

Introduction to Chronicles

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MAJOR THEMES: ISRAEL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

13-22) Israel's Responsibilities

The Chronicler's belief that God was involved in history led him to stress Israel's responsibility before God. True to earlier biblical traditions, his history points out that God's actions could often be explained as responses to Israel's actions. As a result, the Chronicler pointed to the kinds of human activities which resulted in God's judgment and blessing. We will describe his outlooks in seven motifs: 13) *Covenant*, 14) *Standards*, 15) *Prophets*, 16) *Motivations*, 17) *Prayer*, 18) *Humility*, 19) *Seeking*, 20) *Abandoning/Forsaking*, 21) *Unfaithfulness*, 22) *Repentance*.

13) Covenant

Original Israelite Readers:

Chronicles stresses that Israel was bound to God by covenant. On several occasions, the Chronicler used the term "covenant" to describe an agreement among humans (1 Chr 11:3; 2 Chr 23:1,3,11), but his history concentrates on Israel's covenant with God.

First, the term "covenant" appears most frequently with reference to Moses, especially as the Chronicler designated the ark of the temple as "the ark of the covenant" (1 Chr 15:25,26,28,29;16:6,37; 17:1; 22:19; 28:2,18; 2 Chr 5:2,7,10; 6:11). This traditional language from the Pentateuch described the ark as containing Moses' Law (2 Chr 5:10; 6:11). The Mosaic Law was an indisputable covenant bond between Israel and God (see *Introduction: 14) Standards*).

Second, the Chronicler mentioned other divine covenants from the past to affirm their continuing significance for his readers. The Chronicler understood that each of God's covenants with Israel established permanent responsibilities before God. The Mosaic covenant remained authoritative beyond the days of Moses' covenant (see above). The covenant made with the patriarchs was fulfilled in blessings that came to David (1 Chr 16:15-17). Similarly, David commanded Solomon to keep covenant with God (1 Chr 28:9). Asa appealed to David's dynastic covenant ("covenant of salt") to establish the legitimacy of his own throne (2 Chr 13:5). In much the same way, the Chronicler himself explained the continuation of David's line in the days Jehoram resulted from divine

faithfulness to the covenant made with David (2 Chr 21:7). These passages demonstrate that the Chronicler viewed the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants as valid for the people of God even after the exile.

Third, in several passages the Chronicler stressed the importance of covenant renewal. As Solomon noted, God's blessing came only to those who proved faithful to covenant responsibilities (2 Chr 6:14). For this reason, after times of apostasy the people of God had to renew their allegiance to their covenant with God. Such reaffirmations took place in the days of Asa (2 Chr 15:12), Joash and Jehoiada (2 Chr 23:16), Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:10) and Josiah (2 Chr 34:32). Just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of the post-exilic times as one of covenant renewal (Jer 31:31-33; Ezk 34:25; 37:26), the Chronicler stressed exemplary covenant renewals from the past to guide covenant renewal in his day.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The coming of Jesus marked the institution of the New Covenant which built upon the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. It also fulfilled the prophetic hopes of covenant renewal after return from exile.

Christ claimed that his own blood would seal and ratify this greater covenant (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 7:22). This New Covenant would be accomplished by his mediating work on the cross and by his continuing intercession (Heb 8:6; 9:15). As a result, those who trust in Christ are participants and beneficiaries of covenant blessings: eternal life (Jn 3:16; 10:28), assurance (1 Tim 3:13), protection (Jn 17:11), and abundant life (Rom 5:17). Christians are given the responsibility of being "ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6) and are obligated to covenant fidelity and renewal (Rom 3:31).

14) *Standards*

Original Israelite Readers:

As a covenanted nation, Israel lived under divine standards. These standards governed the Chronicler's assessments of many situations in Israel's history and guided the evaluations he held before his post-exilic readers. At least three major standards appear in Chronicles.

First, the Chronicler relied heavily on the standard of Mosaic Law. In many cases, the actions of characters are approved or disapproved by appeals to the Law of Moses. Most often, these appeals focused on the regulations of worship (1 Chr 6:49; 15:15; 16:40; 21:29; 22:13; 2 Chr 8:13; 23:18; 24:6,9; 30:16; 31:4,21; 34:14,19; 35:6,12).

Occasionally, the contexts have other matters in view (1 Chr 22:12,13; 2 Chr 6:16; 12:1; 17:9; 19:8,10; 25:4; 33:8; 35:26). While the Chronicler held forth the authority of Mosaic Law over the post-exilic community, he was not a pendant legalist. On several occasions he wrote approvingly of times when extreme circumstances required actions which did not strictly conform to the Law of Moses (see 1 Chr 21:28-22:1; 2 Chr 5:11-12; 30:2).

