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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

14. 1 CHRONICLES

When people try to read through the Bible they tend to get stuck either in Leviticus or in Chronicles. Leviticus is difficult to read because there is no storyline and the rituals described seem to have no relevance to us in the 21st century. Chronicles is difficult because the first nine chapters are nothing more than genealogies with names that you cannot pronounce. The result of this all is that 1 and 2 Chronicles are very little known in church circles today. There is only one verse that is widely quoted and that is from 2 Chronicles 7:14 “*If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*” No doubt we can draw spiritual principles from that statement, but I would hasten to add that “their land,” is not England, America or Ulster. The land in question was the land of Israel. But sadly apart from this verse and perhaps one or two others people do not know Chronicles at all. So perhaps we could start by thinking about,

1. The Purpose of the Book:

(a) There are Similarities:

With other books. 1 Chronicles contains material found in 2 Samuel and 2 Chronicles contains material found in 1 and 2 Kings. There are similarities.

(b) There are Omissions:

1. There is no mention of Samuel’s part in choosing kings.
2. Saul barely gets a mention.
3. David is mentioned at some length, but even then it is interesting to notice what is omitted. His struggles with Saul are ignored, Absalom’s rebellion is missed out, and the whole episode with Bathsheba the turning point in David’s reign does not receive a single line. (a) (b)

(c) There are Additions:

For example 1 Chronicles starts with genealogies or “*family trees*,” but the author is only concerned with the royal line of David. None of the kings in the north were in the royal line so they don’t receive a mention. Chronicles is specifically a history of the royal house of David and nothing more.

(d) There are Differences:

Samuel and Kings are written from a prophetic viewpoint, Chronicles from a priestly. Samuel and Kings are more negative, Chronicles is more positive. Samuel and Kings are a record of both Israel and Judah, Chronicles is a record primarily of Judah, Samuel and Kings is all about Man’s failings, Chronicles is all about God’s faithfulness. Samuel and Kings emphasizes kings and prophets, Chronicles emphasizes the temple and priests. Samuel and Kings were written shortly after the beginning of captivity in Babylon, Chronicles was written shortly after the return

from the captivity. *Now when you bring together the similarities, the omissions, the additions and the differences you can see the purpose of the book.* The books of Chronicles are given from a different viewpoint. The books of Kings give us history from the viewpoint of the prophets, Chronicles from the viewpoint of the priests. The books of Kings give us history from the human viewpoint, Chronicles from the divine standpoint. The former show us man ruling, the latter show us God overruling. Chronicles therefore provides us with a more heavenly perspective. And it's because of this,

(2) The Penman of the Book:

Is thought to be Ezra. Now remember that a chronicle is a record of events. Have you ever heard of “*The Banbridge Chronicle*,” ? Does it not sound a lot more impressive than “*The Lurgan Mail* ?” You see, 1 & 2 Chronicles were originally one book. The original title in the Hebrew Bible read, “*The annals (i.e., events or happenings) of the days.*” When they were divided into two books in around 200 B.C. the title changed to “*the things omitted*,” reflecting material not found in Samuel and Kings. The English title “*Chronicles*,” originated with Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation around 400 A.D. which used the fuller title “*The Chronicles of the Entire Sacred History.*”

Now there is a very clear resemblance in style and language between the two books of Chronicles and those of Ezra and Nehemiah. As a result 1 & 2 Chronicles are generally credited to Ezra the priest, who was a skilled

scholar and teacher of the Jewish law. (Ezra 7:6) Now that brings us to,

(3) The Period of the Book:

For you when you speak of Ezra you are talking about postexilic, that is after the exile. Actually, 1-2 Chronicles covers the longest period of any of the books of the Bible, beginning with Adam and ending with the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, in 536 B.C. authorizing the Jews to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (2 Chron 36:22-23) Now that is the scope of Chronicles. As John Phillips says, “*it represents a period of time not less than thirty five hundred years. It covers the longest period of any books of the Bible.*” Do you know what the last book in the Hebrew Old Testament is ? It's Chronicles. Now in our English Old Testament it's Malachi but in the Hebrew Bible it's Chronicles which might lead us to believe that its connection with Kings is not as great as we may think. This brings us to consider,

(4) The People of the Book:

You see, the Chronicles were compiled after the Babylonian exile, when the remnant had returned from Babylon to Judaea under Ezra and Zerubbabel. (6:15 9:1) The very last words of 2 Chronicles make even the edict of Cyrus (2 Chron 36:22-23) which officially ended the exile, a thing of the past. Thus the Chronicles were specially written for these repatriated Jews as a chronicle of God's intention of future blessing in spite of the nations past moral and spiritual failure. You see, here were the

