

BIB104 OT2 Life & Literature of Israel

Unit 4a 1 Chronicles: Hope Through Obedience (Part 1)

Presented by the



LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE
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Our story starts in the most attention-grabbing way possible, with nine chapters of genealogies. It's exasperating when you think of all the information that's contained there. I know personally, as I started to read it and go over it, I thought, "What, Lord, are you trying to teach us?" And yet as I study this out, I realize that buried in all those hard to pronounce Hebrew names are some really important stuff. The author starts with Adam and goes up through Abraham and Jacob. Jacob's sons would go on to form the 12 tribes of Israel, who are pretty much the backbone of the whole Jewish history and culture. The chronicler, we find, is mainly interested in the tribes that form the southern half of the kingdom of Israel: Benjamin, Judah, and Levi. Benjamin and Judah are hugely important because they're both ancestors of kings, which would be King Saul and King David, respectively. Now, Levi's tribes, they're the ones that were in charge of the spiritual culture of the Israelites, the people of God.

After we go through those names, the real story starts. Israel's king, Saul, had just died and someone needs to step up to the plate. That someone is named David, and he would go on to become the just, beloved, and celebrated king, probably the greatest in all of Israel's history. And no one loves David more than the author of this book did. Why, do you say? Because he iterates all of David's greatest moments: the time he set up the capital in Jerusalem and then brought the Ark of the Covenant into the city, each and every victory that David had during his wartime, and even his decision to build the temple of God that was dedicated to his love, Yahweh, his God, Jehovah, who is our God today. But in the end, even the greatest kings must die. David goes out by passing the torch to his son Solomon and asking him to be the one who actually would build the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, God told David, "David, you've been a man of war. As a result of that, I can't allow you to build the temple. That needs to be done by a man of peace." [1Ch 22:8-9] David accumulated much of the wealth that Solomon then used to make an elaborate temple that we know as the temple of God. And nothing was ever as gorgeous, as monumental, or as potentially worshipful for Yahweh or Jehovah God as the temple was.

Now, Solomon, is he going to be a great king or not? We'll find out as the story progresses. And really, if you want the full story, you have to go to 2 Chronicles for sure to be able to check out more of the story of the repercussions of Solomon's life. It reminds me in our life, as I look at 1 and 2 Chronicles individually but also as a whole, 1 Chronicles in particular, as we think about that in this study, we really get hit with the fact of the legacy of life that we leave and what we are leaving behind, not just in our immediate living our life today and the people and the ways that we see it, but when we look at it long term to think, "What are my kids and my grandkids...?" And for those of you that don't have children, what are the people that you've disciplined and influenced going to do for the kingdom of God, based upon what you've done, to help pass that along to others?

What if you had the job of communicating your nation's entire history, its rulers, its wars, its religious events, its economic cycles, starting with the beginning of mankind? 1 and 2 Chronicles is the history, that history, of Israel. It's the story of Israel's kings and also of God's faithfulness to his promises. It's a long story. And many Bible readers oftentimes, unfortunately, find it boring. Maybe that's because the Chronicles account opens up with a list of names: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, all beginning in 1 Chronicles 1:1-2 and ongoing. The genealogies go on, as I stated, for almost nine chapters, or nine chapters. But that's not all that's there in this document. We see that 1 and 2 Chronicles is an executive summary of God's covenant with David, and then how things played out afterwards.

