

1 & 2 Chronicles

1. Name and Structure – The two books of Chronicles were originally one. The division into two books occurred when the Septuagint was translated. The Hebrew title is literally “the words of the days,” referring to the days of the monarchies. This title is somewhat unusual in that it is taken from 1 Chronicles 27:24 rather than from the first verse of the book. The Septuagint entitles them “The Things Omitted,” since they include material that is not included in Samuel-Kings. The English title derives from the statement of early church father Jerome, who referred to them as “a chronicle of the whole divine history.”
2. Summary – These books supplement the histories in Samuel-Kings. Chronicles is one of only two books of the Bible to move from the beginning of human history up to the time of the author; the other book that does this is Matthew. Both accomplish this by beginning with a genealogy that begins with Adam and traces through human history to the author’s day. The bulk of Chronicles is a historical account beginning with the close of Saul’s reign, focusing on the reigns of David and Solomon and then tracing the divided kingdom through the exile and finally to the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. The overall focus of Chronicles is on the legitimacy of the priesthood and temple worship and on the continuity between the covenant people of God of earlier times and the people living in the land after returning from the exile.
3. Author and date – The author is anonymous. Some believe that Chronicles was written along with Ezra-Nehemiah as one continuous work by the same author. Chronicles ends with the decree of Cyrus, and Ezra begins with it. Also, there is much shared terminology and linguistic style. However, recent scholarship has pointed out a number of differences in perspective between the two works: the prominence of the Sabbath in Ezra-Nehemiah and its absence in Chronicles, the emphasis on the prophets in Chronicles and the lack thereof in Ezra-Nehemiah, and the sense of unity between the divided kingdoms in Chronicles but hostility toward those occupying the northern kingdom in Ezra-Nehemiah. The genealogy traces at least two generations past Zerubbabel, who lived near the end of the 6th century B.C. The contributions to the temple in 1 Chron. 29:7 are expressed in *darics*, a coin named after Darius, which wasn’t used until 515 B.C. Thus, the book could not have been completed before this coin had time to become widely circulated.
4. Theological message – Even though Samuel-Kings and Chronicles cover much of the same history, they have distinctive purposes. Chronicles is written to post-exilic Israel. Chronicles seeks to answer the question of whether God is done with Israel. What connection does Israel have with God’s promises after the exile? What vision and hope should they have for the future? The Chronicler makes his case through the history of Israel that God will continue his work in Israel according to their faithful response to him.
5. Difficulties – The accuracy of Chronicles has been questioned more than any other OT book other than Genesis. Chronicles selectively presents information about David and Solomon to make them appear more glorious and righteous than they appear in Samuel-Kings. Chronicles adds material not found in the other books. Also, there are apparent discrepancies in the numbers reported between Chronicles and Samuel-Kings. Much of the difference can be attributed to the different purpose the Chronicler has compared to the author(s) of Samuel-Kings. A number of arguments can be made in reply to these apparent contradictions.
6. Structure of the book (Dillard & Longman):
 - a. Genealogies (1 Chron. 1-9) – Modern readers are often put off in reading Chronicles because of the lengthy genealogies at the beginning. However, these genealogies serve some important purposes. They explicitly connect post-exilic Israel with the Israel of the promises. The northern kingdom is included as well, testifying to a future hope that the nation will be more fully revived.
 - b. United monarchy (1 Chron. 10–2 Chron. 9) – David and Solomon are presented in an idealistic way, omitting David’s adultery/murder and Solomon’s apostasy due to foreign wives. Their reigns focus on the establishment of the temple under David and worship under Solomon, providing a paradigm for future Israel and a hope for the establishment of a more glorious Davidic king.
 - c. Post-schism kingdom (2 Chron. 10-36) – The Chronicler demonstrates that Israel was not merely punished for the sins of their fathers; rather, there was an element of “immediate retribution” as well. Likewise, faithfulness results in immediate blessing. 2 Chron. 7:14 (“if my people who are called by my name humble themselves...”) is probably the most famous verse in Chronicles and is also a key to the Chronicler’s purpose. God will bless the faithful remnant according to their faithful response to his covenant claims.

Reference:

An Introduction to the Old Testament, R. B. Dillard and T. Longman III, Zondervan, 1994.
A Survey of the Old Testament, Hill and Walton, Zondervan, 2000.