

Books of The Bible

Contrasts and Similarities Between Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles

Introduction

In reading the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, it is easy to view them as almost the same in repeating the same data several times. The Holy Spirit does at times repeat things. For instance, the last chapters of Ephesians and Colossians show almost identical expressions of “little children, young men and fathers” (1 Jn. 2:13-14). However, a closer study will reveal differences as well as similarities.

- a) The six books trace much of the history of Israel from their last years as a theocracy when God was King to when they became a monarchy having a national as King.
- b) Finally they touch upon the last years of the monarchy to when they became subservient to a foreign king. During this time period there were ups and downs like any nation, but the down periods were not due to superior powers. Israel was defeated by Assyria and Babylon but it was not because of their superior strength. It was due to God’s discipline on Israel because of their sin (Jud. 3:6-8; 12-14).
- c) While the end of 2 Chronicles is tragic reading (2 Chron. 36:11-21), yet in that darkness of the disciplining hand of God there is the reality of better days ahead (2 Chron. 36:22-23). In those dark days of captivity their grief is captured by the words of the Psalmist, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning” (Psa. 137:1-5).

I am aware the normal thought is that the human author of Chronicles was a priest or someone writing from that perspective. However, in considering the arguments for who wrote these books, I find none give compelling evidence of who the man was or what his position was. I leave it for each to decide for themselves.

At the beginning of the human race God gave man a work to do, that being to “replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). It was a place of government, dominion over it. Adam was made to be the administrator of God’s laws and having the foremost place (Gen. 1:26-28) on earth under God. God was to be Israel’s King, whom they rejected, and we are informed how that happened and Israel became a monarchy. The balance of the three sets of twin books, from 1st Samuel 8:19-31:13; all of 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles indicate how they ought to be governed, by whom, and for what purposes?

Key Truths

There can be little doubt that God is a God of order and yet it seems on the surface, 1 Chronicles especially, is so utterly chaotic. For instance:

- a) It is easy to see the first nine chapters are a series of genealogies but while there is a chronological order, the writer goes back and forth with the generations, yet in the middle of the genealogies there is a certain time to deal with the kings who reigned before any king reigned in Israel (1 Chron. 1:43).
- b) He writes about the sons of Israel (1 Chron. 2:1-2), then speaks of “Carmi” of the line of Judah (1 Chron. 2:3-7) who is mentioned again in 1st Chronicles 4:1, yet is a different Carmi from the man of 1st Chronicles 5:3 who was of the tribe of Reuben (1 Chron. 5:3). Furthermore, in 1st Chronicles 4:1 he is mentioned in the sons of Judah with Hur and Shobal, but none of them are mentioned in the first generation of Judah (1 Chron. 2:3).
- c) There is a collective gathering of data on certain themes, but one is left wondering what the main purposes of the book are. To me there are three major avenues:
 - i) The first is the supreme sovereignty of God and this is found in the words of David, “Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron. 29:10-12). The whole book is a manifestation of the greatness of God and this is its focus.

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- ii) Provides the evidence that Jesus is the only man who can show His genealogy in depth up to the time of the death of David and the beginning of the reign of Solomon (1 Chron. 29:22-28). The genealogies of Matthew and Luke chapter 3 provide that which is needed until the Lord was born.
- iii) God is a prayer hearing and answering God. This is evidenced by the dealings of God for His people and is presented in Chronicles by the following illustrations:
 - 1. Jabez prayed and “God granted him that which he requested” (1 Chron. 4:10).
 - 2. The sons of Reuben and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh were going to war against Hagerites when they cried out to the Lord, “and He was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him” (1 Chron. 5:18-20).
 - 3. Dodo who was with David when he fought against the Philistines, “the LORD saved them by a great deliverance” (1 Chron. 11:12-14).

When was it written?

1st Chronicles was written after the death of David (1 Chron. 29:28); after the reign of Solomon (1 Chron. 29:22-25; 28), after Israel went into captivity (1 Chron. 6:15), and after twenty generations from Solomon (1 Chron. chs. 13-19).