Second, the Chronicler relied on many of David and Solomon's arrangements as standards to be observed by his readers. He often spoke of conformity to Moses and David together (1 Chr 15:15; 22:13; 2 Chr 8:13-14; 23:18; 33:7-8; 35:4,6). On a number of occasions the Chronicler upheld specific practices established by David and Solomon. For the most part, these references concerned practices of worship (1 Chr 28:19; 2 Chr 8:14; 23:18; 29:25,27; 34:2; 35:4,15). At times, however, more general patterns are in view, especially when various kings are compared to David (2 Chr 17:3; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2).

Third, the Chronicler set forth prophetic revelation as a standard which God's people must follow. As our discussion below indicates the prophetic word was also an essential guide for life in the post-exilic period.

The Chronicler relied heavily on these standards as he sought to instruct his readers. He explained that compliance with the guidelines of Moses, David, Solomon, and the prophets had led Israel to blessing, but violations of these standards brought judgment. The Chronicler pointed to this dynamic to motivate his post-exilic readers to be faithful to these standards in their day.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

These three standards of judgment are also reflected in the New Testament. First, the Mosaic Law is rigorously upheld as the moral standard for the Kingdom of Christ (Rom 3:31; 1 Tim 3:8). Jesus denied coming to abrogate the Law. Instead, he came to fulfill and obey it (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4). When properly applied to the New Testament situation, the principles of the Law of Moses guide the people of God even today.

Second, certain figures are exalted as standards for others to follow. Hebrews 11:2-40 portrays a variety of Old Testament heroes of the faith that provide for us a standard of faith. As with the Chronicler, David (Mt 12:3) and Moses (Heb 11:24) are offered as ideals by which one's life should be patterned. As the final Moses and the last Son of David, Jesus provided the greatest standard of all.

Third, the authority of prophetic revelation in Chronicles is mirrored in the New Testament by the infallible revelation of the apostles and prophets of the church (Eph

2:20). Their gospels and epistles are marked by revelatory character (Jn 21:24; 1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thess 2:13) and represent divine standards for Christians.

15) *Prophets*

Original Israelite Readers:

The Chronicler placed particular emphasis on prophets. As emissaries of God's covenants, prophets applied divine standards to God's people by drawing attention to God's threats of judgment and offers of blessing. The Chronicler mentioned prophets or seers in his history no less than thirty-nine times. We will touch on three dimensions of his perspective.

First, the Chronicler revealed how much he valued prophets by referring his readers to a number of written prophetic records. The writings of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad recorded the events of David's life (1 Chr 29:29). Nathan, Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo offered more information on Solomon's reign (2 Chr 9:29). Shemaiah and Iddo had more to say about Rehoboam (2 Chr 12:15). Iddo also described aspects of Abijah's reign (2 Chr 13:22). Jehu the prophet kept records of Jehoshaphat's activities (2 Chr 20:34). Isaiah reported on Uzziah (2 Chr 26:22), and Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:32). The Chronicler also introduced a letter from Elijah to Jehoram (2 Chr 21:12). These repeated references to written prophetic sources indicate that prophetic perspectives from the past deeply influenced the Chronicler.

Second, the Chronicler highlighted the importance of prophecy by assigning a prophetic role to many Levites. On a number of occasions he designated Levites as "prophets" and "seers" (1 Chr 25:1-5; 2 Chr 20:14; 24:20; 29:30; 35:15). This identification appears in Chronicles more clearly than any other portion of the Old Testament. It probably reflects the conviction that the Levites, especially the musical Levites, had a prophetic role in the post-exilic community.

Third, Chronicles reports how the fate of Israel and Judah was often determined by their reactions to the prophetic word. God often sent prophets to warn of impending judgment (2 Chr 12:5; 16:7-9; 18:8; 19:2; 21:12; 25:15; 28:9; 36:12), but reactions varied. David submitted to Nathan the prophet (1 Chr 17:1-15) and Gad (1 Chr 21:9-19) and received God's blessing. Rehoboam was blessed because he obeyed the prophet's prohibition against attacking Jeroboam (2 Chr 11:1-23). Rehoboam also avoided complete defeat by responding with humility to Shemaiah (2 Chr 12:1-12). Asa honored the prophet Azariah during his years of obedience and blessing (2 Chr 15:8), but he rejected the prophet of God during his years of infidelity and judgment (2 Chr 16:7-10). God spared Jehoshaphat from death because he searched for a true prophet of the Lord (2 Chr 18:6f). Ahab, however, died after mistreating Micaiah the prophet (2 Chr 18:1-34).