The book tells the story and basically broken up into four major acts or parts. The first one is from Adam to David. Now, those first nine chapters I just mentioned cover all the time that takes place from Genesis 2 all the way to 1 Samuel 15, mostly via those long genealogies. They trace David's ancestry along with the other major families from the 12 tribes of Israel. Now, the second major act that we have is David's reign. David was a good king. He followed God, united the tribes of Israel together, and he delivered their nation from their enemies. Now, God makes an everlasting covenant with David. His son's throne, Solomon, will be forever established. Forever established—what an amazing promise that was made to David during that time. And that's found in 1 Chronicles 17. David draws up plans to make this great temple we talked about that would be dedicated to the Lord, but he dies, and in so doing, he charges Solomon and his people with the building of the temple. And even more than that, and not a side note but foundational, is he also challenged, him and the Israelites, to be faithful to the Lord, found in 1 Chronicles 28:8-9. And that is a challenge that should resonate today above all else. We may accomplish building projects. We may be involved in planting churches or helping churches grow or doing community efforts for the gospel's sake. At the end of all of it, one of the big things we need to understand that's historically from Genesis all the way through Revelation is the faithfulness of the men and women who decided that no matter what happened, they were going to follow God. So those are the first two acts from Adam to David, David's reign.

The third one is Solomon's reign. When Solomon becomes king, God asks him to really grant him a wish, so to speak. "What's one thing you really want?" Solomon wisely says that he wants wisdom instead of riches or long life or even the death of any of his enemies or competitors. God is pleased with that request and he grants him wisdom, plus he has tons of finances, has influence in powerful ways, and is really looked at to be probably the wisest and most influential king, if not just from that time period, possibly all of history. Solomon then has the amazing opportunity to build the temple of God in Jerusalem. It was a majestic house that was dedicated again to Yahweh. Underneath Solomon's rule, Israel flourishes financially. It flourishes economically. They flourish in their political ties. They have peace on their borders, which often wasn't the case. They really had a time when Solomon became the most prominent ruler and Israel became the most prominent nation in that region of that time. And you find a lot of that in 1 Chronicles 9:13-30 that lays out some of that astounding wealth, as well as the story that we just mentioned.

I find it interesting that the Bible even says that at the time of Solomon, silver was like pebbles. I just can't even fathom that. I think of it today as silver being like pennies and people pass them by as they lay on the parking lots of grocery stores or in the aisles of department stores and think, "What's a penny?" Silver was like that: so common that it was almost ignored as a monetary designation instead of cherishing it the way that really it would have been in times previous to that. So we have from Adam to David. We have David's reign. We have Solomon's reign. And then lastly, we have from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Now, the kingdom splits, as we've heard, after Solomon dies. Ten tribes rebel and they form a new kingdom to the north, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, they remain loyal to David's royal or his God-given line there. This act gives us the highlight of each of the kings' reigns, this Chronicles here. The kings that follow don't serve the Lord the way that David did, however. They neglect God's temple. They ignore God's laws. They persecute God's prophets. And they even seek out and establish their own new gods or adopt them from other nations, pagan and anti-God, anti-Yahweh God.

Now, everything wasn't horrible. There were a few good kings that bring about revival. But eventually, because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts and the hardness of the kings that led them, most of the time, God disciplines his people for forsaking him, which is exactly what David warned against prior to his death. Remember, stay faithful to God, and they do the exact opposite of that. The Babylonians come in. They sack Jerusalem. They raze the temple. They carry the children of Israel into captivity for 70 years. I think sometimes we see the numeric aspects of the Bible. We fail to recognize the enormity of it. When I think of silver as pebbles, we don't get the enormity of maybe the way they considered that monetary value of silver at that time with the wealth that they had. And I don't think we understand when we say 70 years. Seventy years they were in captivity. Seventy years feeling abandoned by God. Seventy years of recognizing the heartache of turning away from God and worshiping other gods in there. And then we see that after those 70 years, the Persian king Cyrus decrees that the temple would be able to be rebuilt. Light on the horizon or at the end of the tunnel. The Israelites finally realizing there was a hope and a chance that they could once again become the nation that God had wanted them to be all along.

The Chronicles focus on two important themes: God's covenant with David and the temple. And as you read 1 and 2 Chronicles, you see the Temple of God is the main location of interest. David plans it. Solomon builds it. Kings are crowned in it. Prophets are even killed in it. And the law is rediscovered in it. The temple is the center stage in the drama of Chronicles. The Chronicler, as the scholars have long referred to the author of this book, is anonymous. Now, Jewish tradition speculates that Ezra could have written both 1 and 2 Chronicles, which, like Samuel and Kings, originally formed one work. But nothing within the text provides us a definitive clue as to the compiler of the material. The author, or the Chronicler as they call him, surveys Israel's history as a sovereign state.