The background of Chronicles

An appreciation for the author's writing is greatly assisted by understanding the morale of the people to whom he wrote. Four major judgments had come from God for Israel all had been lost because of sin.

- a) Isaiah informs us that they had lost their God consciousness when he recorded: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Isa. 1:3).
- b) Jeremiah informs us that they had lost their divine satisfaction when he recorded: “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:11, 13).
- c) Ezekiel informs us they had lost the divine presence when he recorded the departing of the glory of God (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:23).
- d) Daniel informs us that they had lost their inheritance when it was recorded: “Then came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it” (Dan. 1:1). But there was more, they were a broken hearted nation because:
 - i) They had been a theocracy from the Exodus to the coronation of Saul (1 Sam. 8:5-7) when they became a monarchy. In time, that was a thing of the past and they became a dependency, no longer having a national king to rule over them, they were under the rule of Babylon (Dan. 1:2).
 - ii) Solomon's Temple, the place of God's presence, was destroyed (2 Chron. 36:19).
 - iii) The land was utterly desolate (2 Chron. 36:21).
 - iv) To the children of Israel the promises God all seemed like an empty dream, yet there was still hope to be looked for in that current situation. What did they have?
 - 1. There were still those who not only remained but returned and that gave hope for the future, but only after they learnt the lesson that the covenant with God had two parts, blessings and those who obey it, and curses on those who disobeyed (Deut. 27:1-28:29).
 - 2. There are prophecies still unfulfilled, that's why 1st Chronicles begins with and ends with the throne of God set in Jerusalem. In so doing, it foreshadowed the throne of David's greater Son when He reigns as King (1 Chron. 29:22-28).

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Observable differences

To the casual reader the double books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are very alike, and in many ways they are because:

- a) They cover the same time period.
 - i) Broadly speaking, 1st Chronicles covers the same time as 2nd Samuel and the reign of David, whereas 2nd Chronicles covers the time period of 1st and 2nd Kings and the kings of Judah from Solomon to the Babylonian captivity.
- b) There is a different emphasis on how things are viewed.
 - i) Since all the scriptures have been given for multiple avenues of instruction (2 Tim. 3:16), yet the foremost focus is the glorification of God. Consequently, it is interesting to see that which is left out, and includes.
 - 1. Surely the Exodus was a manifestation of God's glory and judgment (Ex. 12:12), yet in Chronicles the children of Israel's release from Egypt is not mentioned. It is in 1st Kings 6:1; 2nd Samuel 7:6 and 1st Chronicles 17:5 it is simply stated as a fact without development of thought.
 - 2. Another observation is there is no mention of the wickedness of Cain but there is of Nimrod (1 Chron. 1:10).
 - 3. There is no mention of the flood but there is to the dividing of the earth (1 Chron. 1:19).
 - 4. The evil act of Er is mentioned in 1st Chronicles 2:3 as it is in Genesis 38:7.
 - 5. The fact that Er and Saul were slain by the Lord (1 Chron. 2:3; 10:13-14).
 - 6. Satan was behind the counting of the people by David (1 Chron. 21:1).
 - 7. Interesting that it should include the fact that Seled and Jether would die without children (1 Chron. 2:30, 32).
 - 8. Since all scripture is given by inspiration of God and nothing is superfluous, then what is the reason it is recorded that Sheshan had no sons and only daughters (1 Chron. 2:34), or Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to be his wife (1 Chron. 2:34-35)? The answer is, "I do not know".
- c) The books of Samuel and Kings deal more with the nation's failures, sins, and living independently of God. That is, they had a superficial clinical functioning for God but not a deep spiritual exercising of heart, whereas the Chronicles deal with the kings who humbled themselves before God (2 Chron. 12:6, 7, 12; 32:26; 33:12, 19) and the consequences of those who did not humble themselves before the Lord (ch. 33:23; 36:1), namely Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:6-12) and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:26). In 1st Kings it is only Ahab and Josiah that there is reference made to them humbling themselves (1 Kgs. 21:29; 2 Kgs. 22:19).
- d) In contrast to Samuel and Kings which deals with the kingdom to Israel and Judah, Chronicles deals exclusively with Judah.
- e) The severity of God's judgment is witnessed when the Lord slew Saul by using the Philistines (1 Chron. 10:13-14) and when David sinned in numbering the people. It is of interest that the Lord smote Israel, presumed in war due to the immediate context (1 Chron. 21:1-6) for after it is recorded that David confessed he had sinned. The Lord then gave David the choice of three avenues of discipline (1 Chron. 21:10), then executed that judgment (1 Chron. 21:14).
- f) The Greek translators gave First and Second Chronicles the name, "things omitted", therefore, it was seen as an appendix to Samuel and Kings. However, it is much more than that. Rather it is the history of Israel from the divine perspective.
 - i) In Samuel the Philistines slew Saul (1 Sam. 31:1-6) because of his disobedience but in Chronicles it is the Lord (1 Chron. 10:13-14).

