

Synthesis

Background

Authorship

The most popular traditional positions held are that Ezra or Nehemiah wrote the book, with the preference in that order. However, other than to try to understand a bias, which is the purpose of the liberal critics, there seems no reason to pursue the authorship, since it was in God's purpose to keep it unrevealed.

Purpose

The purpose of 1 Chronicles is that of demonstrating God's preparation of a line from Adam through the promised Abraham, through the chosen David, through the work of a nation, to prepare the temple of God. The reason that this is seen as the purpose is because the first half of the book details the genealogies, primarily of David, who received the promise of God as His chosen King, and then of the 12 sons of Israel who would be the workers and the recipients of blessing of the temple. Thus David prepared the way by conquering the enemies, capturing Jerusalem, the residence of the temple, and inaugurating Solomon, the builder of the temple. Thus the book ends with the expectation of a King and a nation who would build the temple.

Subject and Complement

The temple is readied to be built by God's sovereign election of the line of David to conquer the land and Jerusalem and the election of the people of Israel to build the temple along with David's son, Solomon.

Date

1 Chronicles 3:19-24 contains a chronology of Jeconiah, the prisoner of Babylon, which occurred at the end of 2 Kings. The list of his children requires a date somewhere approximately 400 B.C. If Jeconiah is a prisoner just prior to the edict of Cyrus in 538 B.C., then it would require at least 140 years for the five generations listed in 1 Chronicles 3 to pass. Thus a date somewhat later than 400 B.C. is certainly possible.

Structure

The structure of the book is fairly clear. The genealogies are in the first eight chapters. From that point the chronicler moves to narrative for the most part to show how the expectation of the temple building was brought to pass through David and the 12 tribes.

Commentary

- I. The genealogies from Adam to David, and the sons of Israel at the return to the land. (1:1-9:44).

This section will contain the genealogies, effectively demonstrating God's sovereign selection of a line which would effectively be used for the building and the maintenance of the temple. Thus there will be emphasis on the Davidic line of the king, the Levitical line of the priests, and the popular line of the nation Israel.

- A. The genealogies from Adam to David (1:1-3:24).

The first of the genealogies begins with Adam. This is for the purpose of showing that in the very creation God had in mind producing the nation, the king and the Levites to serve Him in His temple. The genealogy stops along the way to emphasize Abraham, the covenanted one (it shows this by the demonstration of the change of his name). Then the genealogy narrows its focus to the line of King David, by taking the segment of Judah.

- B. The genealogies of the sons of Israel to the time of the return to the land. (4:1-9:1).

The rest of the genealogies focus on the sons of Israel. These were the populous which was to have various responsibilities in the temple. But most probably they were to have a great blessing as the recipient of the initial effect of the temple. Each tribe is mentioned along with its responsibility, and its inheritance, with the exception of Dan. (Zebulon is mentioned only in conjunction with other tribes).

In 6:1-81, the chronicler takes time to give an emphasis to the sons of Levi and their possessions. Obviously this space is given since they were so special in relation to the temple and its proper maintenance and order.

- C. The movement of the sons of Israel to David the king in preparation for the building of the temple. (9:2-44).

In the final episode of the chronicler before going to David the King, the second half of the book, he shows how these peoples of Israel were prepared and aligned for service in the temple that was to be built. Thus the genealogies now show a purpose, that of working and helping at the temple.

- II. The Reign of David and the preparation for the temple building. (10:129:30).

The remainder of the book will be a narrative of David the King, who was brought to be king by God, who was the proper king, who captured Jerusalem, subdued the enemies who would take it away, and prepared Solomon to build the temple.

- A. The failure of Saul and the end of his line. (10:1-14).

The chronicler will first begin by showing Saul as king, and how he was doomed to failure since he was not of the proper genealogy. Thus he was brought to an end. He makes a special effort to show that Saul's sons were all killed.

- B. David, his mighty men, and the support of the people as he rises to king. (11:1-12:40).

Now the author shows that David had the support of the people. They recognized that he was God's choice and that he was able to carry out God's victories. Thus it lists all those who were behind and fought for the true King. It concludes by showing that there was one heart behind David and the nation rejoiced over his being made king (12:38-40).

- C. The bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem. (13:1-16:43).

But it keeps the focus of David's ministry clear, the temple. And an integral part of the temple was the Ark of the Covenant. Thus the author now records David's attempts to fulfill that duty. The first problem which David had was in the fact that he chose someone to carry the ark who was not God authorized to do so. Thus when Uzzah touched the ark to steady it, he died. The emphasis here in Chronicles is on the improper genealogy and the improper carrying of the ark. It was to be carried on poles, not on a cart. Had it been carried on poles it is not likely that it would have needed steadied.

The author then leaves to show David's conquering of those who would oppose his reign at Jerusalem. This was to show that David was indeed supported in his ministry of Ark-moving by God.

Finally the king is successful in moving the ark. Michal gets upset, not realizing the value of the Ark, and David's true motivation in dancing before the Lord. Michal is not shown here to receive punishment, but only noted that she is the daughter of Saul. This then becomes somewhat of a postscript on Saul's unworthiness to be King.