Now, there are several indications throughout the book that reveals the author's reliance on a variety of different source materials. They're referred to as annals, as books, as records, which are edited and cited as dependable historical documentation for the facts that are then written in 1 and 2 Chronicles. Whoever the author was, though, he was a meticulous historian who carefully utilized his official and unofficial documents that he was able to be exposed to. The time frame that we're talking about in 1 Chronicles mirrors parts of 2 Samuel as well as parts of 1 Kings. The chronicler focuses on David's reign in 1 Chronicles, which includes and even admits different events recorded in other biblical histories, so that this document is recording events that are significant for the purpose of what he's specifically talking about.

I'll give you for instance. 1 Chronicles doesn't include David's adultery with Bathsheba that we find in 2 Samuel 11. Recap of the story quickly. David, instead of going to war, is in his palace. He looks out at the time that the city women went to bathe. He saw Bathsheba. He had a lustful desire for her sexually, takes her into his home. He has a relationship with her sexually. Her husband Uriah he then brings in. He gets him drunk, still won't sleep with his wife. And David has Uriah killed and marries Bathsheba. And then God's judgment is they lose the child that Bathsheba and David had together. So that story, which is significant, isn't recorded here in Chronicles, but it is in 2 Samuel 11. And it's a well-known fact and the Chronicler knows that. And it didn't really bear repeating as it related to what his part of the story was.

And I think that's important to note because sometimes as we read the Bible, we think, "Well, God didn't put it here. He only put it here. Then are these passages conflicting with each other?" Not at all. I frequently tell people when we hear multiple sides to a story in the Bible, as we do in the gospels, that it would be like seeing an accident. If you had one person driving a car behind the accident, somebody is standing across the street from the accident, and somebody in the accident, you're going to get three different stories. But they won't contradict if they're all being truthful. They're just different perspectives. And I think you'll find the same thing here as you look at 1 Chronicles.

1 and 2 Chronicles, as we mentioned, cover all Hebrew history, from the creation of man in Genesis 2:20 all the way up through 1 Chronicles 1:1 restating that, and then leading up to, from Genesis, that creation, all the way up to the Hebrews' return from their exile, which we find in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. And as I stated, other texts of Scriptures are used there. You even find it in Ezra 1:1-4. Now, the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as 1 and 2 Samuel and also 1 and 2 Kings. But 1 and 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of this time period. The Book of 1 Chronicles was written after the exile to help those returning to Israel understand how to worship God. The history focused on the southern kingdom or the tribe again of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. And these tribes did tend to be more faithful to God as you read in the Chronicles.

Now, Chronicles was most likely written during the time also of Ezra and Nehemiah, while the Jews were dispersed throughout all of Persia. Some having returned to Israel, but not all of them. In fact, interestingly, archaeological evidence supports this premise and they found even fragments of an actual manuscript of Chronicles at Qumran, which is in the Middle East, which makes a date in the Persian period which was 583 to about 333 B.C., which, again, it's just cool how God allows those non-biblical texts to even reaffirm what we know as Christians as we have learned to study and lay out the Scriptures there.

Now, David and Solomon, as we mentioned, they're really the key characters here, and they were the great kings who ruled all Israel from their capital city of Jerusalem. The Chronicles record the history of these kings through mainly two lenses. The first is the lens of the Mosaic covenant. Now, the Mosaic covenant which God made with all Israel after he delivered them from Egypt, again, remember what happened in Egypt. The Israelites were in Egypt. Why? Because they had rejected God's commands, had not been faithful to God, so God puts them in bondage. In their bondage, God sends Moses and Aaron, and he tells them that he's going to rescue them from their captors, the Egyptians, through a course of the plagues that take place, which most of us, I believe, have heard of. If not, you can look that story up in Exodus. The plagues get to a point where finally the pharaoh, the king of Egypt lets them go. They go to the border of Egypt. God, in a miraculous way, leads them there with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. They come to a point of distraught as they think, "Oh, now we've hit the Red Sea. We're going to die." God again miraculously splits the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to head on their journey towards the Promised Land. Pharaoh's army is quickly behind that, realizing they've lost this huge labor force. He's angry at what's happened. And God again, in his providence, decides to take the walls of water that he split as the Israelites went across, have them come crashing down, and destroys what at that time was the greatest military power in that part of the world at least, if not the whole world, and crushed the army of Pharaoh.

So it's important to note that and that we're aware of that, that it's a part of the Mosaic covenant. That was the covenant God made as the children of Israel left this time of captivity with Egypt. Now, in this covenant, God sets Israel apart as his special nation. The terms, if Israel obeys God's law, then God will bless them. But if Israel rejects God's law, then God will curse or he will punish or reject them. He disciplines them. Now, the documents of this agreement are known as the Law of Moses, or even the Pentateuch, which we know as the first five books of the Old Testament.

Now, there's a second covenant that we need to see as we look at the lens of this time of history, and that's the Davidic covenant. Now, this is the covenant which God made to David. Now, David had planned to build a house for God, but God instead promises to establish David's family on the throne of Israel forever. God is faithful to his promise. Even when the northern tribes of Israel rebel, God keeps David and his line on the throne in Jerusalem. Now, the Davidic covenant is later realized in Jesus Christ, who is called both the son of David and the King of kings (Matthew 1:1 and Revelation 17:14).

Now, we have some key or theme verses in 1 and 2 Chronicles. We want to focus on those in 1 Chronicles in this study, but I encourage you, there's theme verses in 2 Chronicles as well. So I have four of them I'd like to share with you today. The first is found in 1Ch 11:1-2. "All Israel came together to David at Hebron, and he said this." Listen to this. "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'" And we know that promise was fulfilled. But you see the Israelites even embracing that in 1 Chronicles 11:1-2.

The second one is a little shorter. Its 1Ch 17:12, and it says this. "He (which is Solomon now) shall build for Me (Me being God) a house, and I will establish his throne forever." 1Ch 21:13 says this. David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress; let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is very great. But do not let me fall into the hands of man." Wow. That just gives you an amazing perception about how David really got it, that God was the one for punishment's sake or for blessing's sake, that he wanted to be in his court, knowing that man didn't have that ultimate good in mind for David like he knew God did.

And then the last one is 1Ch 29:11 that says this. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and in earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom. You are exalted as head over all." Do we believe that? What a powerful way of sharing who God really is: "Yours alone." And I encourage us all to embrace that concept that even though we live in the time of the Chronicler or in that time of Israel, is God truly the God that we can pray this kind of prayer to, that we can make this kind of declarative statement about: He is our God and he deserves to be our God?

I did have one other passage I wanted to read to you. I don't know that I would call it a theme verse, but I think it's a powerful part of the story here, the narrative that I wanted to share with you. And it's in 2 Chronicles 34:24-25. And it says this: "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah.'" Why? "Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to their gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place and it shall not be quenched." Remember, that goes back to the Mosaic covenant. "You obey what I tell you. You follow my steps, and I will make sure that you are blessed. You disobey and you will face my judgment."

Now, interestingly, as we see again the tie-in in the Old Testament, we find that the content in Chronicles will also reflect Moses' predictions in Deuteronomy. I'm just going to give you a few of them. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, we first of all see this: the anointing of a righteous king. Stated in Deuteronomy, we see fulfilled as we look at Chronicles. The establishment of a temple where God's name dwells (Deuteronomy 12:5-14). The third thing is the prosperity when Israel obeys God under David and Solomon. And we find that in Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

Number four, we see exile when Israel disobeys God. Deuteronomy 28:49-50 share that with us. And lastly, we see the restoration to the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 30:3. Those are all predictions made in Deuteronomy fulfilled in Chronicles. Isn't it cool how God ties that all in and how God always keeps his word?

