

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Kings, Lecture 5

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Kings and Chronicles Compared and Contrasted, Synoptic Problems

F. Kings and Chronicles

1. The Difference in Purpose and Theological Perspective of Chronicles

Okay let's go on to "F" "Kings and Chronicles." "E" was "A Deuteronomic Theology of History." "F" is "Kings and Chronicles." "1" is "The Difference in Purpose and Theological Perspective." As we have noted, Kings is basically retrospective; that is, it looks back explaining to the people in exile the reason for their condition. This emphasis is not to the exclusion of presenting the basis for a prospect of hope in connection with the restoration of the Davidic house in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. But the forward looking idea of restoration is much in the background and not the primary purpose or emphasis in the book. Chronicles is written later than Kings. The last verses of 2 Chronicles tell of the Decree of Cyrus to permit the return of the exiles to Jerusalem in order to reestablish themselves in their own land and rebuild the temple.

Chronicles is, in contrast to Kings, not so much retrospect as it is prospective. Chronicles emphasizes those things that would provide a basis for the people returning from exile in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah to begin the process of reconstruction on a firm foundation. Archer says in his *Introduction*, page 389, "The emphasis of the book is on that which is sound and valid in Israel's past as furnishing a reliable basis for the task of reconstructing which lay ahead." Archer also notes on page 389, "that the Chronicler's purpose is to show that the true glory in the Hebrew nation was found in its covenant relationship to God as safeguarded in the prescribed forms of worship in the temple and administrated by the divinely ordained priesthood under the protection of the divinely organized dynasty of David. Thus, the writer is particularly concerned with Judah, Jerusalem, the temple, the lines of David, kings and Zadok the priest. The primary interest is the kingship of David and his successors. This is clear from the very

beginning as seen in the genealogical materials found 1 Chronicles 1-9. Chapter 1 traces the genealogy from Adam to Jacob. Then immediately the first tribe that is traced is Judah, which is given the most space of any tribe--from 2:1 to 4:23, 102 verses. Within the tribe of Judah, the house of David is emphasized, with the entirety of chapter 3 tracing his generations. To the other tribes comparatively little attention is given: Reuben, 10 verses; Gad, 5 verses; East Manasseh, 2 verses; Issachar, 5; Dan, 11; Naphtali, 2 verses; west Manasseh, 6; Ephraim, 10; and Asher, 11.

Kings of the north are mentioned only in connection with developments in the Southern Kingdom. No mention is made of the fall of the Northern Kingdom, and that is striking in Chronicles. The reign of David himself is given extensive treatment in 1 Chronicle 10-29. There's about 20 chapters of the reign of David. Yet, in all this material there is no mention of the family affairs and the great sin of David. This is found only in 2 Samuel 12-20. Instead, the stress is on his military supremacy and matters of religious interest, particularly in connection with Jerusalem and the temple. This must have been of great interest and significance to Ezra and Nehemiah as they renewed the covenant and attempted to put Israel's worship on its proper footing. David is presented as the example *par excellence* of the true theocratic king (1 Chronicles 17:14, 25, 29, 23), and he is seen as a type of the greater son of David who was to come as prophesized by Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Another emphasis that becomes apparent in the Chronicler's history is a term that has been called "Retribution Theology." The idea is simply that sin brings judgment and obedience, or righteousness, brings prosperity and peace. This idea, of course, is central to the Mosaic covenant. It remains important for the post-exilic community. The intent of this emphasis would seem to be to encourage whole hearted devotion to the Lord to the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law and to reestablish the covenant community as a means of experiencing God's blessing on the nation. It is thus the case that both Kings and Chronicles combine

emphases on the themes of the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants, on the one hand, as well as on the Sinai Covenant on the other.

It seems, however, that in Kings, while the primary focus is on the Sinai Covenant, it is not at the exclusion of the Davidic promise. Whereas in Chronicles the emphasis is on the Davidic Covenant, this is not to the exclusion of the Mosaic Covenant. I think there is a stress on the, you might say, Mosaic Covenant or Sinai Covenant in Kings, and of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles, but neither to the exclusion of the other. In any Old Testament sequence of the covenants there are different emphases, but the promised covenants are not without conditions and the law covenants are not without God's promise to never forsake his people. Nor is there lacking the purpose that he intends to accomplish through them. Curses do not annul the Sinai Covenant; they are the implementations of its sanctions. In other words, it brings judgment and even sends people into exile.

