

1 Chronicles

1. The Genealogies of Israel

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“What a waste of time and effort to study the birth and death records of the ancient Israel kings and people!” That is a common response when some Christians open the Book of First and Second Chronicles. At a glance, these two Books seem boring, tedious, and pointless for the readers of the 21st Century. It is like reading the obituary section in the newspaper or the card catalog at a public library.

But I see two reasons why we should study these Books:

1) Our Lord preserved these Books of First and Second Chronicles.

He watched over their composition and cared for their preservation, mainly for the Israel people. That should be good enough reason for us to put aside our personal opinions about these Books and study them diligently.

2) Help us learn to dig deeper.

The NT truths are pretty much laid bare where we can see. It doesn't take a whole lot of effort to start to figure out what the Lord wants us to learn from the NT. But for the OT, we have to get our spiritual shovels out and start to dig deeper, – by referring to a Hebrews dictionary, cross references, concordance, and commentaries. That is the fun part, ain't it?

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

Many historians and commentators believe that the writer of First Chronicles was none other than Ezra who also was called “Ezra the Scribe” and “Ezra the Priest” in the Book of Ezra. According to the Book of Ezra 7-10 and Neh 8, he returned from the Babylonian exile and reintroduced the Torah to the Jewish people in Jerusalem.

The timeline was around 450-400 B.C.

B. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

As we will learn while we study First and Second Chronicles, many of the events that were recorded in these Books are already mentioned in First and Second Samuel as well as First and Second Kings. While the Books of Samuel and Kings cover the historical part of Israel during that time, First and Second Chronicles tells it from a religious perspective. The Books of First and Second Chronicles were originally united as one Book.

The main theme of this Book is “To show the Israelites how they fit into God's plan by reminding them their godly roots and rediscovering their heritage.”

Remember, the Israelites who were reading this Book were returned from their 70 year exile. Many of them didn't have the foggiest idea about their God, history, and heritage, because they were born in the heathen kingdom where they only were familiar with pagan idol worships. They had to be taught about the God of their ancestors from scratch.

The Lord knew that He was not giving us the most exciting Books in the Bible, and He never intended to. First and Second Chronicles may not be terribly exciting, but they are absolutely essential.

By the way, the word "Chronicles" is from the Latin "Chronicoram" of which the definition is "A continuous detailed account of events arranged chronologically and without analysis or interpretation" like our Encyclopedia.

In A.D. 70, the Roman soldiers burned the Herod's Temple down to the ground with all the genealogies of the Israelites in it. Since then, there is not one single Jewish living person who knows one's genealogy with the exception of Jesus Christ.

This is only my opinion. God preserved these genealogies for the 144,000 Jews who are mentioned in chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation:

Revelation 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

How are these Books going to help them to know about their genealogies when they don't know theirs? I don't know, that is not my problem, but God's. However, God never has a problem that He cannot solve. So, am I going to make a doctrine out of this? Nah!

C. STRUCTURES

1 Chronicles divides into four sections:

- 1) Chapter 1-9: Genealogies
- 2) Chapter 10: King Saul
- 3) Chapter 11-21: King David
- 4) Chapter 22-29: Temple

D. THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

In the midst of hundreds of names mentioned in chapter 1 through 9, many of the men were characterized as being evil, the Lord chose to dedicate two verses for one person, Jabez. The Lord said through Ezra that Jabez was more honorable than others.

His name is rather strange. It means "pain". Was it because the delivery of the baby was so painful to mama or was the circumstance of delivery painful to her? We don't know. But his character stood head and shoulder above others and noted by the Lord.

I don't believe that Jabez's prayer was a typical selfish prayer of "Give me this, let me have that". According to a Chaldean translation of this prayer, with the line: "and enlarge my borders with disciples." Jabez's desire for more territory was not only to displace the wicked, but also to advance the cause of godliness through the multiplication of disciples.

Jabez asked that the hand of God would be with him. "The 'hand of the Lord' is a biblical term for God's power and presence in the lives of His people. He also asked to be kept from evil and that he would not cause pain. In this Jabez recognized that the hand of God to bless us can transform the evil and pain of life. The Lord granted his prayer because he prayed according to the Lord's will.

You might be familiar with a book called "The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life" by Bruce Wilkinson in 2000. It became an international bestseller, topping the New York Times bestseller list and selling nine million copies.

The book "The Prayer of Jabez" has been compared to the "Prosperity Gospel" of the circle of the Faith Movement and has received the criticism often addressed toward its doctrine. For example, Wilkinson's idea of Jabez prayer suggests that God ought to do what man wants, instead of man following God's will. Some theologians and Bible teachers have taken issue with the form of the prayer, citing Jesus' admonition against "vain repetitions" in Matthew 6:7-9. The commercialization of Jabez by the publishing company and the author had attracted criticism further more.

If you ask an opinion about Wilkinson's book "The Prayer of Jabez" to any of the Calvary Chapel pastors, you are not going to get a recommendation.

E. HALF-WAY CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 Chronicles 5:25-26 And they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. 26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day.

Chapter 5 describes the genealogies of the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that dwelt in the land that was on the east side of the Jordan river. They'd prefer to stay on the east of the Jordan due to the rich plain for their livestock so they asked Moses to give them their allotment of the land.

They should have stayed with the rest of the tribes on the west side of the Jordan which gave them a natural barrier against the enemies. But because of the dollar sign, rather the shekel sign in front of their eyes, they'd rather stay out there where they could be influenced spiritually and attacked physically.

The same goes for many Christians after they got saved, they choose to live the life outside of Christ because the popularity and acceptance by their worldly friends and family members. They are more concerned about what those people think about them than what their God would think about them. It is no wonder why they stumble and fall into sins because they hang around so close to the trap of sin.

What a contrast between Jabez who was fully committed to the Lord and these half-hearted tribes!

May we never live the half-way Christian life for our own selfish reasons.

F. SUICIDE

1 Chronicles 10:4-5 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. 5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died.

King Saul's life started with sizzle and ended up in fizzle because of his disobedience to the Lord. Instead of finding security within the arms of God, he relied on himself and only to become more insecure of himself. He felt threatened by the presence of

David and tried to kill him. While he was against David, he was against the Lord, because the Lord chose David over Saul and David was "a man after God's own heart".

When king Saul realized that he was mortally wounded, he'd rather take his own life. This brings an important question to ourselves: If a born-again Christian commits suicide, does that person go to hell in spite of one's salvation? Some denomination Bible teachers insist that if a born-again believer commits suicide, he will end in hell because he cannot repent from his sin of self-murder.

If that is a right theology, we have two very important questions to ponder:

1) Do all Christians ask God to forgive ALL of their sins ALL THE TIME by remembering them each one?

If you are forgetful as me, we are in deep doodoo in that case.

2) How do they know that the person who committed suicide already asked the Lord to forgive his sin of suicide before he killed himself?

If those teachers say, "That doesn't count," I have to ask them another question, "Have you ever sinned against the Lord even though you knew exactly what you were about to do was a sin?" The answer would be "Yes."

G. Campbell Morgan said, "Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice." I believe that Morgan was a little too harsh in that statement, because he probably was never been in the situation of the person who is about to commit suicide – mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Listen, I don't find anywhere in the Bible that talks against suicide in a negative way or positive way. It simply recorded them. When a person is brought to the point of taking their own life, the act of taking their life is an irrational act. That person just does not see a way out of one's life dilemma. Anyone who does commit suicide has given in to the lies and deceptions of satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy according to John 10:10.

It is wrong to take your own life, and it is a very cruel act toward those who remain, but I don't believe that God would condemn that person to hell if he or she is a born-again believer. It is not an unpardonable sin. Our God's grace, mercy, and love cover much more than what we can think.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) When we pray to our Lord, pray according to His will, not ours and for His glory, not ours. We get "Yes" to our prayers every time.

2) Living haphazard Christian life does not glorify the Lord and it only brings misery to ourselves.

3) When we come across any believer who contemplates committing suicide, first, pray for God's intervention; second, we should make ourselves available to encourage them to see what the Lord wants them to see in their lives.