A.D., no early midrash was ever written, and only a few medieval Jewish commentaries are known (Kalimi, “History,” 5-41). With the exception of Jerome and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Chronicles was neglected by early Christians. Chronicles was the stepchild of OT studies till the early nineteenth century.

Chronicles became the center of attention in the early nineteenth century only to move back to the periphery by the century’s end (Graham, “Utilization”). While prior to the nineteenth century the Chronicles history was accepted as reliable (with a few exceptions like Spinoza), the application of the historical-critical method attacked its credibility. In 1806 DeWette published the first critical analysis of the relationship between Samuel–Kings and Chronicles. He concluded that Chronicles was unreliable for reconstructing

preexilic Israelite history. Because Chronicles assumes Levitical priestly developments, it was important for DeWette to discredit Chronicles in the light of a late dating of the Pentateuch.

Chronicles, therefore, became the center of a controversy concerning the authorship and dating of the Pentateuch. Consequently, the nineteenth century was consumed with the deconstruction or defense of the Chronicles history. The credibility of Chronicles, according to some, was further eroded by the Graf-Wellhausen theory. In particular, when it was decided that the Priestly Code (e.g., Leviticus) was a late tradition, the Chronicler's history suffered because he used some of this priestly material in his history of Israel. Consequently, it was concluded, the Chronicler's history is late, unreliable, and biased toward the Levitical class.

However, by the early twentieth century, archaeological evidence, according to some (e.g., Albright), actually supported the Chronicler's history of Israel. As a result, scholars have moderated their complete dismissal though the discussion continues (Japhet, "Historical," 83-107).

While the interest in Chronicles was primarily historical in the first 150 years of critical study, the last 40 years (especially, 1980-90s) have witnessed a renewal in Chronicles research (Kleinig, "Research," 43-76; McKenzie, *Chronicler's*, 17-32). Instead of historical reliability, the primary concern has become the Chronicler's theological interests (e.g., Ackroyd, "History and Theology," "Theology," et al.).

The study of Chronicles has moved into a new era. While the debate over historical reliability continues, the emphasis has shifted. Scholars now seek to reconstruct the setting of the Chronicler's post-exilic community and understand his applied theological perspective. The Chronicler is not just a historian. He is also an exegete and a theologian. Standing last in the Hebrew canon, he is unique in biblical literature because he has a large portion of the OT canon before him and writes his text as historian, exegete, and theologian.

## GENERAL CONTENT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Chronicles covers the same historical period as Samuel-Kings. Consequently, we have two histories of Israel, much as we have four histories of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

While the two histories cover the same period, they write in different settings, with different purposes, and for different audiences. First–Second Kings was compiled during the Babylonian exile. Exilic questions in that time were: “Why were we exiled?” or “Did the Babylonian gods overrule Yahweh?” or “Where is God and his promises?” Dtr<sup>1</sup> focuses on the sins of Israel and Judah. David and Solomon do not escape judgment, and the whole nation is judged for its sins. Judah is in exile because it sinned. The Babylonian gods did not win, but rather God removed Judah from their homeland. Dtr explains God’s judgment.

Chronicles was written during the postexilic period, that is, after the return of the exiles from Babylon in 536 B.C. The Chronicler’s audience lived in Judah. Postexilic questions differed from exilic ones. The postexilic community asked: “Will God still dwell among his people in this new temple?” “Will God take us back as his people?” or “Will God keep his promise to David?” While the Chronicler explains the exile as a divine judgment, he stresses God’s yearning to restore his people. God will keep his promises and God will dwell among his people as in the days of Solomon. If the postexilic community will seek God, then he will dwell among them.

