

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE “CHRONICLER”: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

EUGENE H. MERRILL\*

**Abstract:** *The thesis of this paper is that the unknown author or compiler of the book of Chronicles, who lived most likely at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, wrote from the vantage point of post-exilic Judah (then Yehud), a part of the Persian Empire. His interpretation of the history of his people from the very beginning varied in major ways from that of the composer of Samuel-Kings in light of the trauma of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the great Solomon Temple in 586 BC and the ensuing deportation of the bulk of the Jewish population to Babylonia. The small community among which he lived was burdened with fear and hopelessness despair. The book, however, offers hope of resurrection and future redemption. Evidence of this is the very closing verse of 2 Chronicles which quotes the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. As Cyrus had been the instrument of God to deliver from Babylonian exile, so a Cyrus yet to come would effect an eschatological deliverance.*

**Key Words:** *Cyrus the Great, eschatological hope, redemption, reinterpretation, restoration*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Book of Chronicles, of unknown authorship and uncertain date, is a neglected part of the canon, deemed by some to be either nothing but “endless genealogies” of which Paul spoke (1 Tim 1:4) or a useless repetition of the history of Israel already treated at length in Samuel and Kings.<sup>1</sup> However, these are false premises and in effect relegate the work to a practical non-canoncity. This article is an attempt to help restore the book to the position it enjoyed at the hands of the ancient compilers of the canon as an independent treatise on history and, more important, as a mother lode of rich theological treasure.

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\* Eugene Merrill is distinguished professor of OT interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40206. This essay was written in honor of Gerhard F. Hasel.

<sup>1</sup> Indicative of this even in scholarship is the lack of attention to Chronicles in the collection of essays titled *The Flowering of OT Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century OT Theology* (ed. Ben C. Ollenburger et al.; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 1; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992). The Scripture index yields only eight references to Chronicles out of about 1,400 in all for the rest of the OT canon. This translates into less than .006% of the whole, though Chronicles makes up 6% of that part of the Bible!

II. BACKGROUND<sup>2</sup>

The trauma of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the exile of thousands of Judea's citizens, and the return after seventy years to the homeland and the difficult task of starting the new covenant community virtually from scratch—all contributed to a reassessment of Israel's meaning and destiny. The Chronicler-theologian thus composed his work not just as a history of his people from their ancient beginnings but as an interpreted history, one designed to offer hope to the beleaguered community as well as to issue warnings that should they fall back into the ways of their fathers they could expect the judgment of God to be repeated.<sup>3</sup>

The principal theological themes of the book are (1) restoration and rule of the Davidic dynasty; (2) the renewal of the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and affirmed at Sinai; and (3) the new temple as a symbol of a reconstituted and re-consecrated people.<sup>4</sup> That Israel remained the special people of Yahweh is clear from the very beginning of the book, the genealogies (1 Chronicles 1–9). These are not just random lists of names and tribal affiliations, but selective witnesses to the faithfulness of Israel's covenant God. But the comprehensiveness of the lists broadens Yahweh's concern far beyond the little remnant of the post-exilic state of Yehud. Indeed, it opens with the genealogy of Adam, the father of the entire human race (1 Chr 1:1–4), narrows to that of Noah, the “second Adam” (1:5–27), and then to Abraham the Hebrew through Eber (v. 19; from Heb עֵבֶר > עֵבֶר, “Hebrew”), the founder of the covenant people (1:28–33), Isaac his son (v. 34), and Jacob, whose name change to Israel provided the eponym for the later nation (v. 34).

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<sup>2</sup> See on this section the writer's “A Theology of Chronicles,” in *A Biblical Theology of the OT* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody, 1991), 157–87; idem, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the OT* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 466–82. See also Ehud Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2006); Pancratius C. Beentjes, *Tradition and Transformation in the Book of Chronicles* (SSN 52; Leiden: Brill, 2008); Jonathan E. Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler* (BibInt 33; Leiden: Brill, 1998); John C. Endres, “Theology of Worship in Chronicles,” in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, Stephen L. McKenzie, and Gary K. Knoppers; JSOTSup 371; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 165–88; Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Robert D. Bell, “The Theology of the Book of Chronicles,” *BV* 38.2 (2004): 53–60; R. J. Coggins, “Theology and Hermeneutics in the Books of Chronicles,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in OT Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (ed. Edward Ball; JSOTSup 300; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 263–78.

