

1 and 2 CHRONICLES

Short Version

St. Jerome, an early Father of the Church, gave us the title for these two books of the Bible when he said that they were “a chronicle of the whole of divine history.” The books of Chronicles are intended as a series of lessons in the divine plan for history.

Just as Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings are said to belong to one school of writers called the Deuteronomist, 1-2 Chronicles and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are also said to belong to another school of writers called the “Chronicler.” This writer is believed to have lived in the fourth century B.C. and to have intended his writings for post-exilic Jews who were seeking to restore their lives, religion and nation after the devastation experience of the Babylonian exile. The “chronicler” is from the priestly class. In his books, we notice heavy emphasis on all aspects of Israel’s worship life and how important it was for the future existence of the nation.

Purpose. The purpose of 1-2 Chronicles was to strengthen the Jews of fourth century Judah in their love for God’s law and to teach them that obedience to God was their only hope for survival.

In his book *A Catholic Guide to the Bible*, Fr. Oscar Lukefahr, C.M., writes: “*The Chronicler wanted to say to the ‘remnant,’ the Jewish community of the restoration: ‘Remember what God has done for you. Look at the great heroes of our past. See how evil has always been punished and good rewarded. Realize that the Temple must be the focal point of our lives.’ He painted an ‘idealized’ picture of the past in order to give the Jews an ‘ideal’ for the future. That is why his works are called ‘idealized salvation history’*” (p.70).

The idealization of Israel’s past is mainly achieved through a retelling of Israel’s history from the time of David. While large chunks of 1-2 Chronicles are quite similar to the books of Samuel and Kings, we notice that the author omits the faults and sins of David and Solomon.

For the Chronicler, David was a holy and dedicated leader who followed the ways of God faithfully. The writer stresses David’s role in

composing the psalms and establishing guilds of Levites to serve at the temple. In Chronicles, David prays a lot. He is shown to be fully consumed with zeal for the right worship of God. In Chronicles, the destruction of the nation is blamed on the failure of the people to give God true worship. Finally, the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel are totally ignored because of their failure to worship God in Jerusalem.

Division of chapters

Chapters 1-9: Genealogical tables. Israel’s family tree is traced all the way back to Adam

Chapters 10-29: Reign of David

Suggested reading

Since the contents of these two books are very similar to 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, I will only offer a few suggestions for reading.

Some years ago, Pastor Bruce Williamson wrote a bestselling book called *The Prayer of Jabez*. It was based on the prayer of Jabez found in 1 Chronicles 4:10.

1 Chronicles 16: Psalm of thanksgiving

1 Chronicles 28: David’s address to his leaders.

2 Chronicles 9: Queen Sheba visits Solomon

2 Chronicles 30: Reintroduction of the Passover