### COMPARISON OF HISTORIES

|                     | 1 Sam–2 Kgs                            | 1–2 Chr                                      |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Authorship          | Exilic Scribes/Prophets                | Postexilic Levites                           |
| Date of Composition | ca. 550 B.C.                           | 515–200 B.C.                                 |
| Audience            | Exilic Community                       | Restored Community                           |
| Content             | Northern and Southern Kingdoms         | Only the Southern Kingdom                    |
| History             | From Samuel through David to the Exile | From Adam through David to Restoration       |
| Question            | “Why are we here in exile?”            | “Will God remember his covenant with David?” |
| Theme               | Sin and Judgment                       | King and Temple                              |
| Point               | Punishment for Sin                     | Grace for Seekers                            |

Chronicles begins with a genealogy from Adam to Zerubbabel (1 Chr 1–9). God has preserved a people throughout history. The genealogies emphasize the royal (Judah) and priestly (Levi) lines to

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<sup>1</sup>“Dtr” refers to the unified theological perspective of Deuteronomy through Second Kings. While 1–2 Kings likely were compiled during the exile, other books in Dtr were written earlier.

ensure the continuity of the Davidic royal house and the Aaronite priesthood. The postexilic community shares in the dynastic promises to David (kingdom) and Solomon (temple).

First Chronicles 10 through 2 Chronicles 9 is the history of David and Solomon. The Chronicler does not tell us about the sins of David (except the moving of the ark and the census) and Solomon because he is not interested in their frailties. He is concerned with their role as founders of the kingdom and temple worship. He provides the postexilic community with hope based upon the Davidic promises fulfilled in the Solomonic temple.

Second Chronicles 10–36 is the history of the kings of Judah after David and Solomon. The Chronicler does not merely repeat material found in Kings (60% of Chronicles is unique). Rather, he demonstrates how God blessed kings when they sought him and how he punished them when they did not. He details their relation to the temple, their faithfulness to God, and God's faithfulness to his promises. When the kings sought God, he was found. But when they did not seek him, God forsook them. Faithfulness meant the enjoyment of God's presence at the temple, but unfaithfulness ultimately meant Godforsakenness.

The primary significance for the Chronicler's first readers was the assurance that the Davidic covenant is still operative and that God dwells among his people in his temple just as he did in the days of Solomon. God yearns for his people, and he will keep his promises. God returns the exiles to the land in order to dwell among them. Indeed, the climax of Chronicles is the decree to rebuild the temple. Chronicles, therefore, offers the postexilic community a gracious hope. The Chronicler tells the story of Judah with a concern for his contemporary community (Fishbane, 385-403).

What is significant for modern Christians? The story of God's graciousness culminates in Jesus Christ. The presence of God in the temple is the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christians. God seeks a people who seek him. God seeks worshipers (John 4:23-24) and yearns to share his communion with people who trust him with all their hearts. Just as the Exodus is our story, so the building of the temple is our story. When Christians study Chronicles, they study the significance of God's temple-building for their own faith and life. They learn something about God's faithfulness and grace; about

worship, holiness, faith, and perseverance; and about the God of David and Solomon who is also the God of Jesus Christ.

## **AUTHOR AND RELATIONSHIP TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH**

The Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 15a) credits Ezra with penning Chronicles. This traditional position held sway for centuries and has been defended by some (Albright, "Date," 104-114; MYERS, lxxxvi-lxxxvii; Young, 389-392; Archer, 405-407; PAYNE, 304-307).

However, the book is anonymous. The identification with Ezra hinges on whether or not one thinks Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah is a single work written by a single author. Because this was once the common belief, Ezra was assumed the author of the whole corpus.

Contemporary scholarship, however, has either (1) rejected the idea that a single author lies behind the three books in favor of a "Chronicler" tradition that shaped the books into their present form over a process of years or (2) separated Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah as an independent work. Few scholars would argue that Ezra was the author of the whole corpus though a number argue that Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah is a single work (Clines, 9-12; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra*, 47-54).

The emerging consensus is that Chronicles is an independent work. However, this is not unanimous (Ackroyd, "Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah," 189-201; Talshir, "Reinvestigation," 165-193). Four arguments tend to unite Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Dillard, *Introduction*, 171). First, Chronicles (2 Chr 36:23) ends and Ezra (Ezra 1:1-4) begins with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple which may indicate that the two histories were originally one. Second, the apocryphal book 1 Esdras (ca. 150 B.C.) contains 2 Chronicles 35-36, Ezra, and Nehemiah as if Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah were one book. Third, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah share lexical and syntactical similarities. Fourth, they share a common theological emphasis and setting as well as similar literary forms (e.g., lists).