Jehoshaphat later submitted to prophetic rebuke and received blessings (2 Chr 19:1-11; 20:1-29). Jehoram received a sharp rebuke from Elijah (2 Chr 21:12-15). Amaziah listened to an unnamed prophet and won his battle (2 Chr 25:5-13), but he suffered later for not listening to a prophetic rebuke (2 Chr 25:14-28). In an unusual scenario, Northern Israelites shamed Judahites by giving heed to the prophetic word in the days of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:9-21). Hezekiah sought Isaiah and received God's help (2 Chr 32:20). Repentant Josiah inquired of the prophetess Huldah to his great benefit (2 Chr 35:21f). Finally, the Chronicler noted that one reason Zedekiah was the last king of Judah was because he refused to humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet (2 Chr 36:12). Throughout the Chronicler's history each time the people of God disobeyed the prophetic word, judgment came against them. When they submitted to the Word of God through his prophets, they received blessings.

The implication of these scenarios would have been evident to the Chronicler's original readers. As they heard prophetic instructions in the post-exilic period (including the Chronicler's own words), they had to pay heed in order to receive the blessings of God.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The Christian faith holds similar outlooks on the prophetic word. New Testament writers repeatedly quoted or alluded to Old Testament prophets: Isaiah (Mt 13:14; Mk 1:2; 7:6), Jeremiah (Mt 2:17; 27:9), Jonah (Mt 12:39), Daniel (Mt 24:15), Joel (Acts 2:16), Samuel (Acts 13:20), Enoch (Jude 14). Prophets are called "servants" (Rev 10:7) and "brothers" (Rev 22:9) and are understood in the New Testament as God's spokesperson (Mt 1:22).

As the Chronicler assigned the prophetic office to priests, the New Testament grants the title of "prophet" to the great high priest, Jesus Christ (Lk 1:76; Heb 1:1-3). The apostle Paul performed the prophetic role as he was called to be a minister of the gospel (Rom 1:1; 15:15-16). Timothy is called to be a prophetic voice in the Kingdom of God as he was ordained by Paul and the elders (1 Tim 4:13). Acts 6 records the commissioning of New Testament Christians to be the heralds of God who are devoted to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-7). New Testament believers are called to be prophets as they are to preach the good news to all creation throughout the continuation of the Kingdom (Mk 16:15).

As the Chronicler attached judgment and salvation to the response of Israel toward the prophetic word, so the New Testament depicts the destiny of individuals as contingent upon obedience to the Word of God. Paul warns against treating prophecy with "contempt" (1 Thess 5:20). Eternal life is contingent upon one's response to the Word of

God (Jn 5:24). Those who hear and receive the Word of God are included "in Christ" (Eph 1:13). As with Israel, the Church is promised blessings if it heeds the prophetic word, but curses come to anyone who disregards or changes the Word of God (Rev 22:18,19).

16) *Motivations*

The Chronicler was a theologian of the heart. One of his chief concerns was to explain that service to God must not be reduced to mere external conformity. On the contrary, the blessings of God come to those who bring sincere and enthusiastic motivations to God.

In Chronicles as elsewhere in the Scriptures, the terms "heart," "soul," and "mind" refer to the thoughts and motivations of people. These terms do not designate particular psychological faculties. All of the deeper dynamics of the inner person may be summed up as the heart, soul, or mind. For this reason, these terms are largely interchangeable.

Above all, the Chronicler held before his post-exilic readers the Mosaic ideal of obedience to God with a whole heart. Wholeheartedness appears in several contexts that shed light on what the Chronicler meant by the terminology. For instance, it is closely associated with being "willing" to serve God (1 Chr 28:9), giving money "freely" (1 Chr 29:9), doing "everything" required for completing the temple (1 Chr 29:19), seeking God "eagerly" (2 Chr 15:15), judging "faithfully" in the fear of God (2 Chr 19:9), and performing well "in everything" (2 Chr 31:21). In a word, to devote oneself wholeheartedly to God meant to render service with sincerity, enthusiasm and determination.

For this reason, the Chronicler often pointed out that certain kings did or did not serve God with their hearts. Zedekiah hardened his heart (2 Chr 36:13). Pride is acknowledged as a condition of the heart (literally, "proud of heart" [2 Chr 25:19; 26:16; 32:25,26]). Repentance is said to involve the heart (2 Chr 6:37). Seeking God should also stem from the heart (1 Chr 22:19; 2 Chr 11:16; 15:12; 19:3; 22:9).