That doesn't mean their relationship has been abandoned or destroyed. It's really evidence that the relationship is in effect because that's exactly what God said. If they turn away from him, the curse will come. But God said he would never abandon these people, so the curses do not annul the covenant. They are the implementations of the sanctions of the Sinai covenant and are the implementation of its sanctions. Any attempt to understand these books that presumes to find conflicting conditions in theologies in the various Old Testament covenants distorts the message of the books as well as the unity of the Old Testament covenants. Both books reflect the emphases of promise and law while giving prominence to different aspects of it. This touches on an issue not only between the relationship of Kings and Chronicles, but even between the Deuteronomistic History thing and von Rad's conception of it where he posits this tension between these covenants. It seems to me we shouldn't view them as in tension--the Sinai and Davidic covenants--but they work together.

With some of the kings who weren't particularly good, God still blessed them, which is a manifestation of his grace that I think is a good thing to learn.

The other side of it is often true, as well; somebody might turn against God, and that judgment will come, but it may be postponed; it may not be immediate. But I think generally you see that work too.

2. The Synoptic Problems between Kings & Chronicles

Alright, “2” “The Synoptic Problems.” As is well known, Kings and Chronicles contain much material in parallel accounts. The listing of parallel passages can be found in Young’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 395, or in Crockett’s *Harmony of Kings, Chronicles, and Samuel*, which is listed in your bibliography. Often the Chronicler’s passages contain the tales not to be found in Kings, and often Chronicles’ arrangement of similar material is different. In other instances, the agreement between the two texts is nearly word for word.

When Chronicles is accepted as an authentic historical record and part of the Old Testament canon, this means that the passages must be understood as complementary rather than contradictory. When points of divergence, or even conflict, arise, an interpretation should be sought that takes into account all the data without constructing simplistic harmonizations on the one hand, but without falling into a method of approach that undermines the historical credibility of Kings or of Chronicles on the other hand. Included in consideration of all the data is the possibility of corruption in the transmission of the text of either Kings, or Chronicles or both.

For example, we find differences in numerals in Chronicles from those in Kings. See the discussion in Young’s *Introduction*. The differences in numerals between the two books is one of the most striking points of disagreement. It seems in most instances to involve textual corruption.

There are many other differences, however, that have caused many interpreters to adopt a very low view of the reliability of the historiography of Kings and Chronicles. We do not have the time to look at all the alleged discrepancies or even where they occur. You can check the book like Hailey’s

Alleged Discrepancies in the Bible for examples.

Conflicts Between 1 Kings 9:11 & 1 Chronicles 8:2 for Example

But let me mention just one such example. In his book *Do You Understand What You Read*, H.M. Kuitert says, page 14-15 “If the Bible is God’s word, must we at least assume that everything written in it happened as the Bible describes it?” Obviously, for him the answer is no. Naturally, very much of what the Bible tells us did happen just the way the Bible tells it, but some things are recorded that did not happen the way they were told. Take a few examples from the Old Testament. In 1 Kings 9:11 and following, we’re told that Solomon gave twenty Israelites cities to King Hiram. The cities were northern cities in Galilee and were of no importance to Solomon. But in 1 Chronicles 8:2 we find instead that Hiram gave these cities to Solomon.

Let’s look at the text of 1 Kings 9:11: “King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar, pine and gold he wanted. But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns Solomon had given him, he was not pleased. ‘What kind of towns are these you’ve given me, my brother?’ he asked. And he called them Cabul. [which, as the NIV note says, sounds like the Hebrew for “good for nothing”], a name they have to this day.”

Now, you compare that with 2 Chronicles 8:2: “Solomon rebuilt the villages that Hiram had given him, and settled Israelites in them.” Now, to pick up where Kuitert continues he says, “These illustrations” [he gave that and several others, but that’s the one we’re looking at since it’s about Kings and Chronicles] he says, “These illustrations force us to ask a simple question, which writer tells things as they actually happened, the writer of Kings or the writer of Chronicles, or was it neither of them? In any case, if we’re concerned about historical precision, we cannot find it in both writers. Things cannot have occurred precisely as Kings has it and precisely as Chronicles has it. To say that Bible is God’s word

cannot mean that all its writers report things exactly as they happen.”