Now, readers note, as we look into this, the extensive space again devoted to genealogies. So why are these family lists so common in Chronicles? Now, scholars say that genealogies serve many purposes. Now, among them, I want to just share a couple, so we don't think that there was a waste of space in our minds at least about this. First, we see this. They demonstrate the legitimacy of a person or a family's claim to a role or rank. It also, we find, preserves the purity of the chosen people and/or its priesthood. Thirdly, we see that it affirms the continuity of the people of God despite their expulsion from the Promised Land. In addition, we find, through the family history piece, that 1 Chronicles was priests, Levites, armies, temple officials, and other leaders of various ministries. You see that power again of not just words, not as God just trying to fill space, but a purpose behind even the genealogies in a little bit more extensive way, as I pointed out in those points there.

Now, in Chronicles, the history of Israel is told mainly through a priestly perspective. We talked about how it focused on the religious life or spiritual life of the people. But it's got that priestly perspective there. The Chronicler devoted significant attention to the worship of Yahweh and also a witness to follow the regulations of his law. The author included David's decision of the proper manner in which to undertake moving the Ark of the Covenant in chapter 13 and then chapters 15 to 16, and detailed descriptions of its return to Jerusalem. The Chronicler even highlighted one of David's psalms in 1Ch 16:8-36. We read the story of how David purchased the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which he then designated as the future site of the temple. We see that in 1Ch 2:15-30. Now, though David desired, as we mentioned, to build the temple, God revealed to him that David's son Solomon would have that honor in 1Ch 17:1-14.

Now, the Book of Chronicles are long. As we mentioned, one of the reasons for that is the genealogies and the records they have. But they're records of God's long-lasting faithfulness to his people, even when they weren't faithful to him. Again, grab onto that. God is faithful to us even when we're not faithful to him. As a pastor, I frequently talk to people who feel like they've messed up so badly, certainly God won't be faithful to them because they blew it so much and have not been faithful to God. We serve an amazing God. I love the passage that says his mercies are new every day. If you're struggling in that, I encourage you, embrace him today. He's waiting with open arms. And start to be faithful today. If you mess up, then start again tomorrow. But know this. No matter what you do or don't do, it never affects God's faithfulness to you.

So let's just review the big picture outline of 1 Chronicles. We've talked a lot about the genealogies, which is in chapter 1 to 9. We know that's from Adam to David. But then we find, picking up in chapter 10 and going through chapter 29, that David rules and unites Israel. Now, for future reference, you'll see that same breakdown in 2 Chronicles. 1 to 9, Solomon builds the temple. 10 to 35, David's line rules in Jerusalem. And then lastly, chapter 36, it's the time from Jerusalem to when they end up in exile in Babylon. Now, the Book of 1 Chronicles is a book basically of a narrative history and, again, the genealogies we talked about. The author appears, as we said, to be the prophet Ezra. And again, it was written (we didn't nail this down earlier) about 430 B.C. as it covers the events we discussed. The book, as we talked about, remember, parallels some of the other books. And I think it's important to note how much, again, that God reinforces those things as we think about his correlation of the Old Testament.

Now, in chapters 1 to 9, the book begins with Adam and runs through the genealogies of Israel. It continues through all the 12 tribes of Israel, then King David, and then also the priestly line. The descendants teach the history of the nation, extending from God's creation all the way through the exile in Babylon. 1Ch 4:10, I like the way it says it this way: "Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!' And God granted him what he requested." Now, there's been a book and a movement written on that one verse, "The Prayer of Jabez." You may have heard of it. But as it relates to this in particular, and the focal point of this, so we don't take it out of context anyway, is this was happening right when the Israelites, as they were suffering these things, were asking for God to step in and watch over and take care of them. And you see that happen in those that were faithful to God.

