

Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

I & II Chronicles: The Case for Multi-Vocality

Q- Why 1 week for 2 books (1 scroll that became 2 books when translated from Hebrew to Greek)?
Because Chronicles repeats much of the material in Samuel and Kings. So, is a study of Chronicles a waste of our time?

A- The Hebrew title for Chronicles is *Divrei Hayyamim* (דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים), usually translated “The Events/Words of the Days” or “Annals,” emphasizing a historical record. But, the Greek title in the Septuagint is *Paraleipomena* (“Things Omitted” or “Left Out”), implying that Chronicles supplements (or even redacts) material not fully covered in Samuel and Kings.

Date range: Chronicles is written after the return from the exile (450-350 BCE).

Purpose: Where Samuel and Kings are promoting the DtH (i.e., explaining Israel’s history through covenant obedience and disobedience, especially as the cause of exile and national judgment), the author of Chronicles (“the Chronicler”) diverges from the DtH to tell a different story. Chronicles is written for a post-exilic community seeking restoration, identity, and hope. The “Chronicler” offers the possibility of renewal after judgment, often softening or omitting stories that reflect negatively on David, Solomon, or Judah’s religious institutions.

In Sum:

DtH asks, “Why are we in exile?”

A- Exile is punishment for improper worship.

Chronicles asks: “Are we still God’s people? Do we have a future hope?”

A- God is just, but cares for us.

Subject: “1 & 2 Chronicles: The Case for Biblical Multivocality”

If you want evidence that the Bible is a *multivocal* (refer to Glossary of terms) compare Samuel and Chronicles.

I. Samuel and Kings often contradict Chronicles.

- A. Recounting the same events with differing details and theological framing and rhetorical goals:
 1. Length of famine punishment: 2 Sam. 24:13 — (7 yrs) / 1 Chron. 21:12 — (3 yrs).
 2. Who incited David’s census: 2 Sam. 24:1 — (“God’s anger”) / 1 Chron. 21:1 — (“Satan”).
 3. Number of fighting men counted: 2 Samuel 24:9 (Israel: 800,000; Judah: 500,000) / 1 Chronicles 21:5 (Israel: 1,100,000; Judah: 470,000).
 4. Price paid for Araunah/Ornan’s threshing floor: 2 Samuel 24:24 (50 shekels of silver) / 1 Chronicles 21:25 (600 shekels of gold).
 5. Who killed Goliath’s brother / Goliath? 2 Samuel 21:19 (Elhanan kills Goliath which contradicts 1 Samuel 17 where David kills Goliath) - 1 Chronicles 20:5 (Elhanan kills Lahmi, brother of Goliath).
 6. Saul’s death: did he die by suicide or execution? 1 Samuel 31:4–5 — Saul falls on his sword / 2 Samuel 1:8–10 — Amalekite claims he killed Saul
 7. Age of Ahaziah when he became king: 2 Kings 8:26 (22 yrs) / 2 Chronicles 22:2 (42 yrs).

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8. Age of Jehoiachin when he became king: 2 Kings 24:8 (18 yrs) / 2 Chronicles 36:9 (8 yrs).
9. Stalls for horses: 1 Kings 4:26 — 40,000 stalls / 2 Chronicles 9:25 — 4,000 stalls.
10. Temple furnishings: overseers/builders numbers: 1 Kings 5:16 — 3,300 supervisors / 2 Chronicles 2:2 — 3,600 supervisors
11. Number of bath capacities in the molten sea: 1 Kings 7:26 — 2,000 baths / 2 Chronicles 4:5 — 3,000 baths
12. Genealogical differences: Various genealogies in Chronicles differ from Samuel/Kings in names, order, and descendants, often reflecting theological or priestly priorities rather than strict historical harmonization.

II. Giving Chronicles a Break.

- A. Why? The four Gospels often recount similar events but with striking theological and narrative differences:
1. **Portrait of Jesus:** Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses and fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. Mark emphasizes the suffering Messiah and secrecy surrounding Jesus' identity. Luke highlights compassion for outsiders, the poor, women, and social reversal. John presents Jesus in overtly divine terms.
 2. **Birth narratives:** Matthew includes the magi, Herod's massacre, and flight to Egypt. Luke includes shepherds, census details, and the temple presentation. Mark and John contain no nativity story at all.
 3. **Jesus' final words on the cross:** Mark/Matthew: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Luke: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." John: "It is finished."
 4. **Resurrection accounts:** The women, angels, locations, and appearances vary across the Gospels. Mark's earliest ending likely stops abruptly with fear and silence. John includes Thomas and the breakfast by the sea.
 5. **Kingdom of God vs eternal life:** Synoptics focus heavily on the "Kingdom of God." John emphasizes eternal life, belief, and union with Christ.
 6. **View of disciples:** Mark often portrays the disciples as confused and failing. Matthew softens some of their failures. John gives select disciples deeper theological insight.
 7. **Sermon traditions:** Matthew: "Sermon on the Mount." Luke: "Sermon on the Plain." Differences in wording and setting suggest theological adaptation for different audiences.
 8. Genealogies of Jesus, Timing of the Temple cleansing, Date of the crucifixion, Parables vs long discourses (e.g., Synoptics contain many short parables / John contains almost no parables but long theological speeches "I am" sayings). Scholars generally view these differences not simply as errors to harmonize, but as evidence that each Gospel writer shaped inherited traditions for distinct communities, theological priorities, and rhetorical purposes.