Jews back in the land of promise with a monumental task before them. Their cities were heaps of rubble, their temple was gone the land was desolate and in ruins. Ancient enemies were hostile still and many Jewish people were indifferent to their emancipation preferring a life of luxury in Babylon and Persia to the rigors of pioneering work in Jerusalem. Most devastating of all, the throne of David was gone, and the returning remnant under Zerubbabel, had a commission to build a temple not a throne. So these books of Chronicles were written to interpret to the people the meaning of their history and to encourage them to rebuild the temple for God had not forgotten his promises to His people. Its as though these books were saying, “ *All is not lost though the glory has departed and they are under the control of Gentile powers, God still has a future for them. The throne of David was gone but the line of David still stood.*”
(Wilkinson & Boa)

Now having given you, that by way of background 1 Chronicles falls into two parts. The genealogies from Adam to David (1:1-9:44) and then the reign of David from (10:1 – 29:30) So first of all we are struck with,

(1) THEIR IMPRESSIVE ANCESTRY Ch's 1-9

For this is a series of genealogical tables. Sidlow Baxter says, “ *Nine chapters of genealogical tables. What waste of space. Nay, rather what blindness to think so. No part of the Chronicles is more important. Such lines of descent were of sacred importance to all godly Jews and rightly so for they knew that their nation, besides being the*

repository of a special Divine revelation was the possessor of wonderful Divine promises reaching on to unborn generations. The chronicler himself knew well enough that these genealogies reveal the selective process of Divine election from Adam downwards, and that the covenant line of redemptive purpose was to culminate in the Messiah.”

Now I want you to notice here that there is no interest whatsoever in the northern tribes. The breakaway under Jeroboam is to be reckoned to be a serious spiritual, as well as national disaster, and the returned exiles among whom Chronicles was circulated are not interested in the story of disloyal Israel, only Judah is in their thoughts. So in this impressive ancestry we see,

(a) A CERTAIN PEOPLE:

Now when you are having your daily devotions what do you do when you come to the genealogies ? Getting a blessing out of a genealogy is like expecting to find a marriage proposal in a telephone directory. Now Chronicles begins with a list of names. So what ? Who cares ? What is the point and purpose of all these names ? An old Scottish preacher was reading the opening chapter of Matthew 1, he read, “ *Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren.*” Then, he paused and said, “ *And they kept on begetting one another all the way down this side of the page and clear on to the other side.*” Now put yourself in Ezra's shoes. He had a ministry especially to a little remnant of hardy souls who had come back from Babylon in order to

raise a new nation from the rubble of the past. And Ezra's first aim was to show that although the throne was gone, the royal line of David was still intact. Hence the genealogies. Now I have already said that in the Hebrew Bible the book of Chronicles is not found in the historical section. It does not follow in sequence after the book of Kings. Rather it concludes the Old Testament. You see, the genealogies in Chronicles lead up to the genealogy in Matthew (Ch 1) which opens the New Testament. The Jew reading his Bible comes to this register which is not complete, but when he turns to (Matt Ch 1) he finds it completed there. Do you recall that the earliest prophecy of the Messiah simply promised a Saviour from the human race ? Do you recall what God said to the serpent ?
“ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen 3:15)

But then over time the specific race and then the particular family from which the Messiah would come were identified. He was come to of Abraham (Gen 12:3) of Judah (Gen 49:10) and of David. (2 Sam 7:12-16) You see, when these exiles returned home the temple was gone, and the throne was gone but the line of David was still intact. From “ *Adam*,” to “ *Zedekiah*,” (3:15) as the Chronicles proved God had preserved the of David to execute His sovereign purpose of bringing the Lord Jesus into this world.
 The Companion Bible offers an insightful commentary to 1-2 Chronicles.

“ These books belong to quite another part of the Old Testament, and do not follow in sequence to the books of Kings. They are, according to the Hebrew Canon, the conclusion of the Old Testament; and, the genealogies here lead up to that of Matthew 1: 1, and the commencement of the New Testament. They end with the ending of the kingdom; and, the question of Cyrus, ‘ Who is there ? ’ (2 Chron 36: 23) is followed by the answer, ‘ Where is he ? ’ (Matt 2: 2), and the proclamation of the kingdom by the rightful King and His forerunner. It begins with the first Adam and leads on to the ‘ last, ’ Adam. It deals with the kingdom of Judah because Christ was proclaimed as the successor of David.”