Despite these arguments, I regard Chronicles as a separate work (Japhet, "Supposed," 5-11; JAPHET, 3-5; WILLIAMSON, 5-11; Braun, "Chronicles," 42-64). The reasons for uniting the books are not absolute. There are alternative explanations for the above arguments

(Williamson, *Israel*, 5-82). The overlapping section at the end of Chronicles and the beginning of Ezra may have been intended to unite what was originally separate. First Esdras may combine two separate traditions or perhaps 1 Esdras is a secondary development of Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah (McKenzie, *Chronicler's*, 17-25). There is also evidence of wide lexical and syntactical differences between Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah.

The strongest reason for regarding Chronicles as an independent work is its different purpose and theological interests. The chart below represents some of these different emphases.

| <b>Chronicles</b>                     | <b>Ezra-Nehemiah</b>           |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Inclusivist Attitude toward the North | North as Unclean and Hostile   |
| Little Discussion of the Sabbath      | Sabbath a Major Topic          |
| Davidic Succession Important          | No Role for Davidic Interests  |
| Little Reflection on the Exodus       | Exodus as Primary              |
| No Mention of Solomon's Sins          | Solomon as Bad Example         |
| Little Comment on Mixed Marriages     | Mixed Marriages as Primary Sin |
| Emphasis on the Prophets              | Little Emphasis on Prophets    |
| Theology of Retribution               | No Application of Retribution  |
| Strong Role for Levites               | Weak Role for Levites          |

These differences indicate that Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah did not come from the same author. Chronicles seeks to unite “all Israel” on the basis of the Davidic promises and the temple cult in accordance with prophetic utterances. Ezra–Nehemiah seeks to re-vision the post-exilic community as a “new exodus” under the scribal leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah who focus on Torah cultic purity. Both of these interests might exist simultaneously within the same postexilic community, but the different interests separate the books instead of uniting them. What they share in common is a postexilic setting, but they differ in terms of how each addresses the needs of that community. This commentary assumes Chronicles is an independent work by an anonymous Levite.

## **DATE AND SETTING**

The earliest possible date for Chronicles is 538 B.C., the date of Cyrus's decree (2 Chr 36:23). Also, it is generally conceded that the book could not have been written before 515 B.C. because

1 Chronicles 29:7 refers to a coin that was minted during the reign of Darius (Williamson, "Eschatology," 123-126). The latest possible date is ca. 150 B.C. when Eupolemos (Jewish historian) of Alexandria quoted Chronicles. In addition, Ben Sira (ca. 180 B.C.) alludes to 1 Chronicles 15-16 as he comments on David's role in organizing the temple singers (Sirach 47:8-10). This means that the date of Chronicles is no later than 200 B.C. Within these limits, there are three primary positions (Dyck, 16-29).

First, some place Chronicles in the early Persian period ca. 515 B.C. (Newsome, 201-217; Freedman, 436-442; Cross, "Reconstruction," 4-18; McKenzie, *Chronicler's*, 25-26; Welch, *Chronicler*; Throntveit, *Kings*, 97-107; BRAUN, xxv-xxix; Holdridge). The major reason for dating Chronicles this early is the combination of several themes which find their most natural application during the time of Zerubbabel. The Chronicler emphasizes the Davidic dynasty in conjunction with the temple's priestly cast. The Chronicler employs the prophets as supporters of the temple cultus and the Davidic dynasty. This fits the milieu of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Chronicler is a Levitical historian/theologian who encourages the postexilic community by recalling their Davidic and Levitical heritage as they begin again under Davidic leadership in a rebuilt temple.