<sup>3</sup> For more of a *Weltanschauung* perspective, see Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*. See also Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Israel's Earlier History as Presented in the Book of Chronicles,” in *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History* (ed. Nuria Calduch-Benages and Jan Liesen; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 57–75.

<sup>4</sup> These are essentially the themes embraced by Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Chronicler in His Age* (JSOTSup 101; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 273–89; and Baruch Halpern, “Sacred History and Ideology: Chronicles' Thematic Structure—Indications of an Earlier Source,” in *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text* (ed. Richard E. Friedman; University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies 22; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 35–54. Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler*, correctly sums up the theological (or ideological) center as “theocratic.” Hahn summarizes the theology in a simpl(istic) set of questions: (1) “Who are we?”; (2) “How did we get here?”; (3) “What must we do?”; and (4) “Why?” Scott Hahn, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1–2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 2.

Eventually, the lines of all twelve tribes of Israel are traced (1 Chr 2:1–8:40); however, the listing commences not with Reuben, the eldest, but with an expansive treatment of the offspring of the fourth son, Judah. The Chronicler in this way signals that primogeniture is of little significance in the outworking of God’s covenant purposes.<sup>5</sup> Judah’s centrality is underscored further in the rote manner in which all of Jacob’s sons are listed at the beginning (2:1–2) and then in detail, first and exclusively, Judah (2:3–4:23). The whole subsection then points straight to David though Perez, Hezron, and finally to Jesse (vv. 5–12). It was he who fathered David, the “man after God’s own heart” (v. 15; cf 1 Sam 13:14).

Samuel and Kings narrate the reign of David with the positives and negatives equally distributed and even emphasized, especially the darker sides. It is true that David is “the man after God’s heart,” but this says nothing of his character, only his selection for kingship (1 Sam 13:14).<sup>6</sup> It is true he slew the giant (1 Samuel 17) but he also took a married woman for a wife (1 Sam 25:40) and added many others also to his harem (1 Sam 25:43–44; 2 Sam 3:2–5). He showed mercy to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9:7) but disdained his own son Absalom (2 Sam 14:24), who therefore led a nearly successful coup against him (2 Sam 15:13–18). Finally, he committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2–5), murdered her husband to cover it up (vv. 14–21), and paid the consequences of this string of misdeeds with unending troubles in his own family (2 Sam 12:15–23; 13:7–15; 18:31–33; 1 Kgs 1:5–10).

The Chronicler minimizes these kinds of episodes, not because they did not happen but because his concern was the reinstatement of the Davidic dynasty with an idealistic vision quite out of keeping with David’s less “messianic” past.<sup>7</sup> It is true he recounts faithfully the accumulation of wives (1 Chr 3:1–9; 14:3) but he famously avoids any reference to the fate of Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband. Other theologically-driven omissions are references to Tamar’s rape by her own brother Amnon, Absalom’s estrangement from David and the ensuing rebellion, and the troublesome succession to the throne by Solomon. The most egregious

<sup>5</sup> The precedent for this principle is established early on in the biblical record: Seth replaces Cain and Abel (Gen 4:25); Shem is selected over his brothers (Gen 10:21–31); Isaac edges out Ishmael (Gen 21:12); Jacob comes before Esau (Gen 25:23); Moses, not Aaron, leads Israel out of bondage (Exod 3:10; 7:7); and now David comes to the fore after seven older brothers are rejected as suitable candidates for the throne (1 Sam 16:1–3,12). The same, of course, could be said with respect to Solomon, clearly not the heir apparent as his order in the sons of the family would seem to dictate (1 Kgs 1:13, 30; cf. 1 Chr 3:1–9; 22:9). See Thomas Willi, “Das davidische Königtum in der Chronik,” *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo* (ed. Rüdiger Lux; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 71–87.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of David’s chosenness, “after God’s heart” (Heb פֶּלִיבְבוֹ) clearly has nothing to do with David’s heart but God’s. It is not David’s worthiness that is in view but God’s gracious election (Mal 1:2; Rom 9:13). For other passages that speak of David’s divine selection see 2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kgs 11:34; 1 Chr 28:4; 2 Chr 6:6; Ps 78:70; 89:19–20.