My during the period of the Hebrew history of the Old Testament, Israel came into conflict with 4 world powers.

In relation to Egypt: Israel **Grew** Up:
 In relation to Assyria: Israel **Gave** Up:
 In relation to Babylon: Israel **Girded** Up:
 In relation to Persia: Israel **Got** Up:

You see, against this changing panorama of world empires the Lord wrote Hebrew history. Through it all God was working His eternal and sovereign purpose to bring the Lord into a lost and dying world for Jews and Gentiles. From the Creation to the Flood to Egyptian bondage through the Red Sea, in the wilderness, to the Land of Promise, through the times of the Judges, Kings, Prophets, and through 70 years of captivity, where man ruled, God overruled. As John Phillips says,

He overruled the passions and powers of men, immutable in His counsels, invincible in His purposes, from generation to generation, pursuing His eternal purpose to prove that He cannot be impeached, He cannot be overtaken, and He cannot be dethroned.

My what a comfort to know that He knows, what we don't know. His eye is on the clock, His hand is on the compass, He doeth all things well, and He maketh no mistakes. Hallelujah “ *God is still on the throne.* ”

(b) A CERTAIN PRAYER:

You see, there are some marvellous “ *gems among the genealogies,* ” that you have to look for when reading through them. One is found in (4:9-10) Now this story may have been included to encourage the dispirited returning exiles. You see, Jabez means “ *pain.* ” So the pain felt by the returning exiles can be changed to blessing by the God who answers our prayers, enlarges our borders, dispels our loneliness and conquers our enemies. Do you see this is a prayer for

1. Divine Enrichment:

“ *Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed,* ” Now what is a blessing ? Well, “ *to bless in the Biblical sense means to ask for or to impart supernatural favour. When we ask for God's favour we're not asking for more of what we could get for ourselves. We're crying out for the wonderful unlimited goodness that only God has the power to know*

about or give to us. ” The Bible tells us, “ *the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich and he addeth no sorrow with it.* ” (Prov 10:22) Now a blessing has three characteristics. It comes

*** From God for His glory:**

*** To you for your good:**

*** It is channeled through you for the good of others:**

Now don't forget that. “ *O that Thou bless me indeed,* ” I don't want a substitute blessing, or a false blessing. I want it to come from God for His glory, I want it to come for me for my good. But if you stop there you are selfish. I want it come to me to touch the lives of others. You see, God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others (Gen 12:3) Is this your desire ? “ *Oh that bless me indeed.* ”

2. Divine Enlargement:

“ *And enlarge my coast,* ” (4:10) In that day a persons border or territory would mark the limit of his influence. Jabez was asking God to give him greater responsibility, more influence larger opportunities to do something for Him. His was a God sanctioned ambition for his underlying motive was the glory of God. You see, here is a man who asks God for increase, he wants God to expand his opportunities for service. You see, the more faithful you are, the more God will bless you, the more God blesses you, the more enlargement there is, the more enlargement there is, the more work you have to do. Do you recall what Christ said to the good servant ? “ *Thou*

hast been faithful in a very little have thou authority over ten cities.” (Lk 19:17) Faithfulness in little things is God’s appointed way to bigger things. “ O that Thou and enlarge my coast.” (4:10) It was Hudson Taylor that used to pray, “ Oh, God give me wider usefulness.” Is it not sad that there are Christians who are looking for retirement so that they can do less ? Jabez was not looking to do less, he was looking to do more. He wasn’t looking to slow up, he was looking to speed up. In effect what he was saying was, “ Oh God expand my opportunities and my impact in such a way that I can touch more lives for your glory.” Is this your desire ? (a) (b)