The problem with this scenario is that 515 B.C. is not the date of the final form of Chronicles. The genealogy of Jehoiachin (1 Chr 3:17-24) contains at least two generations and possibly six generations beyond that date into the fifth century, possibly as late as 450-420 B.C. Further, Chronicles's genealogical list in 1 Chronicles 9:2-34 is about a generation later than the list contained in Nehemiah 11:3-19. Some propose two forms of Chronicles. An early form (1 Chr 10-2 Chr 36) dated around 515 B.C. and a final form with the addition (or updating) of 1 Chronicles 1-9 by a final editor around 450-400 B.C. This is possible, but 1 Chronicles 1-9 appears integral to the rest of Chronicles since it articulates the same themes and reflects the same style (Johnson, *Purpose*, 44-76). Consequently, a 520-500 B.C. date is unlikely (Williamson, "Eschatology," 120-130).

Second, some place Chronicles in the early Hellenistic period ca. 300-200 B.C. (Torrey, *Ezra*, 209; Noth, 69-75). They believe Chronicles is a polemic against the rise of Samaritanism. However, one of the key theological themes of Chronicles is that "all Israel" is

invited to Jerusalem. Chronicles has a positive outlook on the potential of the north to share in the temple cultus (Braun, "Reconsideration," 59-62). Further, there is no indication of any Greek influence in Chronicles (Ackroyd, *Age*, 7-8).

Third, some place Chronicles in the middle or late Persian period ca. 450–350 B.C. Those who unite Chronicles with Ezra–Nehemiah date it around 450 B.C. (MYERS, lxxxvi-lxxxix; Albright, "Date," 104-114; cf. SELMAN, 1:69-71) while others generally favor a late Persian date around 400–350 B.C. (JAPHET, 23-28; WILLIAMSON, 15-17; DE VRIES, 16-17). The later date has gained the widest acceptance among OT scholars. The consensus is that Chronicles is "late biblical Hebrew" with affinities to Ezra–Nehemiah, Esther, Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Samaritan Pentateuch (Japhet, "Supposed," 5-11; cf. Polzin).

Since neither the early (515 B.C.) nor the late dates (200 B.C.) are feasible, and since the Chronicler probably had Ezra–Nehemiah in front of him, it is best to date the book in the late Persian period (ca. 350 B.C.). If this is the case, then Chronicles is the last OT book written (given conservative datings of other texts). It is fitting that the Chronicler occupies the last place in the Hebrew Bible since he is a theologian of the whole Hebrew canon.

## THE CHRONICLER'S SOURCES

Biblical authors often used sources and researched material. Luke did this for his Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). He talked to eyewitnesses and read the works of others. Nevertheless, as he composed his Gospel, he did so under the influence of the Spirit. God superintended the writing of Scripture in such a way that human authors wrote in their own style, vocabulary, and in the light of their own research. The final product is inspired but the exact dynamics of inspiration are unknown.

The Chronicler (like Luke) used sources. He cites them and points his readers to them for more details (e.g., the reigns of the kings). However, the nature, use, and reliability of these sources are hotly debated.

His sources include both canonical (biblical) and noncanonical literature. The biblical literature includes the Torah (five books of

Moses), Joshua–Kings, many of the prophets, Ezra–Nehemiah, and some psalms. The apparent extrabiblical literature (no longer extant) includes the “books of the kings” and the “books of the prophets” as well as additional Levitical, military, and genealogical lists.

The Chronicler used the text of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. Some of this material is copied verbatim. Indeed, the Chronicler’s history of the kings of Judah in 2 Chronicles is a redaction and elaboration of 2 Kings. In addition, the Chronicler had access to a wide range of biblical texts. While 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings provided the basic historical frame, the Chronicler’s interests reflect themes and continuities with the whole OT. The chart below is only representative (cf. ENDRES).

| <b>Chronicles’ Use of Biblical Sources</b> |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Biblical Materials</b>                  | <b>Appearance in Chronicles</b> |
| Genealogical Lists in Genesis              | 1 Chronicles 1:1–2:2            |
| Joshua 19:2-8                              | 1 Chronicles 4:28-33            |
| Joshua 21:10-39                            | 1 Chronicles 6:54-81            |
| Joshua 17:11-12                            | 1 Chronicles 7:29               |
| Joshua 7:1                                 | 1 Chronicles 2:7                |
| Ezra 1:1-4                                 | 2 Chronicles 36:22-23           |
| Nehemiah 11:3-19                           | 1 Chronicles 9:2-17             |
| Numbers 26:5-11                            | 1 Chronicles 5:2-10             |
| Exodus 6:16-26                             | 1 Chronicles 6:2-4              |
| Numbers 3:2-4                              | 1 Chronicles 6:50-53            |
| Psalms 105:1-15                            | 1 Chronicles 16:8-22            |
| Psalms 96:2-13                             | 1 Chronicles 16:23-33           |
| Psalms 106:1,47-48                         | 1 Chronicles 16:34-36           |
| Psalms 132:8-10                            | 2 Chronicles 6:41-42            |

Chronicles refers to the “books of the Kings” quite often (cf. the top chart on p. 24). The different titles are probably variations on the basic title “book of the Kings.” Many have concluded that they refer to the canonical books of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings or at least to a single comprehensive history of Israel.

Chronicles also refers to the “books of the prophets” (second chart overleaf). These references are more elusive. If we compare them with Dtr, we discover similar source notes (cf. 1 Chr 29:29 with 1 Kgs 14:29). Further, some of the prophetic references are said to be contained in the “books of the Kings of Judah and Israel” (2 Chr 32:32) or the “book of the Kings of Israel” (2 Chr 20:34). Second

Chronicles 33:18 says that the words of the seers are recorded in the “Annals of the Kings of Israel.” What Chronicles calls “the books of the prophets” may be the reports of the prophets contained in the “books of the Kings.” In other words, these are not independent sources from the “books of the Kings,” but they are prophetic speeches or records contained in those books. However, some prefer to see the independent references to the prophets as additional sources beyond the “books of the Kings.”

| <b>Books of the Kings</b>              |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Title</b>                           | <b>Texts</b>                     |
| Books of the Kings of Israel and Judah | 2 Chr 27:7; 35:27; 36:8          |
| Books of the Kings of Judah and Israel | 2 Chr 16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32 |
| Books of the Kings of Israel           | 1 Chr 9:1; 2 Chr 20:34           |
| Annals of the Kings of Israel          | (2 Chr 33:18) 2 Chr 33:18        |
| Interpretation of the Book of Kings    | 2 Chr 24:27                      |
| Annals of King David                   | 2 Chr 27:24                      |
| Directions of David and Solomon        | 2 Chr 35:4                       |

| <b>Books of the Prophets</b> |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Prophet</b>               | <b>Text</b>        |
| Samuel, Nathan, and Gad      | 1 Chr 29:29        |
| Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo     | 2 Chr 9:29         |
| Shemaiah and Iddo            | 2 Chr 12:15        |
| Iddo                         | 2 Chr 13:22        |
| Jehu                         | 2 Chr 20:34        |
| Isaiah                       | 2 Chr 26:22; 32:32 |
| Chronicle of the Seers       | 2 Chr 33:19        |

More than likely, Dtr and the Chronicler had access to the same source, that is, the “books of the kings” which included the words and deeds of various prophets. If this is correct, the Chronicler not only had access to Joshua-Kings, but also to some of the same sources as underlie those books.

In addition, the Chronicler apparently had access to other kinds of sources, including genealogical and military lists (e.g., the further generations of Jehoiachin, 1 Chr 3:17-24). He also probably had access to some census records (1 Chr 5:17; 7:1-11,30-40; 24:6).

The Chronicler may have had other kinds of sources available to him. For example, he refers to what is “written in the Laments”

(2 Chr 35:25) which should not be confused with the canonical Lamentations. The various literary genres that appear in Chronicles indicate that he had a wide range of resources upon which to draw (DE VRIES). He includes many prophetic or Levitical speeches/sermons (e.g., 1 Chr 12:18; 17:4-14; 21:9-12; 2 Chr 7:12-22; 12:5,7-8; 15:1-8; 16:7-10; 18:7-27; 19:1-3; 20:14-19,27; 21:12-15; 24:20; 25:7-9,15-16; 28:9-11; 34:23-28). He includes many prayers (e.g., 1 Chr 14:10,13; 16:8-36; 17:16-27; 19:13; 21:8,17; 29:10-20; 2 Chr 1:8-10; 6:1-2,14-42; 14:11; 20:3-13; 30:18-20,27; 32:20,24; 33:12-13). These sermons and prayers may have come from collections of similar material.

In contrast to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholarship (Torrey, "Chronicler," 157-173, 188-217), the Chronicler did not invent sources. The current debate is the nature and use of these sources.

Second Samuel and 1-2 Kings are the Chronicler's major source since he consistently appropriates them. Yet, he probably had access to another history as well which he generally cites as "books of the Kings and prophets." Whatever we may say, the Chronicler uses materials that predate him, and he cites his sources as a mark of authenticity.

The Chronicler is selective. He does not reproduce 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. He omits some things (David's relationship with Bathsheba), rewords others (Nathan's oracle to David), and adds additional details (Manasseh's repentance). He retells the story of Judah in order to apply its significance to his own time. He verifies his story with sources, but he tells the story in a way that has meaning for his contemporary readers.

## **PURPOSE: HISTORIAN, EXEGETE, AND THEOLOGIAN**

Israelite historiography has been hotly discussed in the last few decades (e.g., Handy, *Age of Solomon*; Long, *Art*). On one extreme are those who believe that OT histories (e.g., Solomon) are theological fiction without any real historical basis ("the minimalists"). On the other extreme are those who believe that the Old Testament histories are strict chronicles analogous to modern scientific history.

The question focuses on the Chronicler's intent. Does he intend to write a "history," and what is meant by "history"?

The Chronicler does not intend to offer a comprehensive history. He does not record every detail (e.g., he omits the sins of Solomon). But neither does the Chronicler intend fiction. He notes his sources, and he assumes a knowledge of Dtr. However, despite his name, he is not a chronicler. He is an interpreter.

The Chronicler writes history as an exegete of the Hebrew canon. He utilizes the whole canon in order to shape a history that speaks to his own context. In other words, he writes a theological history. The Chronicler is concerned about what really happened, but he is also concerned with how those events are interpreted. He is a historian for theological purposes.

Consequently, to say the Chronicler is a "historian" might be a misnomer if we mean by "historian" one who simply chronicles events. While he is a historian in that he makes factual claims about the past, he is a theologian who uses history to proclaim a message. He is a narrative theologian. He writes history in a "representational" manner so that he reliably interprets its meaning (Long, "History," 232-254).

## THE BASIC THEOLOGY OF CHRONICLES

The fundamental theological hermeneutic of Chronicles is "God seeks seekers." The faithful and gracious God seeks hearts that seek him. The God of Chronicles is a relational God who seeks authentic reciprocal relationship. Those who seek him will find him, but he will forsake those who forsake him (1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2).

Two of the most significant terms in Chronicles are "seek" (שָׁרַר, שָׁרַר, *dāraš, bāqaš*) and "heart" (לֵב, לֵבב, *lēb, lēbāb*). They are thematic for Chronicles (Begg, "Seeking," 128-141; Schaefer). These terms are linked 11 times (1 Chr 16:10; 22:19; 28:9; 2 Chr 11:16; 12:14; 15:12,15; 19:3; 22:9; 30:19; 31:21), that is, hearts that seek God. "Seek" appears 54 times (the most in biblical literature) and "heart" 64 times (only Jeremiah and Psalms use it more often). God seeks hearts and yearns for hearts that seek him.

The flip side of God's relational nature is that he will forsake those who forsake him (1 Chr 28:9; 15:2). The history of Israel is

filled with example after example of this Godforsakenness. Ultimately, because Israel forsakes God, God exiles Israel.

Consequently, God enters history to create, discipline, probe, test, and redeem in order to find hearts that seek him as he seeks them. Chronicles is the story of Yahweh who moves among his people to know their hearts and find those who seek him (2 Chr 16:9). In Chronicles, Yahweh creates the world and preserves a people throughout history (1 Chr 1–9). Yahweh establishes a covenant with David as he inaugurates a kingdom (1 Chr 17). Yahweh graciously dwells among his people in the temple (2 Chr 6–7). Yahweh disciplines, blesses, and tests his people in order to know their hearts (1 Chr 29:17-19; 2 Chr 32:31). The story of Chronicles is the dynamic engagement between God and his people as God seeks to establish a gracious relationship with those who seek him.