III. Fun Facts (or theological moves).

- A. (Ch. 1-9 are genealogies) 1:1 - Notice the genealogy excludes/erases Cain and Abel.
1. Abel is excluded because he leaves no lineage. Cain is intentionally excluded. Why?
 2. Adam → Seth → Noah → Shem → Abraham → Israel.
 - a. This is the covenantal/narrative line leading to Israel.
- B. Many scholars argue Chronicles omits David's sexual assault of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) because the Chronicler's purpose was not to provide a complete historical record, but to present David as an idealized founder of temple worship and covenant faithfulness for the post-exilic community.

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1. By excluding episodes that severely compromise David's legitimacy—especially sexual violence, murder, and dynastic scandal—the Chronicler preserves David as a model king whose primary theological role is to authorize the temple, priesthood, and restored national identity.
- C. In 1 Kings, the transfer of power from David to Solomon is politically tense and marked by court intrigue, rivalry with Adonijah, intervention by Bathsheba and Nathan, and violent consolidation of power (1:5–53, 2:13–46). In 1 Chronicles, those conflicts are almost entirely omitted, and Solomon's succession is presented as orderly, publicly endorsed, divinely sanctioned, and centered on temple continuity and worship (22:6–13, 28:1–21, 29:22–25).
- D. Solomon will build the temple, not David.
 1. 2 Samuel 7:12-13 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
 2. But, in 1 Chronicles 22:7-8 (cf. 28:3) "David said to Solomon, 'My son, I had planned to build a house to the name of the Lord my God. ⁸ But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to my name because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth.'"
 - a. Gathering materials for the temple — 1 Chronicles 22:2–5, 14–1
 - b. Organizing priests and Levites — 1 Chronicles 23–26
 - c. Preparing architectural plans — 1 Chronicles 28:11–19
 - d. Appointing musicians and gatekeepers — 1 Chronicles 23:5; 25:1–8; 26:1–19
 - e. Financing and donating for the project — 1 Chronicles 29:1–9
 - f. Publicly commissioning Solomon — 1 Chronicles 22:6–13 and 28:20–21

IV. Major Theological Tensions in Chronicles:

- A. Idealized David vs historical David — Chronicles elevates David as a model king while omitting scandals like the assault of Bathsheba, creating tension between theological idealization and earlier traditions.
- B. Immediate retribution theology vs lived reality — The Chronicler often portrays obedience bringing immediate blessing and sin bringing swift punishment, which contrasts with the wisdom literature like Job and Ecclesiastes.
- C. Temple centrality vs prophetic critique — Chronicles strongly centers the temple, priesthood, and liturgical order, while many prophets warn that worship without justice is empty.
- D. Hope after exile vs memory of judgment — The book seeks to restore post-exilic identity and hope, yet it is built on a history that culminated in catastrophic national failure.
- E. Davidic monarchy without a king — Chronicles glorifies the Davidic line even though the post-exilic community no longer had a Davidic monarch ruling them.
- F. Inclusivity vs exclusivity — At times Chronicles welcomes repentant outsiders and northern Israelites, yet it also reinforces priestly and cultic boundaries that narrow legitimate worship.
- G. Historical retelling vs theological reshaping — Chronicles reuses material from Samuel and Kings but edits, omits, and reframes narratives to serve theological aims, creating tension between historiography and interpretation.
- H. Peaceful temple theology vs violent royal origins — David is portrayed as divinely chosen for the temple project even while being disqualified from building it because of warfare and

1. In Samuel, King Manasseh's evil deeds cause future generations to be exiled (even after reforms under Hezekiah and Josiah). But in Chronicles, Manasseh repents, humbles himself, and God restores him to the throne and he leads people back to proper worship (not Hezekiah or Josiah).

c. DtH (proper worship) vs the Prophetic Critique (concern for the oppressed).

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