3. Divine Enablement:

*“ And that thine hand might be with me,” (4:10) You see enlarged territory involves increased responsibilities and imposes greater demands. Jabez knew that he required a power greater than his own to possess and develop his new land for God. God’s hand represents His mighty power. My when God wants to get something done, He gets His hand upon you. Ezra says, “ I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me,” (7:28) Nehemiah testifies, “ I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me,” (Neh 2:18) and John the Baptist moved Israel so mightily because “ the hand of the Lord was with him.” (Lk 1:66) That is what Jabez wanted ? “ Oh, that and that Thine hand might be with me,” pushing me, holding me, sustaining me. You see, Jabez realised something very important. **The blessing is more important than the blessing.** When you start seeking the blessings of God, you have to remember that*

with them you must seek God in the blessing. Why ? Otherwise, you won’t be able to handle the blessings that God gives you. ***Did you know that success is more dangerous than failure ?*** Failure never went to anyone’s head. You see, it finally hit Jabez, if God answers my prayer and God blesses me, and God enlarges my territory, and God gives me more responsibility and more opportunity, His hand had better be on my life or I won’t be able to handle it all. Independence says, “ *Keep your hands off me.*” Dependence says, “ *Keep your hands on me.*” My there is no problem you cannot solve, no circumstance you cannot face, no enemy you cannot defeat, if the hand of the Lord is with you. What a prayer this was. (a) (b) (c)

4. Divine Environment:

“ And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.” (4:10) Jabez well knew the inevitable peril of an enlarged coast, increased activity on the part of his enemies. He knew that the more you do for God, and the more God does through you, the higher ambition you have, and the more advancement that comes your way, the more you are being set for the Devil to tempt you, trip you, and trap you. Does this not show you how mature and godly Jabez really was ? He was saying, “ God bless me, enlarge me, lead me, empower me, but keep me humble and keep me holy.” Do you remember what Christ taught us to pray ? “ And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Lk 11:4) How many of you have ever committed a sin ? How many of

you have ever committed the same sin a second time, a third time, ten times ? Why is that ? We keep committing sin, and then come to the Lord and say, “ *Lord, forgive me I have messed up again.* ” Now thank God, He does forgive us of our sins. But Christ taught us to not only pray “ *forgive us our sins,* ” but also “ *deliver us from evil.* ” We need protection from sin. One day Coach Jordan of Auburn University in the USA said to Mike Kolen, who played for the Miami Dolphins, “ *Mike I want you to do some scouting for me.* ” Mike said, “ *Sure, coach, what kind of man do you need ?* ” Coach Jordan said, “ *Well, Mike you know there’s a man that when he is knocked down he just stays there.* ” Mike said, “ *We don’t want him do we coach ?* ” “ *No, sir; we don’t want him.* Then the Coach said, “ *You know Mike, there’s a man that when he is knocked down he gets back up, and when he’s knocked back down he stays there.* ” “ *I don’t think we want him either coach.* ” The Coach then said, “ *Mike there’s a man who when he gets knocked down, he gets up, he gets down again and he gets up, he gets knocked down again and he gets up, in fact every time he keeps getting up.* ”

“ *Yes, coach, that’s the kind of man we want, isn’t it coach ?* ” “ ***No, Mike, I want you to find the man who keeps knocking every one down.*** ” My there are times we get knocked down and I am grateful that the Lord Jesus will pick us up. But God wants us to do a little knocking down for a change. He wants us to be victorious in our battles with sin. That’s why Jabez prayed for God to protect him from evil. Evil communications:
 (1 Cor 15:33) evil speaking: (Eph 4:31) an evil heart.
 (Heb 3:12) You see, the one thing that can reverse the

process and take you from the extraordinary to the ordinary is sin. From the time Samson was born he was intended by God to be extraordinary, but if you know the story sin took away his supernatural strength and made him just like one of the boys. Now when you measure you’re praying by this man’s praying how do you feel ? *Mind you it was not a long prayer, but you see prayer is not measured by its length but by its strength.* He prayed for (a) (b) (c) (d) Did God respond ? “ *And God granted him that which he requested.* ” (a) (b)

(c) ***A CERTAIN PRINCIPLE:***

And the principle is God’s work deserves the best.

1. That’s why Saul was Rejected:

Now in 1 Samuel (Ch 31) its simply recorded that King Saul met his death in battle with the Philistines. But do you see how the chronicler reports it ? (10:13-14) Who slew him ? The Lord slew him. The Philistines were merely executioners acting out God’s justice. (10:13) Do you what God wants from His people in this 21st century ? The same thing that He wanted from His people in the 1st century. Obedience. John says, “ *And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments.* ”
 (1 Jn 2:4) Does God’s work not deserve the best ? 1.