<sup>7</sup> Mark A. Throntveit, “Was the Chronicler a Spin Doctor? David in the Books of Chronicles,” *WW* 23 (2003): 374–81. Throntveit’s response is (correctly) “yes” on the literary surface, but “no” when understood in terms of the Chronicler’s theological intent. See also Samantha Joo, “Past No Longer Present: Revision of David’s Legacy in Chronicles,” *SJOT* 26 (2012): 235–58; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

recorded act by far was David's sin in taking the census of his troops, for which he deeply repented, but which resulted in God's judgment and then favor (1 Chr 21:1–30).

The agenda of the Chronicler is clearly to set the stage for an ongoing succession of Davidic kings in fulfillment of God's unconditional covenant pledge (1 Chr 17:7–15). He surely was familiar with the history of promises of an anointed ruler passed down from one generation to the next. The "messianic" seed was first planted in the Abrahamic covenant which speaks of Abraham's offspring being the means of blessing the whole earth (Genesis 12, 15, 17, etc.). Isaac and then Jacob were instructed of this truth and passed it on to their descendants, generation after generation, until the Chronicler's own time. He recalled the blessing of Jacob upon Judah that specified that a ruler from that tribe would someday rule over Abraham's seed (Gen 49:10); the blessing by the pagan seer Balaam that a star would rise out of Jacob and exercise kingship (Num 25:17); the promise to David that he would be that star (2 Sam 7:8–17); and David's own assurance of that fact in his and others' poetic responses to it (Psalms 2; 45; 72; 89:3–4, 34–37; 110).

The prophets, too, spoke of that figure, over and over again linking him with David and his dynasty. Isaiah refers to his everlasting reign (Isa 9:7), its righteous character (16:5), and the mysterious Eliakim who will inherit David's keys to the kingdom (22:22). Jeremiah announces that a branch will sprout from David and reign in the day of God's second "exodus" delivery of his people (23:5–8; cf. 33:15 for the same epithet). Elsewhere the prophet speaks of an unnamed scion of David who will be king (30:9) and he promises that the Davidic throne will never be vacant (33:17), a promise based on God's irrefragable covenant (33:19–26). Ezekiel adds his word of confirmation of all the prophets who preceded him. He speaks of David as a messianic shepherd who will feed God's people (34:23–24) and as a prince will rule over them (37:25). Hosea appears to link together Yahweh, [Israel's] God, and David their king, hinting perhaps at a divine messianic offspring (3:5). Amos, in a glorious reference to a future David and his tabernacle, sees that it will be rebuilt and become a magnet to attract the nations of the earth to Yahweh (9:11). Finally, the postexilic prophet Zechariah echoes and enlarges upon the theme of Davidic rule in clearly eschatological terms. The house of David (that is, the dynasty) will be "as God" (12:8), a metonymy meaning that the house of David will be indistinguishable from the house of God because both will be ruled by the David yet to come.<sup>8</sup> This will be possible because the same messianic figure will have provided a means whereby the sinful people of the Lord can be purified (13:1).

### III. THE HOUSE OF DAVID

The theology of Chronicles, centered as it is on David and his historical and eschatological reign, is founded on and encompassed by the concept of covenant, the instrument by which Yahweh initiated relationship with David, his nation Israel,

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<sup>8</sup> Lyle M. Eslinger, *House of God or House of David? The Rhetoric of 2 Samuel 7* (JSOTSup 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

and, indeed all mankind.<sup>9</sup> It is inherent in creation itself, the climax of which was God's creation of humankind "to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth" and "to have dominion over it" (Gen 1:26–28). The failure of the first generation to meet these covenant demands resulted in alienation from God and thus the need for a remedy to restore the broken relationship. The problem was twofold: sinfulness and incapacity to serve God as his image, his vice-regent, as it were. Thus began a process of redemption and restoration, every stage of which was in terms of a covenant structure in which God took the initiative, outlined the stipulations, and promised to bless or curse depending on the response of the person or persons to whom the covenant was offered.