It is important to note that the Chronicler explicitly distinguished between external behavior and the condition of the heart. Asa failed to destroy all "the high places from Israel," but "Asa's heart was fully committed ... all his life" (2 Chr 15:17). In the Chronicler's thinking, wholehearted devotion to God was not synonymous with perfect practice. Conversely, Amaziah "did right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly" (2 Chr 25:2). In this case, the Chronicler distinguished between doing what was right and doing it sincerely and enthusiastically.

The Chronicler emphasized the importance of motivations because he believed that God examined the heart as well as behavior. David warned Solomon to evaluate his motives

because God "searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts" (1 Chr 28:9). David also confessed, "You test the heart and are pleased with integrity" (1 Chr 29:17). As Solomon said, God keeps covenant "with those who continue wholeheartedly in your way" (2 Chr 6:14). These passages warned the Chronicler's readers to examine their own motivations instead of simply conforming to a set of behaviors.

In the Chronicler's history, sincerity of heart often mollified the consequences of behavioral failures. The condition of the heart can be the basis of divine patience and forgiveness. Solomon asked God to "forgive and deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of men)" (2 Chr 6:30). Similarly, Hezekiah prayed for God to forgive everyone "who sets his heart on seeking God" (2 Chr 30:19).

The Chronicler emphasized the heart to challenge his post-exilic readers. They were the restored community of whom it had been said, "I will put my law on their hearts" (Jer 31:33). His history called his readers to bring their hearts into conformity with the Law of God. Only then could they be assured of God's blessings.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The New Testament places a similar emphasis on the importance of the heart and motivations. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was to love God "with all of your heart" (Mt 22:37-40). Moreover, salvation itself is described as the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the heart (Gal 4:6). During the continuation of the Kingdom, God searches believers' hearts and minds as well as deeds (Rev 2:23). In the consummation, judgment will not only focus on external behaviors, but God will also "expose the motives" of the heart (1 Cor 4:5).

17) Prayer

The Chronicler exhibited a deep concern for prayer. The fullest expression of this concern appears in Solomon's temple prayer (2 Chr 6:3-42 // 1 Kgs 8:22-53) and God's response (2 Chr 7:13-15 // 1 Kgs 9:3-9). In his great temple prayer, Solomon asked God to hear prayers as the nation faced a variety of circumstances. In response, God agreed to hear such sincere prayers. These two passages established prayer as a principal means by which Israel could receive God's blessings.

This basic theology of prayer comes to expression throughout Chronicles as God answers prayers time and again. Although this pattern appears in Kings, it is much more extensive in Chronicles. In the opening genealogies and lists, the Chronicler mentioned the prayer of Jabez (1 Chr 4:10) and the Transjordanian tribes (1 Chr 5:20). In both of

these cases, the people of God cried out to God for help in times of conflict and he gave them victories. In the United Kingdom, both David (1 Chr 16:7-36; 17:16-27; 29:10-20) and Solomon (2 Chr 6:3-42) prayed. Their prayers modeled devotion and humility before God. In the Divided Kingdom, the record of the first four kings of Judah includes their prayers. Rehoboam and his nobles (2 Chr 12:6), Asa (2 Chr 14:11), Abijah (2 Chr 13:14), and Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 18:31; 20:6-12) ask for help in times of military crisis. Once again, God answered these prayers. In the Reunited Monarchy Hezekiah prayed for healing during Passover observance (2 Chr 30:18), relief from Sennacherib's threat (2 Chr 32:20-21), and deliverance from his sickness (2 Chr 32:24). Moreover, Manasseh prayed for forgiveness while in exile and God returned him to the land (2 Chr 33:12-13,18). All of these examples of prayer illustrated that God kept his promises to hear the prayers of his people.

These examples of prayer in Chronicles demonstrate the importance of prayer for the Chronicler's post-exilic readers. God's consistently gracious response to sincere prayers offered the returnees hope that God would answer their cries as well.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The centrality of prayer in the Chronicler's history foreshadows the importance of prayer in the teachings of the New Testament. Jesus prayed throughout his earthly ministry (Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12). Jesus also taught his followers how they should pray (Mt 6:9-13). He encouraged them to pray that they "may not fall" (Mk 14:38; Lk 22:40). He even commanded that his disciples pray for those who persecuted them (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28).

The apostles gave similar admonitions. We are to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions" (Eph 6:18) and to be devoted to prayer (1 Cor 7:5). We are to pray continually (1 Thess 5:17) as we surround "everything by prayer" (Phil 4:6). James emphasized the efficacy of the prayer of a righteous man (Jas 5:16). Like post-exilic Israel, believers should pray to God when in trouble (Jas 5:13) trusting that "his ears are attentive to their prayers" (1 Pet 3:12).

