

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

The Books of the Kings give us the general and public history of the government of Israel; its glory in the reigns of David and Solomon; its fall, and the causes which led to it.

The Books of Chronicles, while traversing substantially the same ground, have another purpose, a well-defined aim, viz., that of tracing the history of Judah, and the house of David. Israel (the kingdom of Samaria) does not enter into these books save as its kings come into contact with those of Judah. In Chronicles there seems to be a kind of studied avoidance of any mention of the northern kingdom, and the attention of the reader is held steadily to Judah, Jerusalem, the temple and its priests and services, as if God was now concerned exclusively with these.

The key word is "*Election*;" the key verses, I Chronicles 17:7, 8, 27; 28 15.

Chronicles serves well as a title, if we understand it to mean the equivalent of "Acts," or "History." "Things Omitted" (the title of the Sept.) is inaccurate. The books are not a supplement to other books of Scripture; they are an independent work, having their own plan and end.

1. *The time of composition can be approximately fixed.*

The books were written at the close of the Babylonian exile. The genealogy of the house of David is carried down to Zerubbabel, if not a little lower, 3:17-19. In I Chronicles 6:15 the captivity is spoken of in such a way as to make it evident that the author was writing in a time subsequent to that event. It is generally believed that Ezra was the author. Certainly no man of that time could be found better fitted for the work.

2. *Contents.* These may be conveniently distributed into four groups.

I. Genealogical tables, from Adam to the return from the exile, I Chronicles 1-9.

It is important to observe that throughout these long lists of names there is traceable the sovereign choice of God. The lines follow mainly the track of a blessed generation, a separated race.

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then after a brief list of the families of Japheth and of Ham, the family of Shem, whose God is the Lord, is taken up and traced to Abraham who becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity after the flesh is first given; then Isaac, the child of promise, a fresh stock, because a child of election, follows, with Jacob and his twelve sons, of whom Judah is the central object of the inspired writer, for he is the royal tribe, from whom the Messiah is to spring; and the family of David is given the pre-eminence in the line of Judah. Two of the sons of Israel are omitted, Dan and Zebulun; no genealogy of them is given. All through it is the sovereign action of grace in the selection of those who are brought nigh to God that is prominent.

## II. *David's reign*, I Chronicles 10-29:22.

After a brief account of Saul, I Chronicles 9:35; 10, David's throne is the theme, the kingdom, looked at as ordained of God for blessing. And accordingly David's sufferings and faults are passed over in silence, except that of numbering the people, I Chronicles 21.

## III. *Account of the kingdom under Solomon*, I Chronicles 29:28-30; II Chronicles 1-9.

**“Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king, instead of David, his father, and prospered”**—a remarkable expression not found elsewhere (cf. I Chronicles 28:5). The throne was God's; and people and king should have sought the realization of the august idea. They did not, yet the idea is not lost sight of or abandoned, for the Messiah is to fulfill it perfectly. So David and Solomon become types in these books of the future glory of the true Son and Heir.

## IV. *Account of the kingdom of Judah from the disruption to the captivity*, II Chronicles 10-36.

### 3. *Design of First and Second Chronicles.*

Their object is manifold. Some of these purposes may be pointed out.

First, God's dispensational ways. Obviously, with the opening of Chronicles a new era begins. Through all the preceding books we have the record of God's ways with His chosen people, the seed of Abraham. The record is carried forward through the second Book of Kings, when it is broken off, no less in sorrow than in anger. With Chronicles the sacred writer goes back to the beginning and starts again with Adam, Seth, etc., and dwells with great minuteness on the tribe of Judah, and the house of David. With Chronicles, therefore, begins the second great division of the Bible. Up to this point failure has marked the whole history. A fresh start is now made; and David's Divine Son, in whom all will be made good, comes more and more into prominence.

The Books of Chronicles are related to the new order of things, not to the old. They are not linked with Samuel and Kings, but with Ezra and Nehemiah, with Zechariah and Malachi. They do not look back, but forward. The antediluvian economy failed through man's sin; the patriarchal likewise; the Jewish next, in its national capacity. But here begins a new epoch. A remnant according to the election of grace returns from captivity to the land of promise; and the Spirit of God turns their faces toward Him who is promised, who will not fail.

A second purpose is, to secure the genealogy of Christ, as the Son of David. Hence the lineage of David's house, and indeed of the whole tribe of Judah, is very fully given. Evidently, Matthew and Luke availed themselves of Chronicles in tracing the human descent of our Lord.

Another practical object was to confirm the returned captives in their allegiance and fidelity to the Lord. It is pointed out in an impressive manner that ordinarily temporal blessing ensued when King and people renounced idolatry, destroyed the idols, and served the Lord; while punishment followed disobedience and apostasy. Such teaching was calculated to settle the Jews in the conviction that the fate of the nation was in their hands.