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- ii) In the transporting of the Ark of the covenant there is one chapter in Samuel (2 Sam. 6:1-19) but in Chronicles there are three chapters given to it (1 Chron. 13, 15, and 16).
- iii) In Samuel two chapters are used to describe David's sin with Bathsheba (1 Kgs. 11:3-12:24) but in Chronicles it is not mentioned, yet there is a reference to the second great sin of numbering the people (1 Chron. 21:1-27).
- iv) "Ish-bosheth" is the name of Saul's son (2 Sam. 2:8) but in Chronicles he was called "Esh-baal" (1 Chron. 8:33; 39).

Some of the incidents mentioned in Samuel and Kings but not in Chronicles

- 1) The reign of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1-31:6)
- 2) David's sin with Bathsheba and his slaying of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:2-27)
- 3) The revolt of Absalom against his father (2 Sam. 15:1-18:15)
- 4) Absalom was arranging for the death of Ammon (2 Sam. 13:23-33)
- 5) Saul's hatred for David and his endeavors to kill him (1 Sam. 18:10-11; 19:1, 10, 11; 20:31)
- 6) The conflict with Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. 2:10-17)
- 7) The putting of Saul's descendants to death (2 Sam. 2:1-16)
- 8) The Psalm of David (2 Sam. 22:2-51)
- 9) The last words of David (2 Sam. 23:2-7)
- 10) Ammon and Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-14)
- 11) Solomon's apostasy (1 Kgs. 11:5-8; 2 Kgs. 23:13)

Some of the matters found in Chronicles but not in Samuel or Kings

- 1) David's material preparation for the Temple (1 Chron. 22:1-4; 29:1-9)
- 2) David's numbering and distribution of the Levites and priests (1 Chron. 23:1-24:31)
- 3) David's arranging of the singers and portraits and in humility praise to God (1 Chron. 25:1-26:25)
- 4) The death of Saul was a judgment from God who slew him because of his sins (1 Chron. 10:1-6, 13-14)
- 5) The war between Abijah and Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13:2-19)
- 6) Genealogical histories (1 Chron. 1:1-9:44)
- 7) The Passover of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:1-25)
- 8) The keeping of the feast of unleavened bread (2 Chron. 30:21)

Some of the matters found in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles but with a different emphasis

- 1) Asa had a foot disease (1 Kgs. 15:23) but in Chronicles we are informed that he did not seek the Lord (2 Chron. 16:12)
- 2) The Passover of Josiah (2 Kgs. 23:21-23; 2 Chron. 35:1-19)
- 3) The judgment of God on Israel for David's sin and the purchasing of the ground for the ark (2 Sam. 24:1-25 1 Chron. 21:1-28)
- 4) The glory of the Lord filling the house (1 Kgs. 8:11; 2 Chron. 7:2)
- 5) The death of Saul (1 Sam. 31:2-6; 1 Chron. 10:1-6)
- 6) David's thoughts of building a house for God (1 Kgs. 8:17-19; 2 Chron. 6:8-9)

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia