



**Key Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:17-18 (see also 2 Kings 18:5-7)**

**Key Thought: God encourages His people after their exile by telling of kings in the mold of David who sought God's ways.<sup>1</sup>**

### **The gospel in 1 Chronicles:**

If 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings were difficult to read, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles are a breath of fresh air. These books cover much of the same ground as Kings, but they offer a breath of fresh air for the reader. Kings tells the people in exile “this is why this has happened to you. Look what you did.” But Chronicles is written for God’s people after being released from exile. For a people wearied and worried, Chronicles says “yes, God still cares for you. Yes, you still have a future with Him.”

One of the first things you will notice about 1 Chronicles is the long list of names. These are “genealogies.” We are used to seeing them for about a chapter long back in Genesis. But this one takes us all the way to chapter 8. Then chapter 8 begins, “so this

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<sup>1</sup> Note, key passages, key thoughts, and hook questions come from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*. These notes are compiled from 4 principal sources. In addition to Michael Williams book, notes are also derived from Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, and H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible*.

is the genealogy of Israel. But while we are at it, let's start another one about Judah." And you are tempted to throw the Bible across the room. But he doesn't take that long—not even the whole chapter. Genealogy is not simply watching someone else's vacation videos. Genealogy is a way to tell the story, to frame the narrative, that gives meaning and purpose to your life. This list doesn't just start with Moses (which would be fine, or even Abraham, which would seem thorough. No—this goes all the way back to Adam. The author of Chronicles says the story of Israel begins with Adam. It begins with God-breathed life, walking with God in the cool of the day. That is where God gave laws; you could say God entered into covenant with humanity. All of human existence, says the Chronicler, is the story of God in covenant with his people. That's how the book begins. Then, the writer tells the post-exilic audience "Do you remember the story of King David? If you want to find your identity, let's go back and recall the covenant God made or remade with David. So after a brief description of Saul and his sons, Chronicles 1 opens chapter 11 with David anointed King, and won't stop talking about him until he dies in the last 5 verses of the book.

David is heralded as "the man after God's own heart." I mentioned in a previous lesson that this phrase doesn't mean David's thought, intentions, or feelings were the most like God (though we see David think nobly of God, often have good intentions, and offer some of the most moving emotional poetry available in the Psalms). When David sins—and sins greatly—this phrase stings a bit: "a man after God's own heart." But "heart" probably refers to God's plans for the nation. David carried out God's plans for the nation like no other. That is why it's called the Davidic covenant, and it's why David is the pre-eminent character of the Old Testament. When Paul is in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), he stands up to tell the history of God's people leading to Jesus Christ. And he starts with Moses, then the conquering that happened under Joshua and others. Then he mentions Samuel, and Saul. Then David: "the son of Jesse, a man after [God's] heart" the one whom God says "will do all my will." Then he jumps immediately to Jesus.

David created the template, the atmosphere, for a covenant to yield lasting fruit. The central picture of this is the Temple. I know David didn't physically build the Temple. But he planned it, prepared for it, deeded it over to Solomon, prayed for it, then died. That's 1 Chronicles! It connects the Temple with King David. Much like Babe Ruth hit an opening day homerun in the new Yankee stadium in 1923; so it became known as "the house that Ruth built." Well, Solomon built the Temple. But it was the throne of David.

The book of 1 Chronicles expresses hope. For a people returning from exile, and wondering if God still cares for them, if they are still a people in any way, shape, or

form, they are told “you are the children of Adam, and you are the children of Abraham, and you are the people under the rule of David. You are the people of promise.”

Surely we can see the gospel here. The gospel is preached to every creature under heaven. Every son or daughter of Adam is now able to truly be a “son of Abraham” and an heir according to the promise. And that is because of a king who came through the line of David to surpass them all, and to welcome all into his kingdom who want to have His rule over them. His name is Jesus Christ, and he is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of God.

### **The gospel in 2 Chronicles:**

The book of 2 Chronicles opens with 9 chapters about the reign of Solomon. It’s a glorious 40-year reign. The same stories appear that were in 1 Kings 1-10. The stories present such hope. Such promise. He was a man in whom the Holy Spirit was at work (1 Chron 28:12). There is his prayer for wisdom. There is the recording of his building God’s temple, praying for people who would come to the Temple, and encouraging the people to follow God’s laws and instructions. If you want a glimpse of the power and exhilarating hope of this story, imagine being a post-exilic reader, wondering who you are and how to view your place in the grand scheme of things, and reading this:

As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. <sup>3</sup>When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” (2 Chron 7:1-3)

We are told of all of Solomon’s wealth, his building powers, his military accomplishments. And then he dies (2 Chronicles 9). The author tries very hard to present both David and Solomon as deeply important (though flawed) men. Not so much because of how great they were, but because of how God’s greatness, and Israel’s importance, could be seen in their reigns. Even if future kings were also-rans, ne’er-do-wells, or nincompoops, never forget the glory of Israel that once was, and then tell yourself it is the glory that IS, for the same King rules Israel today—that King is God. God is still on his throne, and this is what you are called to be.

A few years ago, I ran across this dramatic story:

While on one of his expeditions to the Antarctic, Sir Ernest Shackleton was once compelled to leave some of his men on Elephant Island, with the intention of returning for them and carrying them back to England. But he was unavoidably delayed, and by the time he could go for them he found to his dismay that the sea had frozen over and his men were cut off. Three times he tried to reach them, but his efforts ended in failure. Finally, in his last effort, he found a narrow channel through the ice.