The two theological pillars of God's relationship with his people are (1) the promise to David (1 Chr 17) and (2) the presence of God in the Solomonic temple (2 Chr 6–7). Both ground the hope of the postexilic community. The kingdom is incomplete without Davidic king and Solomonic temple (divine presence).

The Davidic promise involves God's commitment to rule the nations through Israel. The move from Sinaitic theocracy to Davidic kingdom was not incidental. The postexilic restoration was incomplete without a Davidic king even though the temple was fully operational. The Davidic promise grounds the hope of the restored community in a future Davidic king (Raison, 292-308; cf. Kelly, 135-185). The postexilic community depends on the God's faithfulness to David.

However, the Davidic kingdom finds its pinnacle in God's presence in his temple. God comes to "rest" among his people (2 Chr 6:40-42) as they rest in the land God has given them through Davidic victories. The temple is God's redemptive, gracious, and reconciling presence. It is the place of communion between God and his people. The postexilic community trusts the gracious presence of God in the temple.

Thus, standing on the promise of God to David and the gracious presence of God in his temple, the postexilic community is called to hope, holiness, and perseverance. If they will seek God in his temple, trusting in his promises, then God will find them.

Christians understand this dual theme of Davidic promise and gracious presence. God has demonstrated his faithfulness in Jesus Christ who sits on David's throne, and God has given his presence to the church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The theological themes that ground the hope of the postexilic community are fulfilled in Jesus Christ who grounds the hope of the Christian community.

God still seeks seekers. Those who seek him will be found, but he will forsake those who forsake him. In this sense the story of Chronicles is our story. The same God seeks the same kind of hearts. The same God is still at work in history to find those hearts and give them his rest.

There are several helpful theological summaries of Chronicles. At the popular level, Braun (*Understanding*) is an excellent treatment. At the scholarly level, Japhet's *Ideology* is a must read (cf. Petter). Most major commentaries summarize the key themes of Chronicles, but especially helpful are WILLIAMSON (24-33), BRAUN (xxix-xli), and SELMAN (1:45-65). The best single survey of theological themes in Chronicles is PRATT (14-55) who interprets them in both a postexilic and Christological context.

### **SPECIAL PROBLEM: LARGE NUMBERS IN CHRONICLES**

One of the most puzzling questions in Chronicles is its large numbers. Though numbers are typically taken at face value, some are problematic. For example, Judah and Israel send 1.2 million men into battle and 500,000 are killed (2 Chr 13:3,17) which is larger than American casualties in WWII. Also, on a few occasions, the numbers in Chronicles differ from those in Samuel-Kings.

Some are explained by textual corruption. Through years of transmission, numerals were especially susceptible to copyist errors (Wenham, "Large," 21-24). These accidental changes might involve a letter change (cf. 2 Sam 10:18, "700 chariots" with 1 Chr 19:18, "7,000 chariots") or confusion of nouns. (2 Sam 10:18, "40,000 horsemen" and 1 Chr 19:18, "40,000 footmen").

Obvious textual issues aside, other difficulties remain. Two options are available. One interprets large numbers objectively as precise numerical values. This assumes that the numbers have been

interpreted incorrectly. Several attempts have been made to determine the meaning of these large figures (Davies, 452-465). The most convincing solutions interpret the use of  $\text{אלף}$  (*ʾlp*). When pointed  $\text{אֶלֶף}$  (*ʾelep̄h*), it is translated “thousand,” but sometimes it bears a general collective meaning, e.g., “cattle” (Isa 30:24) or “clan/family” (Judg 6:15). When it is pointed  $\text{אֵלִיף}$  (*ʾallūph* [defectively as  $\text{אֶלֶף}$ , *ʾallūph*]), it carries an individual meaning of “chief” (e.g., Gen 36:15-43). In an unpointed text there is no difference in the spelling of the words. Hence, some apply these alternative meanings to numbers over a thousand. Wenham (“Large,” 27, 45) takes the 3,700 of the house of Aaron to mean three “captains of thousands” and seven “captains of hundreds” (1 Chr 13:1).