The arbitrary, unconditional covenant with Noah (Gen 6:18; 9:1–17) repeated the mandate to rule and also pledged to him that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood. It also made provision for one of his sons, Shem, to be specially blessed as the vehicle through whom the nations would be blessed (Gen 9:25–27). Though neither reigning nor salvation is explicit in the Genesis text, the reference to Eber in the Shem genealogy (Gen 10:21) is a deliberate attempt by the compiler to advance the notion of both by hinting at the ethnicity of the later Abraham (עֵבֶרִי/עֵבְרִי) and the narrative comment about Eber embedded in the text (v. 25). The Chronicler is careful to include this "messianic" clue in his genealogical table as well (1 Chr 1:19), for he, like the compiler of the Genesis list, is concerned to highlight Eber as the patronym of the chosen people.

The "Eberites" issued in Abra(ha)m the Hebrew (Gen 14:13; 39:14, 17; etc.), a term almost always used by outsiders to describe Abraham and his descendants (for exceptions see Exod 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1; 10:3 [all these in addressing a foreign king]; Jer 34:9, 14; Jonah 1:9 [again speaking to foreigners]). This S(h)emite through whom blessing was promised now is identified and becomes, indeed, by means of another, more precise covenant, the conveyor of both Yahweh's salvific purposes and the promise of a dynasty that would represent the sovereignty of Yahweh on the earth (Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–18; 15:1–21; 17:1–14). It even made provision for kings who, like humankind in general, would be the surrogates of Yahweh through whom he would reign (Gen 17:6, 16; cf. 35:11). Isaac too was blessed with the covenant promise (Gen 26:3–4) as was Jacob (Gen 27:27–29; 28:3–4, 13–14; 35:11–12; 46:1–4), most particularly because the promise of royal succession came from own lips in the blessing of his sons (49:10). Judah, then, would be the son (and tribe) whose offspring one day would rule over not just the seed of Abraham but over "all the people."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Sperling correctly observes that the term or even concept of "covenant violation" never occurs in Chronicles (p. 60), and he is equally correct in his conclusion that wherever post-exilic literature speaks of covenant it is always as an unconditional arrangement (p. 72). S. David Sperling, "Rethinking Covenant in Late Biblical Books," *Bib* 70 (1989): 50–73.

<sup>10</sup> Heb לֹא יִקְהָת עַמִּים לוֹ, lit., "to him will be the obedience of the people." For the rare noun יָקָה, see *NIDOTTE* 2:518–519. The term עַם, in the plural (as here) and without qualifications, generally refers to the masses of the nations (*HALOT* 838). Westermann observes, "That the ruler to come wins the obedience of the nations, corresponds exactly to the historical reality under David and Solomon." Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37–50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 230.

That David was the epitome of this anticipated ruler is clear from several passages, especially genealogies designed to make that connection. The first of these canonically is Ruth 4:18–22, which traces the line from Perez (a son of Judah [Gen 38:29]) through to David, the tenth in the line inclusively. Not to be overlooked is the fact that David's grandmother was Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 4:13, 17; cf. Matt 1:1–6), a harbinger of the inclusion of Gentiles within the covenant as previous covenant promises had declared. The Deuteronomic History omits any reference to David's genealogical ancestry, which makes the inclusion of such a register in Chronicles one of the hallmarks of its difference from that earlier source. First Chronicles 2, commencing with Perez, agrees with Ruth 4 except for the inclusion of other kinsmen more distantly related to David (2:5–14). Moreover, the Chronicler continues the record by listing David's royal descendants all the way through to Anani (1 Chr 3:1–24), otherwise unknown. In this manner, the linkage between the dim concepts of a single ruler to come and the full blown realization of it in the historical figure David was of inestimable value.

The covenant texts relating to David are found in both 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. On the surface it seems the two versions are nearly identical, Chronicles having been a transcription of Samuel. However, a few details of some significance should be noted: (1) Where Samuel refers to God as *Yahweh* (6x: 2 Sam 7:3, 4, 5, 8, 11 [bis]), Chronicles frequently prefers *Elohim*, the generic for deity (2 Sam 7:3, 4, 5, 11). However, Chronicles also makes use of the name *Yahweh* (1 Chr 17:4, 7, 10), so there is no need to posit a Yahwist or the like. However, where Samuel reports that “Yahweh tells you that Yahweh will make you a house” (v. 11), Chronicles reads “I tell you that Yahweh will make you a house” (v. 10), a somewhat more intimate communication. Also, where Samuel employs the second-person pronoun (“your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever; your throne shall be established forever,” v. 16), Chronicles uses the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons (“I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever,” v. 14).

Of special note is the “his” house, kingdom, and throne in Samuel and the “my” house and kingdom in Chronicles. The most significant difference in the parallel texts has to do with the omission in Chronicles but inclusion in Samuel of the possibility of a royal descendant whose iniquity will result in harsh punishment and the loss of *Yahweh's* covenant loyalty (his יִשְׁרָאֵל) (2 Sam 7:14). Chronicles also holds out the possibility of the latter, but is silent about the potential sin that might

Matthew's stylized genealogy (Matt 1:1–16) agrees with the Chronicler's until the reference to Zerubbabel (Matt 1:12; cf. 1 Chr 3:19). There Matthew concludes his rendition with Joseph, husband of Mary and (foster) father of Jesus (Matt 1:16), fourteen generations after the return from exile (v. 17). From another angle, the Gospel of Luke identifies twenty generations between Zerubbabel and Jesus, with names different from both Matthew and Chronicles. In any case, no need exists here for a resolution of this conundrum, though to Christian thought the culmination of the Davidic line in Jesus Christ is of major theological significance. For a reasonable proposal, see Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1: 1:1–9:50 (BECNT 3A; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 348–62. Cf. Isaac Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature: A Historical Journey* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 66.

bring God’s harsh judgment in addition. Clearly, the Chronicler is painting a more favorable portrait of David, at least here.

In both accounts one thing remains constant, however, and that is the certainty of the endurance of an eternal Davidic reign. Founded upon the promises to that effect of a God who cannot lie, the Chronicler’s community can be assured of the eventual victorious outcome of the kingdom purposes of God. Included in the Chronicler’s version of the so-called Davidic covenant (apart from the details above) are the following elements with identification of those parts that differ from 2 Samuel 5:

1. The Samuel narrative points out at the very beginning that David informed Nathan about his plans to build a temple because the surrounding world situation now permitted it—he had rest from all his enemies (2 Sam 7:1). In Chronicles, David’s impetus is merely the fact that he lived in a grand palace whereas Yahweh still dwelt in a tent (symbolized by the presence of the ark).
2. In 2 Sam 7:5, Yahweh asks whether David plans to build the temple; the query in Samuel turns into an imperative: “You must not build me a house to dwell in” (2 Chr 17:4; against LXX, “you must not,” in agreement with Chronicles).
3. Chronicles omits the name of the king from whom Yahweh had taken his covenant loyalty, referring to him only as “him that was before you (v. 13).” Samuel openly names him as Saul, the one “whom I put away from before you” (v. 15).
4. The guarantee of the future security and endurance of David’s dynasty is in the passive voice in 2 Sam 7:16: “your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever [עַד עוֹלָם] before you;<sup>11</sup> your throne will be established forever.” Chronicles, on the hand, renders it in the active: “I will settle him in<sup>12</sup> my house and in my kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever” (v. 14; passive as in Samuel).

Each of these observations by itself might seem to be of little moment, but taken together they yield the following synthesis: The center of Yahweh’s attention is clearly on the temple and the establishment of David and his everlasting dynasty as its caretakers. He dismisses the irrelevant reference to peace from enemies, including Saul; converts David’s question about building to a divine command to do so; and says that he, Yahweh, will personally establish both temple and monarchy forever. They will not “be established”; he will do the establishing.

The prophets add their affirmations of the certainty of all this and its implications for Israel and the nations.<sup>13</sup> Isaiah, announcing the miraculous birth of a son

<sup>11</sup> LXX,  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  read “before me.”

<sup>12</sup> LXX, “I will entrust to him (πιστώσω αὐτόν).”