Now, to get back to this question, what *do* we do with this text? In the *NIV Study Bible*, at 1 Kings 9:11, the note I wrote there says this: “Comparison of verses 10-14 with 5:1-12 suggest that during Solomon’s 20 years of building activity he became more indebted to Hiram than anticipated in their original agreement (see note on 5:9), which had provided for payment for labor. That’s in 5:6, and wood in 5:10-11. From verses 11 and 14, it is evident that in addition to wood and labor, Solomon had also acquired great quantities of gold from Hiram.” You see it says in verse 11 Hiram supplied him with cedar, pine and gold. 2 Chronicles 8:1-2 indicates that in some later date, when Solomon’s gold reserves were increased--perhaps the return of the exploitations of Ophir or the visit from the Queen of Sheba--he settles his debt with Hiram and recovered the 20 towns held as collateral.” It seems to me he gave the 20 towns to Hiram at one point because he owes him money he couldn’t pay, but later when he was able to repay it he got the towns back. The text doesn’t make all that clear, but it is a reasonable assumption when you put *all* the data together that’s involved. I don’t think there is any need to conclude that there’s a fundamental contradiction between Kings and Chronicles.

It’s hard to construct a chronology. The emphasis here is on this gold. The very next verse is how Hiram had sent the 120 talents of gold, that’s in 1 Kings 9:14. It seems to me the cities may have been collateral for the gold, but it’s an assumption, admittedly. I think the point is there is no need to conclude that there is a contradiction. There are ways to understand both statements without coming to a conclusion that either Kings or Chronicles is in error.

So it seems to me that this is the sort of thing that must be striven for in places where there appears to be a conflict between the two books. In some instances there might not be sufficient information or evidence to resolve the difficulty. In such cases this is to be readily admitted without a defensive attitude that suggests that one’s view of the reliability of the Old Testament depends on the

reliability of the resolution of every matter of this sort. I think as far as your approach you have to take, you don't have to solve every problem in order to hold onto a high view of Scripture. If you don't have the information to solve it you leave it stand as a problem. If you don't have enough information to solve it, admit you don't. We leave it unresolved. There's nothing wrong with that.

Moving on, there is a sense in which the Chronicler idealizes, not in an improper way, but in a proper way, David as a type of Christ. Chronicles doesn't even mention the Bathsheba incident. It passes over it. But yet be careful how far you go with that. I don't think the Chronicler's changing history, he's just leaving out. In this case, the Chronicler doesn't say anything about the cities being not very nice towns, whereas Kings tells you that he gave him these worthless cities.

Kings and Chronicles may be coming at it from a different perspective, but it's like the gospel accounts: Matthew comes at the life of Christ from one perspective and Luke from another one, a different one. That doesn't mean they aren't equally valid, but there are different perspectives.

All right, it seems to me we don't necessarily have to resolve all these things. It's better to leave some difficulties stand than to offer implausible and simplistic harmonizations. I think a lot of these simplistic harmonizations that have been offered can do more damage than good. You're better to say you don't know than to just artificially construct some harmonization.

Different Perspectives on the Same Historical Event

There's an issue of the newsletter called *ICBI Update*. That was the International Counsel for Biblical Inerrancy. It operated for 10 years and completed its work for promoting the cause of biblical inerrancy. Their newsletter was called *Update*, and in it Norman Geisler notes that Kenneth Kantzer tells the story of receiving two reports from eye witnesses regarding the death of a friend. I have mentioned this in Old Testament History before. First report: she was standing on a street corner, was hit by a bus, was injured but not killed, and died

sometime later. Second report: she was riding in a car. The car was hit, she was flung from the car and killed instantly. Geisler says the reports were both received from credible eyewitnesses. They are apparently contradictory, although not absolutely contradictory. There are possible explanations, but none of them seem plausible. Later Kantzer learned why we must trust the eye witnesses and believe our basic principle that the Bible was without error. He learned this: she was standing on a street corner, was hit by a bus, was injured but not killed. She was picked up by a motorist, a good Samaritan, who sped off to the hospital. His car was hit, she was thrown from the car and killed instantly. Both reports were literally true. If you didn't know the background, you'd look at them and say they're contradictory. The lesson is we should trust the eyewitnesses even when they conflict.

Denying the Historicity of the Bible Problem

We are two thousand years or more too late to reconcile all the problems in the Bible because we will probably never in our lifetime get the needed information to solve all the problems. There are a lot of things for which the needed information has been lost and not available to us. If we had all the information, it would resolve these matters. Where possible, we should suggest possible interpretations that resolve the apparent difficulties. In some cases we should let certain difficulties stand without offering superficial communication without substantial evidence on the one hand, and without capitulating the position that jeopardizes the credibility of Scripture on the other hand.