Jesus also instructed the church to pray earnestly for the consummation of the Kingdom when he prayed "your Kingdom come" (Mt 6:10). Following the example of John the apostle, we are to cry, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). Our prayers will prove instrumental in the return of Christ.

18) *Humility*

Original Israelite Readers:

Humility before God is another important responsibility which the Chronicler associated with divine blessing and judgment. The Chronicler used the verb "to humble" eighteen times. The NIV translates this term "subdued" (1 Chr 17:10; 18:1; 2 Chr 13:18), "subjugated" (1 Chr 20:4), "humble" (2 Chr 7:14; 12:6,7 [twice],12; 28:19; 30:11; 33:12,19,23; 34:27 [twice]; 36:12). Once the NIV renders the same Hebrew word as "repented" (2 Chr 32:26).

On three occasions in the United Kingdom (1 Chr 17:10; 18:1; 20:4) and twice in the Divided Kingdom (2 Chr 13:18; 28:19) the term is employed in the more ordinary sense of humbling through military defeat. Conquered nations were humbled in the sense that they lost the ability to resist and utterly surrendered to their conquerors.

The Chronicler employed this concept as a theological metaphor. He described a number of situations in which people humbled (or did not humble) themselves before God. On a number of occasions, the Chronicler placed humility in a four-step scenario. 1) Israel was in rebellion against God. 2) They were confronted with the need for change. 3) They responded to the confrontation by surrendering themselves to God and submitting to his supremacy over them. 4) This humility led to blessing from God.

First, several forms of rebellion gave rise to humility. 1) Rehoboam had abandoned the Law of God (2 Chr 12:1,6,7). 2) Manasseh and Zebulun had not celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem according to the Law of God (2 Chr 30:11). 3) Hezekiah "humbled himself in his pride" ("repented of his pride" [NIV]) (2 Chr 32:26) because he had proudly failed to appreciate the kindness of God toward him (2 Chr 32:25). 4) Manasseh humbled himself (2 Chr 33:12,19) because he had worshipped other gods and resisted the prophets (2 Chr 33:18). 5) Ammon is said not to have humbled himself as Manasseh did (2 Chr 33:23); he continued his syncretistic practices throughout his life. 6) Josiah also humbled himself because he realized that Judah had forsaken God for idols (2 Chr 34:27).

Second, humility resulted from several types of confrontation. 1) Three times the Chronicler pointed to prophetic confrontation. Rehoboam was humble when the prophet Shemaiah warned of defeat (2 Chr 12:6,7). Josiah responded with humility at the word of Huldah (2 Chr 34:27). Similarly, Zedekiah refused to humble himself in reaction to the word of God through Jeremiah (2 Chr 36:12). 2) The northern Israelites in Hezekiah's day responded with humility to the king's couriers (2 Chr 30:11). 3) In two situations, divine judgment brought about humility. Manasseh humbled himself only after defeat and exile (2 Chr 33:10-13,23). Hezekiah also humbled himself after the Lord's wrath was on him (2 Chr 32:25).

Third, humility resulted in surrender to God. 1) Humility gave rise to reforms during the reigns of Rehoboam (2 Chr 12:6), Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:12), Manasseh (2 Chr 33:12), and Josiah (2 Chr 34:27). 2) In the reigns of Rehoboam and Manasseh humility led to prayer for forgiveness and help (2 Chr 12:6,7; 33:12,19). 3) In every case when people humbled themselves before God they ceased to rebel against him. Instead, they surrendered themselves to the will of God as their rightful Sovereign.

Fourth, humility before God brought dramatic blessings on no less than four occasions. 1) Rehoboam was spared utter defeat at the hand of Shishak and enjoyed many good things in his kingdom (2 Chr 12:6,7,12). 2) Northern Israelites came to celebrate Hezekiah's Passover which resulted in the reunification of the nation (2 Chr 30:11). 3) The destruction of Jerusalem was postponed because of Hezekiah's humility (2 Chr 32:26). 4) Manasseh returned from exile in Babylon and experienced new prosperity when he humbled himself (2 Chr 33:12,19).

The Chronicler's repeated emphasis on this theme inspired his post-exilic readers to humility. They too had a propensity to fall into rebellion against God. They had opportunities to receive God's warning against their rebellion. They were responsible to surrender themselves to God. Moreover, only humility could restore them to God's favor and bring a greater experience of his blessing.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The New Testament applies the theme of humility to Christians. Salvation is defined as humbling oneself before the Lord (Jas 4:10; 1 Pet 5:5). Entrance into the Kingdom of God is contingent upon the humbling of oneself with a child-like dependence upon God (Mt 18:4).