- D. The Lord promises David a throne forever, and David is victorious in the Lord. (17:1-20:8).

Perhaps this is the centerpiece of the book. God now promises David a throne forever. This demonstrates clearly God's choice of David. Most of the rest of the book will demonstrate God's support of David based on this promise. The immediate benefit is how David wipes out the enemies of his kingdom, both those who come against him and those who perhaps he has an old score to settle.

- E. David's sin and his survival due to the promise of God. (21:1-30).

David numbers the people and sins against God. (Exodus 30:12ff.). Again David is in trouble because of his lack of effort to obey the laws of God. But he is saved from elimination because of God's faithfulness to the covenant which He gave him.

- F. David prepares Solomon to build the temple of the Lord. (22:1-29:30).

The remaining portion of the book is the preparation by David for the reign of Solomon and the building of the temple. David first assigns Solomon the task of building the temple, then assigns the Levites their duties (23:1-26:32).

David then charges the people with obedience in following the orders of the temple and temple worship. (28:1-29:22a). The people respond with obedience.

The remainder of the book simply shows the emergence of Solomon as King and the death of David. The close leaves the reader expectant to see what will happen now as the temple is ready to be built.

2 Chronicles

Background

Authorship

(See section in 1 Chronicles).

Purpose

The purpose of 2 Chronicles is to examine to continuance of the temple order in the declining kingdom. All who respect God's commandments with regard to the temple worship are blessed. Those who do not are not blessed. The book ends with the expectancy of the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem by the exiles, simply showing the continuance of the temple and its worship.

Subject and Complement

The subject of 2 Chronicles, like 1 Chronicles is the temple worship. Its complement is the tracing of the endurance of temple worship throughout the declining kingdom and the return to re-establish temple worship.

Date

(See section in 1 Chronicles.)

Structure

The book basically follows the decline of the kingdom on the basis of their respect for temple worship or lack of respect for it. The two basic sections are Solomon's reign, and the reign of his sons.

Commentary

I. The reign of Solomon. (1:1-9:31)

The text begins the first third of the book by examining Solomon. His reign is essentially recognized as good by the Chronicler due to his respect for temple services. It is not noted that he shared worship with other gods, as in the book of Kings. Basically this reaffirms the theme of the author, that of examining the movement of the nation with respect to temple worship.

The chapters are basically long blocks of information showing how Solomon lined up foreigners to provide skills in building the temple, how he made the furniture, moved things into the temple, and then led the worshipers in the requests before the Lord. In chapter 7, the Lord answers Solomon by bringing fire down from heaven.

The remainder of the Solomon section shows his attentiveness to detail in organizing the temple order and thus his obedience to God. The emphasis then shifts to the blessing of God as Solomon becomes rich beyond measure.

II. The reign of Solomon's sons, the decline of the northern tribes, the perseverance of Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple worship. (10:1-36:23).

The remainder of the book examines the divided kingdom, but then follows the kings of Judah, since they are the true place of temple worship. The kingdom declines, due to its disrespect for worship, and is taken into captivity along with the temple items. The book ends with the hope of the rebuilding of the temple by the returning captives.

A. The division of the kingdom, and the emergence of Judah as the focus of the temple worship. (10:1-14:1).

The first section shows how the emergence of Judah and its return to prosperity despite the rule of a wicked king. The emergence is shown when Abijah stands for Jerusalem worship before Israel and succeeds.

B. Degeneracy of the kingdom and the true worship at Jerusalem. (14:2-36:14).

The remainder of the book shows the sons of Solomon and the kings of Judah as they decline to captivity.

There is some detail about Asa and Jehosaphat who both reform the kingdom, while Asa has personal failure. (14-20). Jehoram (21) and Athaliah (22) lead the nation downhill. But Josiah issues reforms (24). But following him Amaziah (25) is only a partial temple worshiper, Uzziah (26) respected God, but fell victim to a lack of respect for the priesthood, and Jotham was only good in a small way (27). Finally, the list of bad kings is stopped with Ahaz who rebels against temple worship, helping the cause of idolatry.

Hezekiah is devoted four chapters (29-32) as he re-establishes the temple worship. He brings the temple back and establishes the proper order. He celebrates the Passover feast. Hezekiah however, becomes proud and must repent. God restores Hezekiah and gives him much honor prior to his death.

But the story is back on a downward track as Manasseh and Amnon lead the people away from true worship (33). Manasseh however, repents after he is led by hooks to Babylon. Amnon is evil.

The story returns to a hopeful note as Josiah comes on the scene and is given two chapters to detail his reforms. Basically, as Hezekiah, he repaired the temple and re-established temple worship as God commanded. He then began the celebration of the Passover once more. Josiah, though, has a sad ending as he dies in battle after being disobedient.

Chapter 36 describes the temple items being taken to Babylon in the days of the last kings. However the book leaves on the note of hope for those who desire true temple worship. The captivity is over and they are allowed the return with the purpose of building the temple.