Now, chapters 10 through 29, then there's that review of King Saul's death, when the Philistines come and slay him, through King David's reign, including the preparation and then ultimately the building of the new temple, which Solomon would have that opportunity to do it. And then again, Scriptures says it best. 1Ch 28:20 says this: "David also told his son Solomon, 'Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don't be afraid or terrified. The Lord God, my God, will be with you. He will not abandon you before all the work on the Lord's Temple is finished.'" "He will be with you." This book ends with Solomon's reigning as king of Israel. The promises of God!

So why do we need the books of 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles when we already have the history of this time period in 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings? Great question. Now, just as the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each offer a different perspective on the life of Jesus, so the books of Chronicles present Israel's history, with a purpose different than each other in the historical context. The books of 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings reveal the monarchies of Israel and Judah, the sins of the nations that resulted in the exile. But the books of Chronicles written after the time of exile focus on the elements of history that God wanted the returning Jews to meditate upon: Obedience that results in God's blessing. Continue to devote yourself to God. Remain faithful to God, and that will reap blessings.

David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-19 summarizes the themes that the Chronicler really wished to communicate: glory to God, gratitude for giving David's family the leadership of the nation, the desire that David's descendants continue to devote themselves to God and then remain faithful to God no matter what happens. The Chronicler desired that the people remember the royal Davidic lineage, for God had promised a future leader would rise from that line. We know him as Jesus.

After the 70-year exile in Babylon, Jewish political and social power resided more with the religious than the political rulers. Telling Israel's history through a priestly and kingly lens was intended to prepare the people for the future Messiah. In David's song of thanksgiving in 1 Chronicles 16:33, he refers to the time when God will come to judge the earth. Now, this foreshadows Matthew 25, in which Jesus describes the time when he will come to judge the earth. Through the parables of the 10 virgins and the talents, he warns those that are found without the blood of Christ covering their sins, that they'll be cast into outer darkness. He encourages his people to be ready because when he comes, he will separate the sheep from the goats in judgment. Now, part of the Davidic covenant, which God reiterates in chapter 17, refers to the future Messiah who would be the descendant of David. Verses 13 to 14, [1Ch 17:13-14] in particular, described a son who will be established in God's house and whose throne will be established forever. This can only refer to Jesus Christ.

Let's wrap it up with a practical application. Genealogies such as the one we see here in 1 Chronicles may sometimes seem dry to us, but they remind us that God knows each of his children personally. Even down to the number of hairs on our heads, Matthew 10:30 says. We can take comfort in the fact that who we are and what we do is written forever in God's mind. If we belong to Christ, our names are written forever in the lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 13:8). God is faithful to his people, and he always keeps his promises. In the Book of 1 Chronicles, we see the fulfillment of God's promise to David when he's made king over all Israel (1Ch 11:1-3). We can be sure that his promises to us will be fulfilled. He has promised blessings to those who follow him, who come to Christ in repentance, and who obey his word.

Now, please don't misunderstand this. When we talk blessings, don't get locked into a modern day perspective in the world in which we live, that that means financial blessings. God blesses in so many ways beyond financial. Don't be restrictive to that when we experience obedience, experience where that means coming in obedience to Christ. Because it does bring blessings, and disobedience does bring judgment. The Book of 1 Chronicles as well as 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings is a chronicle to the pattern of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of the nation of Israel. And we go through that ourselves. Understand that when we sin, we need repentance. When we repent, God forgives and then restoration takes place. God is patient with us. He forgives our sin when we come to him in true repentance (1 John 1:9). We can take our comfort in the fact that he hears our prayer of sorrow, prayers of forgiving us, that we ask for forgiveness of our sin. He restores us to fellowship with him, and he sets us on a path to joy. I encourage you, read David's magnificent prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-20. Consider your own spiritual heritage.

Would you like to model such godly strength and character, as you read in those who followed God, to your children? What steps do you need to take in order to echo truthfully David's attitude in verse 11 [1Ch 29:11]? I'm going to say it again. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and in earth is yours."