Day by day Christians are to clothe themselves with humility (Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 5:5). As with Israel, God blesses his people by giving grace to those who have sincere humility (Jas 4:6).

The New Testament also projects humility into the consummation of the Kingdom. Upon the return of Christ those who attempted to exalt themselves will be humbled by the judgment of God (Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14). Even so, those who voluntarily humble themselves will ultimately be exalted (Lk 14:11; 14:14).

19) *Seeking*

Original Israelite Readers:

Seeking God is another crucial responsibility of God's people in Chronicles. Two Hebrew verbs express this idea: *darash* (43 times) and *biqesh* (13 times). On one occasion the Chronicler indicated that these terms were closely related by using them together (1 Chr 16:11). The NIV usually translates both terms "seek," but "inquire" also appears. Occasionally, "search," "consult," "require," "follow," "want," and "call into account" emerge in particular contexts.

"Seeking" appears in non-theological contexts (*darash* 1 Chr 26:31; 28:9; 2 Chr 24:6,22; 31:9; 32:31; *biqesh* 1 Chr 4:39; 14:8; 21:3; 2 Chr 9:23; 22:9). These uses are only tangentially related to the Chronicler's theological concept of seeking God.

The Chronicler wrote of "seeking" in a theological sense with several specific objects. 1) On two occasions seeking focused on "all the commands" (1 Chr 28:8) and "the counsel of the Lord" (2 Chr 18:4). 2) In one passage seeking God was equivalent to inquiring for direction from a prophet (2 Chr 18:6,7). By contrast, the opposite of seeking God was to consult a medium (1 Chr 10:13). 3) Most frequently, however, the explicit object of seeking was God himself (e.g. *darash* 1 Chr 10:14; 13:3; 15:13; 16:11; 21:30; 22:19; 28:9; 2 Chr 1:5; 12:14; 14:4; 14:7 [twice]; 15:2,12,13; 16:12; 17:3,4; 18:7; 19:3; 20:3; 22:9; 26:5 [twice]; 30:19; 31:21; 34:3,21,26; *biqesh* 1.16:10,11; 2.11:16; 15:4; 15:15; 20:4 [twice]). In these passages seeking was an expression of loyalty and devotion to God himself. For this reason, twice (1 Chr 16:11; 2 Chr 7:14) the object of seeking was the "face" of God (i.e. his favor [see Numb 6:26]). Similarly, seeking God was the opposite of forsaking him or abandoning the covenant relationship between Israel and God (2 Chr 15:2).

The concept of "seeking" carried implicit connotations of intensity and commitment. The Chronicler highlighted this aspect of his concept by explicitly mentioning that seeking was to stem from the heart and soul (1 Chr 22:19; 2 Chr 11:16; 12:14; 19:3; 30:19). Mere outward conformity to the Law of God did not constitute seeking God. Seeking him required sincere inward devotion expressed in behavioral compliance to the Law.

The importance of seeking God with a sincere heart comes to light in the Chronicler's addition to God's response to Solomon's temple prayer (2 Chr 7:14). God affirmed that when the people of God suffered the consequences of their sins, they could receive divine blessings if they sought the face of God (2 Chr 7:14). This promise guided the Chronicler's repeated use of the concept of seeking God. Throughout his history he noted the dramatic results that occurred when people sought or did not seek God. Some people did not seek God or sought others instead of God (e.g. 1 Chr 10:14; 13:3; 15:13; 2 Chr 25:15,20). Without exception these people suffered divine judgment. Nevertheless, the Chronicler also indicated that other

historical figures did seek God (e.g. 2 Chr 14:4; 15:12). In each of these cases, the results were God's blessings.

The repetition of this motif throughout Chronicles called the post-exilic community to seek God in their own day. As troubles and disappointments mounted against those who had returned to the land, the way of divine blessing was made clear. Those who seek God could expect his blessing. To fail to seek him was to insure the failure of the post-exilic restoration.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The New Testament further reveals what it means to seek God. Jesus commanded that his followers seek the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31). Paul explained that seeking God is unnatural for sinful man and impossible for him to accomplish (Rom 3:11). Even so, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit enables man to “seek to be justified in Christ” (Gal 2:17) with the full assurance that “he who seeks finds” (Mt 7:8; Lk 11:10). The promise that God “rewards those who earnestly seek him” extends to the consummation of the Kingdom (Heb 11:6).