2. That’s why the Priests were Rewarded:

Details are given about the Levites and their appointment
 “ *unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house*

of God.” (6:48) They have seemed to have responded enthusiastically to their duties and responsibilities. Later some of the priests are described as “ *very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.*” (9:13) You see, only the best is good enough for the service of God. Does this not rebuke our half heartedness ? My when it comes to the work of God, what kind of attitude do you have ? Are you giving of your best ? (1)

(2) THEIR IDEAL KING Ch's 10-29

For the remaining chapters, focus on David, the national hero. Now David was the yardstick by which God measured the behaviour of each successive king of Judah, which is the why the book of Chronicles spends so much time on David. (1 Kings 11:4, 6, 15:11) David's was Israel's ideal king. He was a shepherd at heart, but he was also a soldier, a psalmist, a statesman, and a saint. He loved the Lord and not even his glaring sins could obscure that fact. You see, the great burden of this book seems to be, “ *Oh, if only we could back to David. If only the golden days of David could be restored. If only the kings of Judah not only sat on David's throne but ruled with David's heart.*” In these concluding chapters we see,

(a) DAVID THE SOVEREIGN:

For in 1 Chronicles David is presented in all his strength and with the exception of the census in (Ch 21) David is presented in his best light for he personifies the hopes of the nation. He is the one to whom the Israelites look for a type of the Messiah and Deliverer. So David was

crowned. Then we see,

(b) DAVID THE SOLDIER:

For although David's agonizing years with King Saul are omitted in Chronicles, David's leadership skills as a soldier are not. My when David hit rock bottom, God gave him a ministry helping 600 men (1 Sam 23:13) who had been weakened by despair to become strong warriors. (1 Chron 12:8) Do you recall the motley band that came to him when he was in the cave at Adullam ? The despised, the distressed, the debtors, and the discontented. Sounds like a local Baptist church. (1 Sam 22:2) But under his leadership these men became a disciplined highly competent fighting unity. (12:2, 8) My is this not one of the responsibilities of leadership ? To train new leaders. Do you recall what Paul says to Timothy ? “ *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.*” (2 Tim 2:2) There ought to be a legacy of spiritual truth passed from one generation to the next. (a) (b)

(c) DAVID THE SERVANT:

As he brings up “ *the ark of God,*” (13:6) to Jerusalem. Now what was the ark ? Well, the Ark was the sacred chest which stood in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. It was the most important piece of furniture in the Tabernacle, for God said, “ *There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, and from between the two cherubim's.*” (Exod 25:22)

Here was an available place of meeting with God, an opportunity for constant communion with Him. My do you see the desire David possessed ? What a passion he had for God ! He says in one of his psalms, “ *SurelyI will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* ” (Ps 132:3-8) Do you have this passion for God ? Do you long to know God through His Word ? Do you long to meet with God in public and private ? To desire His presence above all else ? (a)(b)(c)

(d) DAVID THE SCRIBE:

For we read “ *then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren.* ” (16:7) I mean David writes over half of the psalms in the Word of God. Then,

(e) DAVID THE STEWARD:

Is brought before us. Is brought before us. For he longs for a more permanent home for the Ark. He says, “ *Nathan I’m troubled that I have a nicer house than the Ark does.* ” (17:1) Now I wonder are we as spiritual in heart as David was ? Is there a striking contrast between what we spend on ourselves and what we offer to the Lord ? Someone has said “ *that to do less for God than you do for yourself shows where your heart is.* ” In (Ch 21) we see,

(f) DAVID THE STATISTICIAN:

Tempted by Satan to conduct a census of Israel’s fighting men. What was it that lay behind David’s desire for a national census ? Probably it was pride, he had won a number of great victories (1 Chron. 18-20) and perhaps wanted to bask in the glory of success. The book ends with,

(f) DAVID THE SPONSOR:

For David with a great attitude says, “ *If I can’t build the temple, then I will buy it, I will raise the money for it.* ” Someone has calculated that in USA dollars that the value of David’s gift was that in silver he gave 450 million dollars and in gold he gave 17 billion dollars. (29:3) You say “ *David had plenty of money yes, but he realised that it was not his.* ” (29:14) David says, “ *look at everything you have and remember this. (1) God owns it. It belongs to Him. (2) God gave it. It came from Him.* ” (Deut 8:18) My we are simply the stewards of God’s money. And the Lord is simply asking us to give back to Him what He has given us. Look at (29:15) Shadow speaks of the brevity and swiftness of life.

Here’s an old warrior about to leave this scene passing the baton of responsibility on to an inexperienced son, encouraging him in relation to God’s Work, God’s Word and God’s Will. I mean didn’t David finish well. Paul says, “ *For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep.* ” (Acts 13:36) Will you listen to me carefully. For some of us this is going to be our last year. How will you finish ? “ *And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ?* ”