<sup>13</sup> Yairah Amit, “The Role of Prophets in the Chronicler’s World,” in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak; LHOTS 427; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 80–101.

to a virgin (Isa 7:5),<sup>14</sup> addresses the ‘house of David’ in this context, suggesting that the birth is somehow connected to that dynasty. More explicit is his proclamation about a royal Davidic throne from which will issue grace (דָּוָה), truth (אֱמֶת), and righteousness (צְדָקָה; Isa 16:5). Other clear sentiments of this kind by Isaiah occur in 22:22 and 55:3, the latter adumbrating the covenant promise of 2 Sam 7:11–17 and anticipatory of 1 Chronicles 17. Jeremiah ominously says of Jehoiachin that no one of his seed will sit on David’s throne (Jer 22:30; cf. 36:30). However, the prophet does aver that a throne of David exists and will do so in the future. More explicitly, he speaks of the righteous “branch” who will reign as a Davidic offspring, executing justice and righteousness and delivering Israel from her enemies (Jer 23:5–6; cf. 30:9; 33:15–17). In 33:18–22, Jeremiah assures his hearers that the covenant with David will never be broken and that his descendants will be multiplied (cf. the covenant promise to Abraham in Gen 15:5).

Other prophets also lend their voices. Ezekiel, looking to the day of the Lord, declares in the name of Yahweh, “I, Yahweh, will be [Israel’s] God and my servant David prince among them” (34:24; cf. 37:24–25). Furthermore, Yahweh will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (v. 26). “In the latter days,” says Hosea, “the people of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king” (3:5). Zechariah is so bold as to say that “the house of David will be as God” (12:8) and that “in that day” Yahweh will pour out upon the house of David “the spirit of grace and supplication” (v. 10). In strongly salvific terms the prophet goes on to iterate that “a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the people of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity” (13:1).

#### IV. THE RESTORED TEMPLE

The third major theme of Chronicles theology has to do with the temple, God’s symbolic dwelling place on the earth. The term (or its equivalent) occurs about 190 times in the book, primarily, of course, with reference to the so-called “Temple of Solomon” or “First Temple.” In thirty-three of these instances the focus is on David’s preparations for its construction and sixty others recount the actual building of it and Solomon’s theological reflection on it (2 Chr 6:14–42).<sup>15</sup> The rest have to do with the history of the temple in the Divided Monarchy period until its destruction and the proclamation of Cyrus authoring its reconstruction (2 Chronicles 10–36).

The concept of an earthly dwelling place for Yahweh has ancient roots in the OT. There is intimation of it at the very beginning when God walked about in the Garden, making himself at home, as it were (Gen 3:8). Then throughout the patriarchal narratives there are multiplied instances in which God, if not dwelling in any

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<sup>14</sup> Heb עַלְמָה generically refers to any pubescent young woman, married or not. However, LXX reads *parthenos*, meaning *virgo intacta*, virgin in the technical sense. See NIDOTTE 3:415–19; BDAG 627.

<sup>15</sup> The close association between monarchy and temple is expanded by Tiño Jozef, *King and Temple in Chronicles: A Contextual Approach to Their Relations* (FRLANT 234; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).



sense, nevertheless "touched" the earth at various places, making those places holy and asserting at the same time that he could mingle with human beings. Usually these places were thereafter marked by altars or other structures testifying to God's visitation (cf. Gen 8:20; 12:7–8; 22:9; 26:29; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7).

A temporary temple-like dwelling came into being in the Sinai desert in the days of Moses (Exod 25:1–35:11; 35–40). The express purpose for the sanctuary (שְׁכֵנִית < שָׁכַן, "holy") was for Yahweh to "dwell among them [Israel] (Exod 25:8). He said he would meet them there, especially in the most holy place where sat the Ark of the Covenant, tantamount to his royal throne (v. 22). From then until the reign of David, the tabernacle seemed adequate. David, however, felt that as a proper and established king he needed to build a royal palace (2 Sam 5:11–12). But having done that he was struck by the obvious fact that while he dwelt in royal splendor, Yahweh still "lived" in temporary quarters that were far too demeaning for the ark and its invisible occupant. Thus, he instigated the construction of a suitable temple for Yahweh, though he left to Solomon the execution of his plans as his final legacy (2 Sam 7:1–2; chaps. 6–7; 1 Chr 22:6–16; 28:11–19; 29:1–19).<sup>16</sup>

Just as Yahweh was pleased with the tabernacle, filling it with his fiery presence (Exod 40:34–38), so he delighted in the temple, manifesting himself the same way (1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 7:1–3). Solomon's prayer in anticipation of God's act of dwelling on earth and in the building he had erected is rich in temple theology (2 Chr 6:14–42). In line with the great Shema (Deut 6:4–5), he extolled Yahweh as the incomparable God who keeps covenant and שָׁמַר and who has kept all his promises to David about dynastic succession (vv. 14–17). At the same time he exults in the temple, Solomon recognizes its inadequacy to contain the great God of the universe (v. 18). Nevertheless, he fully understands that the city and the temple are indeed in fulfillment of the promise of Deut 12:5, 11 that this would be the place where God would "put his name" (v. 20). Even were Israel to sin and be dragged away into exile, he was confident that if they sincerely repented, Yahweh would bring them back and restore to them all they had forfeited (vv. 37–39; cf. 1 Kgs 8:53).