20) *Abandoning / Forsaking*

Original Israelite Readers:

Chronicles also stresses that the people of God must not “abandon” nor “forsake” God. The NIV translates the same Hebrew term as “abandon,” forsake,” reject,” leave,” and “give up.” The basic significance of this terminology becomes apparent in non-theological contexts. On seven occasions, the Chronicler applied the concept of abandoning or forsaking to describe ordinary human affairs. When the people saw that Saul and his army had been defeated, they “abandoned” their towns (1 Chr 10:7). The Philistines “abandoned” their gods by leaving them behind (1 Chr 14:12). David “left” Asaph to serve before the ark (1 Chr 16:37). Rehoboam “rejected” the advice of his elders (2 Chr 10:8,13). In Ahaz’s day, the soldiers of Israel “gave up” their prisoners and plunder (2 Chr 28:14). The Arameans “left” Joash without helping him recover from his wounds (2 Chr 24:25). These passages indicate that “abandoning” implies concepts such as disowning, deserting and leaving something behind.

Throughout his history, the Chronicler used the concept of abandonment to describe Israel’s disowning, deserting and leaving God behind. No less than eight times Israel’s abandonment is stated in personal terms; Israel abandoned God himself (2 Chr 7:22; 12:5; 13:10; 21:10; 24:20; 24:24; 28:6; 29:6; 34:25). In 2 Chr 34:25 the personal character of Israel’s abandonment of God becomes evident in that they left him “for other gods.” For this

reason, on two occasions abandoning God is set in opposition to seeking him (1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2).

Despite this personal dimension, Chronicles is clear that forsaking God was to violate the Law of God. Israel abandoned God in two main ways. They flagrantly violated the Law of Moses in general terms (2 Chr 7:19; 12:1; 24:20). Moreover, the nation also neglected divine regulations specifically governing worship (2 Chr 13:10-11; 15:2-3; 21:10-12; 34:25).

To indicate the importance of not abandoning God, the Chronicler frequently pointed to dire consequences that came to those who did. In a word, when Israel abandoned God, he abandoned her (1 Chr 28:9,20; 2 Chr 15:5; 24:20). Divine abandonment took different forms. Maritime troubles (2 Chr 20:37) and disease appear (2 Chr 26:18-20). Yet, abandonment usually resulted in some kind of military trouble or defeat (2 Chr 12:5; 21:10; 24:24; 32:21; 34:25). Exile was the most severe form of God's desertion (2 Chr 7:19).

The Chronicler emphasized the theme of abandoning God for at least two reasons. First, he explained to his post-exilic readers why they had not seen great blessings in the restoration. The early returnees had abandoned God in a number of ways and their actions brought them under a shadow of judgment. Second, he also pointed out the consequences of further violations of God's Law. The Chronicler's readers stood at a crossroads. If they continued to abandon God, they could expect only further abandonment from God.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The theme of abandonment continues to unfold in the New Testament. The Kingdom of Christ began with abandonment when Jesus cried, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). Absorbing the full judgment for the sins of his people, Christ was abandoned by God and painfully lamented. Nevertheless, God did not abandon Christ to the grave, but raised him up in victory through the resurrection (Acts 2:27-31).

Due to the redemption accomplished by Christ, those who are genuinely in Christ need not fear the abandonment of God. Christians may stumble and experience intense suffering, but Christ has promised "Surely I will be with you always" (Mt 28:20). True believers may be "persecuted, but never abandoned" (2 Cor 4:9). Neither the threats of death nor the attacks of the evil one can separate God's children from his love (Rom 8:37-39).

Nevertheless, as in the Chronicler's day, not all who appear to be in Christ are genuinely in him. For this reason, the New Testament warns that some will abandon the Faith (1 Tim 4:1). People within the Church must be careful not to abandon their "first love" (Rev 2:4).

The consummation of the Kingdom will infallibly demonstrate God's faithfulness to his people. He promised "Never will I forsake you" (Heb 13:5). In the end, God's people will never forsake him and he will never forsake them.

21) *Unfaithfulness*

Original Israelite Readers:

On fourteen occasions the Chronicler noted that the people of God had been "unfaithful." This description of rebellion against God brings to light another dimension of Israel's responsibility before God.

First, on many occasions the object of Israel's unfaithfulness is explicitly noted as God himself (1 Chr 10:13; 2 Chr 6:16; 12:2; 28:19,22; 30:7). From the Chronicler's point of view, Israel was in a special relationship with God and rebellion was a direct and personal affront against him.

Second, unfaithfulness was also specified as acts of turning away from the Law of Moses, especially the Laws regarding worship (1 Chr 2:7; 10:13; 2 Chr 12:2; 26:16,18; 28:22-23; 29:6,19; 33:19; 36:14). By this means the Chronicler drew attention to his keen interest in the Law and his high regard for proper worship.