Guiding his small ship back to the island, he was delighted to find his men not only alive and well, but all prepared to get aboard. They were soon on their way to safety and home. After the excitement ended, Sir Ernest inquired how it was that they were ready to get aboard so promptly. They told him that every morning their leader rolled up his sleeping bag, saying, “Get your things ready, boys, the Boss may come today.”<sup>2</sup>

In his own book, “Elephant Island,” Sir Earnest Shackleton concludes: “And sure enough, one day the mist opened and revealed the ship for which they had been waiting and longing and hoping for over four months.”<sup>3</sup>

This is what the author is trying to do. The people are weary. Nothing looks like it did before. Who are we if we are not experiencing all the splendor of our former days? “Roll up your sleeping bags, boys,” says the author of Chronicles, “The throne of David remains the resting place of God’s leadership over his people. And he promised it would be his throne for all time. The restoration could start today.”

What about the rest of 2 Chronicles? Well, 2 Chronicles 10-36 goes over the same 350-year saga recorded in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12 through 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25. If you’ve already read those stories, why read them again? Because the Chronicler has different emphases. I love how the Bible doesn’t sugarcoat or hide the truth of these stories. We learn terrible things about even the most important men in Israel’s history (like David and Solomon). They don’t give us purified stories. But they do often “frame” the stories so that you can let the truth of what happened lead you to find hope in God, rather than simply dwell on the futility of failed human leadership. So the writer of Chronicles tells all about the rejection and the rebellion that occurs from king to king. He pulls no punches

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/60375/shackleton-found-them-ready-by-sermon-central>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/south/south\\_shackleton\\_chapter12.php#:~:text=From%20a%20fortnight%20after%20I,hoping%20for%20over%20four%20months.](https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/south/south_shackleton_chapter12.php#:~:text=From%20a%20fortnight%20after%20I,hoping%20for%20over%20four%20months.)

when he tells of King Rehoboam abandoning the law of the Lord, which is equal to rejecting God himself (2 Chron 12:1-5). Or when telling of King Manasseh of Judah, whose rule was so bad (he practices soothsaying and built altars in the Temple itself), he was carried off in manacles into captivity, and the evils of his reign cause damage even Josiah's reforms couldn't fully overcome (2 Chron 33:11; 2 Kings 21:1-16). But we it is given in the context of a God who made great promises and will not forget those promises. And of kings who, from time to time, remind you of the promise of what a Davidic king *could* be. For example, in 2 Chronicles 29-31, Hezekiah renews the covenant, as does Josiah later (2 Chron 34-35).

But remember how 1 Chronicles began, then look at how 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles ends. Babylon's empire lasted about 70 years, as Jeremiah predicted. Persia comes along and defeats Babylon, and ushers in a new wave of power and dominance, since Persia will rule for about 200 years. The conquering king of Persia is named Cyrus. To show how God works in mysterious ways: imagine if you were a conquered, displaced and dispossessed people. Displaced and dispossessed because of conquering kingdoms—Assyria and Babylon. The new conquering kingdom comes along, and guess what is the first official thing the new king does? He issues an edict to allow any displaced and dispossessed people to go back home and worship their own gods! You can read the text of his edict in the last verse of 2 Chronicles:

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.’”

Now the author of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles makes sure you read that wonderful ending in the light of the whole long story he's been telling. It's not a story about human leaders. It's a story about God. In verse 22 of his last chapter, the author says what Cyrus did was so “that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled.” And that's why Cyrus didn't just do this on his own, or out of his own ingenuity. No, “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” to do it.

We could look at the aftermath and imagine where the people were when they read this. You may know that many people did go home, in waves and over time. But it wasn't like a red carpet return to the glory of old days. As one writer says, “the land has been neglected for nearly two generations. The city of Jerusalem is still a burned-out skeleton with no protective walls. The temple is gone. They face bad harvests and renewed problems of debt and taxation. On top of that, they face suspicion and opposition from the mixture of people in the northern part of the territory who pester them with threats

and political slander against them to the Persian authorities.”<sup>4</sup> To put it succinctly: It doesn’t feel much like the glory days.

But the author of Chronicles is saying, “wrap up your sleeping bags, boys...the same God who brought about the reign of David and Solomon still has a people. He’s still on his throne. This is his land. And he will not forget his promise.”

Surely we see the gospel here as well. Kings like David come along to renew the covenant, but no king was quite like David. And David wasn’t quite like God. But then, Jesus comes and keeps every law perfectly; he embodies the law in every way, and even more so—is the express image of God himself. And he becomes the King and High Priest forever. As Revelation 5:5 puts it: “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed!” If only we had a King in whom we could trust! If only we had a king who could never be defeated. If only we had a King who would walk in God’s ways perfectly, so that the promise of God would stand firm, and he would never leave nor forsake his people.

We have such a king. Such a high priest. The Son of God himself: Jesus Christ. Blessed be his name!

### Hook Questions:<sup>5</sup>

1. Are you good enough for heaven? Do you behave as though you were? Do you expect other Christians to behave as though they were? If you are relying on your own righteousness (whatever that is) to bring about or maintain your relationship with God, then what do you think Christ’s righteousness accomplished?
2. How do *you* acknowledge the Lord’s rule in your own circumstances? Do you regard yourself as a subject of King Jesus? If someone watched you during the day, who would they say really ruled your life? Jesus? Public opinion? You?

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament In Seven Sentences*, 135.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.56.