Jehoshaphat understood the significance of the temple as a vital element in Israel's theology. In time of trouble, he said, he would stand before the temple, recognizing it to be God's house (2 Chr 20:8–9). Jehoiada the priest, on the occasion of the coronation of the boy-king Joash, led the gathered throngs of people in covenant reaffirmation in front of the temple, recognizing Joash as a true heir of David (2 Chr 23:3). Hezekiah's succession to the Davidic throne was marked by refurbishment of the temple (2 Chr 29:3), recommittal to the (Davidic) covenant (29:10), and an attempt to include even the depleted populace of the north in reunification with the Davidic south as one people of Yahweh (30:6, 9, 11). The Chronicler summarizes his account of the good king by observing that he kept Torah

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<sup>16</sup> John W. Wright, "The Legacy of David in Chronicles: The Narrative Function of 1 Chronicles 23–27," *JBL* 110 (1991): 229–42.

(תורה) and the commandments (מצוות; 31:21) in line with the injunctions of Deuteronomy (Deut 17:18–20).<sup>17</sup>

Josiah likewise stands out in the narrative as a worthy occupant of the Davidic throne.<sup>18</sup> He began to seek after Yahweh early in his life (2 Chr 34:3), undertaking demolition of pagan worship sites (vv. 4–7) and the restoration of the temple that had fallen into grievous disrepair and cultic impurity (35:1–19). In the course of refurbishing the temple, a scroll of Deuteronomy was found, the reading of which by Josiah impelled him to lead the people in covenant recommitment (34:29–33).<sup>19</sup> Perhaps his greatest legacy is found in the epitaphic summation, “All his days they [the community of faith] did not depart from following Yahweh, the God of their fathers” (34:33).<sup>20</sup> For the most part, however, the Chronicler paints a gloomy picture of neglect of the temple by David’s descendants and the nation as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

As noted already, the Chronicler’s account of history ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the exile of its last Davidic ruler (36:17–21), followed by what is likely a later appendage that speaks of the liberating decree of Cyrus that enabled restoration of both the Jewish state and the temple (vv. 22–23). Though the book was without doubt composed at least a century after the return, reflection on the exile and all that had occasioned it, as well as the gloomy and pessimistic postexilic situation of the people of its composition, provided the landscape against which a new historical and theological account of the people could and must be written. As Japhet correctly observes, “The Chronicler places himself and his generation in the time of Cyrus. Restoration lies ahead and is about to begin.”<sup>22</sup> Chronicles must thus be read and understood within this framework.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Mark A. Throntveit, “The Relationship of Hezekiah to David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles,” in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers; JSOTSup 371; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 105–21.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth A. Ristau, “Reading and Rereading Josiah: The Chronicler’s Representation of Josiah for the Postexilic Community,” in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 219–47.

<sup>19</sup> The technical terms in v. 31 (מצות, עדות, חקים) make clear that the scroll was indeed a copy of Deuteronomy, where they abound, and with all three together (Deut 5:28; 6:1; 7:11; 8:11; 11:1; 26:17; 30:16).

<sup>20</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “Observations on Josiah’s Account in Chronicles and Implications for Reconstructing the Worldview of the Chronicler,” in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman* (ed. Yairah Amit; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 89–106.

<sup>21</sup> Hezekiah and Josiah are, of course, exceptions but their attempts at reformation were too few and too late. Israel’s and Judah’s course was set toward death and destruction and the demise, it seemed, of the Davidic monarchy and the temple that symbolized the presence of David’s God among them.

<sup>22</sup> Sara Japhet, “Exile and Restoration in the Book of Chronicles,” in *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 340.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Gelston, “The End of Chronicles,” *Scandinavian Journal of the OT* 10 (1996): 53–60.