Third, in every case of unfaithfulness, the Chronicler pointed to severe consequences of divine judgment. Achan (Achar) died (1 Chr 2:7). The half-tribe of Manasseh went into exile (1 Chr 5:25). Saul died (1 Chr 10:13). Rehoboam suffered Shishak's attack (2 Chr 12:2). Uzziah contracted a skin disease (2 Chr 26:16,18). Ahaz was subjected to Assyrian domination (2 Chr 28:19,22). Manasseh was exiled (2 Chr 33:19). In fact, the Chronicler twice explained that Judah underwent the Babylonian exile because of unfaithfulness (1 Chr 9:1; 2 Chr 36:14).

This correlation between infidelity and severe consequences spoke to the post-exilic community in at least two ways. It reminded them that the troubles they had experienced were the result of their failure to remain faithful to God. Moreover, it warned that further infidelity would bring about severe consequences.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The New Testament often warned against infidelity. Jesus rebuked Israel for being "unbelieving" (Mt 17:17). The apostle Paul became "astonished" at those who turn to a different gospel after confessing their faith in Christ (Gal 1:6; 4:9). He further warned

that many will turn from the truth and follow the way of Satan during the continuation of the Kingdom (1 Tim 5:15; 2 Tim 4:14). At the consummation, those who have been unfaithful will receive God's judgment (Heb 10:26-31).

22) *Repentance*

Original Israelite Readers

On nine occasions Chronicles explicitly mentions the theme of repentance. The NIV translates the Hebrew term reflecting this concept as "turn back" (2 Chr 6:24), "turn" (2 Chr 6:26; 7:14; 15:4; 36:13), "return" (2 Chr 30:6,9, "bring back" (2 Chr 24:19) and "repent" (2 Chr 6:37). The theme of repentance is not unique to Chronicles, but six of these nine occurrences appear in the Chronicler's additions to the book of Kings (2 Chr 7:14; 15:4; 24:19; 30:6,9; 36:13). The motif was an important dimension of his concept of Israel's responsibility before God.

The Chronicler's concept of repentance was twofold. On the one hand, repentance was to turn away from evil. Solomon described it as turning "from their sin" (2 Chr 6:26). Similarly, God spoke of Israel turning "from their wicked ways" (2 Chr 7:14). On the other hand, repentance was an act of turning toward someone. Azariah the prophet referred to a time when Israel "turned to the Lord" (2 Chr 15:4). Prophets spoke to "bring them back to him (the Lord)" (2 Chr 24:19). Hezekiah called northern Israel to "return to the Lord" (2 Chr 30:6) and offered compassion from God if they would "return to him" (2 Chr 30:9). Finally, Zedekiah is condemned for not turning "to the Lord" (2 Chr 36:13). These expressions indicate the personal dimension of repentance. It did not amount simply to changing behaviors to match a set of regulations more thoroughly. Repentance was to approach God himself.

The results of repentance are also explicitly noted in Chronicles. On the one hand, those who refused to turn back to God would suffer his judgment. For instance, Zedekiah was sent to exile because he did not repent (2 Chr 36:13). On the other hand, a number of blessings come to those who repent. The Chronicler stressed that God will have compassion, forgive sins, and answer the prayers of those who turn to God (2 Chr 6:24,26; 7:14; 30:9).

The purpose of this theme is evident. The failures of the post-exilic community had brought them to the point that the Chronicler called them to repentance. If his readers heeded this call, they would receive the mercy of God. If they refused, they could only expect further judgment from God.

Contemporary Christian Readers:

The theme of repentance is also emphasized in the New Testament. Jesus declared that entrance into his Kingdom was contingent upon genuine repentance (Mt 3:2). Christ explicitly warned that anyone who did not repent would certainly perish (Lk 13:3). Yet, the one who does repent inherits the Kingdom of God and causes much celebration in heaven (Lk 15:7).

The New Testament describes repentance much like the Chronicler. Paul preached that God requires repentance of everyone (Acts 17:30). Repentance includes the turning away from wickedness (Acts 3:19,26) and turning toward God (Acts 3:19; 26:20). True repentance is evident in the deeds of the repentant believer (Acts 26:20) and will be met with divine blessings (Acts 3:26). God himself is the one who grants the gift of repentance (2 Tim 2:25).

At the consummation of the Kingdom, the presence or lack of repentance will determine eternal destiny. John anticipates the rebellion of those who refuse to repent, even in the face of judgment (Rev 16:9,11). The Kingdom will belong to all who receive the word of God in repentance (Rev 3:3).