The difficulty is knowing when to translate something other than “thousand.” Inanimate objects cannot be grouped into military units or clans (e.g., 1 Chr 22:14; cf. Klein, “Thousand,” 275-277). In 1 Chronicles 5:21 the 44,760 transjordanian Israelite soldiers defeated the Hagrites and took “50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, 2,000 donkeys . . . also . . . 100,000 people.” Should we apply “units” to donkeys and sheep as well as military personnel?

Others interpret the numbers hyperbolically (Fouts, “Hyperbolic,” 377-387; “Large Numbers,” 205-211). Ancient Near Eastern historiography often employed extraordinary numbers, especially in military contexts and royal inscriptions. Though many are intended to be precise (Millard, “Large,” 215), some are exaggeration. The texts concerning David and Solomon may resemble the genre of classic royal inscriptions (Fouts, “Hyperbolic,” 387). The function of hyperbole is theologically grounded. It exalts Yahweh, the house of David, and the fulfillment of God’s promises.

Interpreting 1 Chronicles 12 as hyperbole resolves the problem of the “unit interpretation.” The nearest tribes to Hebron were the least represented (e.g., Judah, 6,800). The most remote tribes had larger representations (e.g., Zebulun, 50,000). Klein (“Large,” 279-280) interprets the numbers as symbolic of the popular enthusiasm for David’s kingship among the “fringe” tribes. Even with a “unit interpretation” it is difficult to comprehend why Judah had only six troops/chiefs and Zebulun had 50.

Fouts (“Another,” 209) cites a text from Ugarit which describes a strong army numbering “three hundred ten thousands.” In the

next line this same army is described as “without number” and “beyond counting.” The Chronicler makes the same point when he describes the sheep and oxen as too many to count (2 Chr 5:6).

The unit interpretation of *ʿp* may be appropriate in some contexts and the hyperbolic appropriate in others. Sometimes the numbers are precise and sometimes they are figurative (even typological). When the literal statement makes little or no sense in its context, it is probably figurative.

However the large numbers are interpreted, one should recognize two things in Chronicles. First, the Chronicler was not simply inventing historical fiction. Of the 213 numbers in Chronicles which are paralleled elsewhere in Scripture, 194 agree. Only 19 differ and some are smaller (Payne, “Validity,” 23-24). Second, his primary purpose is theological interpretation. This affects the book’s genre and interpretation in comparison with other records.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Exegetical Detail.* The most comprehensive commentaries on the Hebrew text in English are those by JAPHET (1993), WILLIAMSON (1982), BRAUN (1986), and DILLARD (1987). WILLIAMSON is the least detailed, while BRAUN and DILLARD provide extensive bibliographical resources. JAPHET, however, is the single most comprehensive commentary. DILLARD is more theological and conservative, but JAPHET touches on almost every question the text might raise. Her conclusions are usually moderate.

*Theological Reflection.* The three most significant theological commentaries are SELMAN (1994), McCONVILLE (1984), and JOHNSTONE (1997). They think theologically and canonically (especially SELMAN’s Christological applications). While they do not neglect exegetical questions (McCONVILLE is the least helpful), their quest is theological understanding. Of the three, SELMAN is the better theologian though JOHNSTONE and McCONVILLE are often quite insightful. A book which combines exegetical substance with theological interests is Japhet’s *Ideology* (1997).

*For the Serious Student in the Pew.* PRATT (1998) is the best single commentary for the person in the pew. It is filled with rich theology and covers problem areas in a conservative vein. THOMPSON

(1994) is conservative on critical issues and often applies the text Christologically, but lacks PRATT's detail and theological insight.

*Homiletical Help*. WILCOX (1987) is an excellent teaching tool with many applications. ALLEN's (1987) work is designed for preachers. Both are quite theological and oriented toward practical application.

Overall, the most balanced, helpful and instructive commentary for a broad audience is SELMAN.