#### 4. *David's arrangements for the worship of God*, I Chronicles 23-26.

These provisions relate to the services of the temple, and are quite full and explicit. The priests, sons of Aaron, were divided into twenty-four orders or courses: the Levites into twenty-four courses of singers and musicians, porters, keepers of the treasures of the house of God, officers and judges. It is singular that nothing touching these arrangements is recorded in the books of Samuel or of Kings. The reason for the omission of them in those books probably is this: in the disorder and confusion consequent upon the captivity, much of the knowledge of the order and manner of God's worship would be lost, and such a guide as here is given would be both necessary and useful, indeed, indispensable. Hence they are recorded here alone.

#### 5. *Dedication of the Temple*, II Chronicles 5.

The splendid structure reared on Mt. Moriah was at length completed. The Cherubim, let it be observed, stood at the lower end of the house, and really looked outward, II Chronicles 3:13 [margin] as if intimating that a wider field of blessing ere long would be enjoyed. The priests began the dedicatory services, but it was only when the singers and players on musical instruments sang and played **“as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voices with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord.”** vs. 13, 14.

So, too, when the disciples **“were all with one accord in one place,”** Acts 2:1, the blessing came—the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them in richest profusion. Unity of will, of heart, of voice and mind brings the blessing. Our discords and jarring purposes and wishes, hinder our prayers and worship

#### 6. *Deliverances wrought for the house of David.*

There are four of them, and they mark a kind of progress, and were significant signs to Judah.

(1) Abijah, son of Rehoboam, gained a great victory over Jeroboam, II Chronicles 13 (not recorded in Kings). Abijah was completely surrounded by the forces of Israel, and escape seemed impossible. Judah cried to the Lord, the priests sounded with the trumpets, and the men gave a shout, **“and God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.”**

**“Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.”**

(2) Asa, son of Abijah and a better man, found himself confronted by a prodigious host of Ethiopians, II Chronicles 14 (not recorded in Kings). The battle was not yet joined when Asa appealed to God in the noble words of faith: **“Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee.”**

The Lord in answer to the appeal gave him at once the mastery over the enemy.

(3) Jehoshaphat had a still more remarkable deliverance, II Chronicles 20 (not recorded in Kings). He was threatened by a formidable combination of Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites. In this crisis of impending danger he proclaimed a fast throughout his kingdom, and summoned a national prayer-meeting at Jerusalem. The pious monarch led the devotions of the people; and in his prayer he spoke of Abraham as the **“friend of God,”** cf. Isaiah 12:8; James 2:23.

He marched out against the enemy, in this extraordinary order: in the forefront of his battle-line he put singers who should praise the Lord, and who sang the refrain of the Temple-hymn, **“Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.”** The army of Judah drew no sword, shot no arrow. The Lord turned the arms of the hostile allies against each other; and Judah was delivered without striking a blow.

(4) Hezekiah’s deliverance was even yet more wonderful, II Chronicles 32; II Kings 18, 19.

The occasion of it was the visit and insulting letter of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. The godly monarch met the crisis as a man who trusted in God. The enemy relied on **“Chariots and horses,”** but Hezekiah remembered the name of the Lord.

Sennacherib would have laughed, and thought him in an agony of fear had he seen the king on his knees with the open letter spread out before the Lord, The proud boast of the Assyrian was but brief. In this case, there was no blare of trumpet, no call to arms, no marching of an army.

In the silence of the night, and unattended by any human agency, the angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians, and with shame, defeated and broken, the proud king turned back to his own land.

7. *A main cause of Judah’s fall*, II Chronicles 36:21; cf. Leviticus 26:34.

A striking fulfillment of prophecy, and the shining proof of its truth. Nearly nine hundred years before the event God said that the people should be carried away from the land, and it should have its rest. And here is the accomplishment. To violate any command of His is to bring upon one’s self certain punishment.

There are some apparent discrepancies in these books of Chronicles with others of the Old Testament. But all of them can be easily explained, or are due altogether to errors of transcribers. We ought to be thankful that copyists of the Bible, in the days before printing, adhered so faithfully to the text, and refused to tamper with it in the slightest degree. For example, how easily might a transcriber have changed II Samuel 8:4 so as to harmonize with I Chronicles 18:4; or II Chronicles 36:9 with II Kings 24:8. But none of the copyists did so. Their reverence for the Word of God was too deep and true to allow them for a moment to do anything of the sort. How different are some who live in our day whose pens are far more reckless and daring than Jehoiakim's pen-knife!

**~ end of chapter 14 ~**

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