This latter temptation should be avoided completely lest it lead to arbitrary distinctions between those parts of Scripture that we can trust as historically reliable, and those parts we cannot. Once you start down that road, there is no way to separate, to draw the line and say: Well, this happened, but this didn't. There are a lot of efforts doing that. It seems to me that a lot of people say that, but that argument should be called the "slippery slope" argument. Once you start on it

one just gets further and further from the truth. It's not a valid approach, and I think its end result is an inevitable loss of truth, and this is certainly something you need to be aware of if you're going to take that direction. You can say: Well, they're just minor details they're not important. But then you go a little bit further with it. History has shown that people start with that and then go further and further astray. Usually the students go a lot further in this than their professors, and then by the third generation they've give up as far as keeping a historical view of Scripture is concerned.

Dillard's Article on Dischronologization

A word of caution here is in order with respect to the position that seems to be suggested, although hesitatingly, by Ray Dillard in his article "An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, volume 23. If you have read that, you'll know what I'm talking about. If you haven't read it, try to read it because I think it's an example of this kind of problem and something worth looking at. Even though Ray raises legitimate questions in his article, there are some difficult problems there, and even though the answers to his questions may not be readily apparent, it seems to me he offers a methodologically dangerous position to suggest that the writers of biblical history may have the liberty to utilize factual errors in order to bolster their theological purpose. Now, he doesn't come out in so many words and say that, but he kind of suggests it by questions. You come away from reading the article thinking that that is the solution that he thinks has the most to be said for it, at least that is the way I read the article.

This, in principle, is the methodology taken to extremes by Gerhard von Rad and many other scholars utilizing the historical-critical method. It seems to me that the distinction between "dischronologization," which is a term they use, when ambiguous, and chronological error when explicit and erroneous, must be maintained lest we lapse into a position that we accept historical error in the

biblical narrative.

If you read the article, you know what that's talking about this dischronologization. Sometimes you can get material in scripture that is not arranged in chronological order. It is arranged in some kind of logical order for some purpose or another, whatever it might be for the writer. Now, if that dischronologization, not putting it in chronological order, is ambiguous, then there is no problem with that. A writer can arrange materials out of chronological order in order to make a point. I mean he hasn't distorted anything if he hasn't specifically indicated the time sequence. But we are talking about a dischronologization that is erroneous. If somebody's going to rearrange material and say that this happened here, and that happened next and then the other thing happened when that's not the way it happened in that order, that brings you into factual error. It seems to me that Dillard's article suggests that the Chronicler is using that kind of a method. At least he raises the question: isn't this the best way to solve the problem? There's a tough problem and I don't know what the answer to the problem is. What I'm saying is I don't think we want to go in Dillard's direction to solve the problem, for I think you lose far more than you gain.

So there are these synoptic problems, you might say, in Kings and Chronicles, and it also extends to parallels in Samuel. So you have the synoptic problem in the Old Testament as you have in the New Testament Gospels, and the synoptic problem with the gospels, is a long sort of discussion. How do you harmonize these things? Some we have to leave open because we don't have enough information, and we have to leave it at that. That's the end of my handout.

McConville's Analysis of the 2 Stages of Deuteronomistic History

I see we have two minutes left. I thought we would get further in this tonight. I didn't mention the McConville's article that I wanted you to read for today, too. Let me just say this: McConville interacts with the current theory about the composition of Kings that suggests that there's a double, or dual,

redaction of Deuteronomistic history. The original Deuteronomistic history is supposed to have been written about the time Josiah. The original one was very positive and optimistic, but that's before destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The second edition of Deuteronomistic history was written in the time of the exile. The second Deuteronomistic editor stressed the negative emphasis that you find. That's a common theory--that's a dual redaction.

McConville says that he feels that there's a single author and he suggests that from the very beginning you get hints that the kingship is flawed and will ultimately lead to exile. You get that right from the beginning, right from the time of Solomon. I think he's right in that. And he points out that even the reforms--when you think of the reform of Hezekiah and the reform of Josiah--even the reforms are disappointing, he says. And so the question that really seems to come up throughout the book of Kings is whether any king can really provide for any kind of permanent salvation, or blessing, or deliverance. Or is it because of the sin question and the inherent inability of man to live up to God's standards. God set up something that ultimately and inevitably would lead to exile, and that's what the writer of Kings is trying to develop.

I think he's right on target there. I think that's sort of a backdrop you might say, or a foil, for what you find particularly in the prophets. And of course, the prophets were writing during this period and you see this in the downward spiral of the kingdom that they described. The prophets start saying in the future there's going to be a king who will sit on the throne of David who is going to fulfill the ideal and bring about a kingdom of justice and peace. But this one is not going to be just man, he's going to be a God-man. He will be the offspring of the virgin, and called "God with us," or "Emmanuel."

So I think that's the basic idea. I think we'll come back to that kind of idea when we get into the content of the book of Kings itself, and I think there is a lot to be said here and maybe even elaborated in Kings.

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