

Preface: The Mother of All Genealogies (1 Chronicles 1-9)

Given the nature of our scripture reading tonight,

I need to attach a preface to the reading,

so that you have a better chance of *hearing* the Word as it is read.

We are going to spend the next six weeks in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles.

Six weeks on a list of names!

Why?

Because names tell stories.

When Chronicles was first read to the people of Israel,
they would have understood what was going on.

No, they would not have known who *everyone* was.

Genealogies function to connect the “important” people to us –
through a whole lot of “unimportant” people!

In my family tree, the name of William Wallace looms large,

because he was the one who brought the family over from Ulster to North Carolina,
and then to Nova Scotia, because of his loyalist stance during the Revolution.

The subsequent list is not as memorable –

but they are essential for the purpose of connecting me to the Wallace clan of Scotland.

As you listen to the reading of 1 Chronicles 1,

remember that this is *your* genealogy –

your story.

The first few names are even *your* biological ancestors!

But more importantly, the rest of the names are part of *your* story
as you have been adopted into the family of Jesus.

You may not recognize all the names!

But you should listen for the story –

those few names that you *do* recognize

provide context for the rest of the names.

Read 1 Chronicles

Introduction:

Jerome once wrote

“The book of Chronicles, the epitome of the old dispensation, is of such importance
that without it anyone who claims to have a knowledge of the Scriptures
makes himself a fool.”

I believe that is true –

but I also concur with another commentator who added a caveat:

“anyone who claims to know Chronicles
without having a thorough knowledge of Scripture
would be making an even bigger fool of himself,
for least of all books of the Bible can it be studied in isolation.” (Dillard, ix)

I’ve titled this sermon, “what’s in a name?”

which actually has a double meaning –

because I’m not only interested in the names in chapter 1,
but also the very name and placement of the book of Chronicles!

In Hebrew the title of this book is “Davare haymim” – the words of the days –
and in most manuscripts, it is placed at the end of the Old Testament.

The Greek title, “Paraleipomenon” – the things left over –
was somewhat unfortunate –

suggesting that Chronicles was just the “leftovers” of history –
and the placement matched the description,
as the book of Chronicles was placed in the LXX after Samuel-Kings,
a place where it has remained to this day.

There have been lots of speculation about the author and date of Chronicles.

There are lots of connections with Ezra-Nehemiah,
suggesting either the same author, or at least very similar concerns.

It is possible that the Chronicler wrote as early as 500 B.C.

(just after the return from Babylon under Zerubbabel),

and it is possible that the Chronicler wrote as late as 250 B.C.

(since his work was well-known and attested shortly thereafter).

We do not know when or by whom Chronicles was written –

but we do know that it was accepted as authoritative by our Lord Jesus,

and appears to have been one of the last books written

(since it appears at the very end of the Hebrew bible).

The book of Chronicles is written to a people who are in danger of forgetting their story.

It is written to a people who live in the modern world.

The first readers of Chronicles could have said (in the words of Michael Wilcock),

“The story of old Israel is just that – a tale in a story-book:

... We have moved out of that ancient Bible world in to this secular modern world.

We do not deny that there are links between the two;

but we wonder very much how meaningful those links are.

There is still a nation of Israel, but it comprises only a few of the twelve tribes
and only remnants of any of them.

There is still a land of Canaan, but we occupy only a small portion of it.
There is still a house of David, but its royal glory has long departed.
There is still a temple in Jerusalem, but it is a second-rate thing,
 far inferior to the one it replaces.
Even if the people of God are not persecuted, they are (which is worse) ignored.
They are a feeble minority in a world
 which in practice bears no relation to the world of their Bible.
For them the future is unknown and the past is meaningless.” (p24)

Does that sound like your world?

 The book of Chronicles addresses a people
 who still have a memory of God and his mighty deeds,
 but who are no longer certain who they are or where they are going.

The Chronicler says that the answer is found in remembering who you are.
 And you remember by retelling your story

What Are Genealogies For?

After all, what are genealogies for?

 Why would *anyone* open a book with a list of over 900 names?!

There are different kinds of genealogy.

 Linear genealogies give you a direct line from father to son.
 (verses 1-3 give you an example of that).

 Linear genealogies are designed to show how the last person on the list
 is related to the first person.

 So in verses 1-4, the point is show how Shem, Ham, and Japheth
 are related back to Adam.

But verse 4 introduces a second type of genealogy –
 the segmented genealogy.

Because sometimes you want to do more than just connect back up the tree!

Sometimes you want to show how you are related to other people “out there.”

If I just go back up the Wallace tree, I will never find the famous “William Wallace,”
 the liberator of Scotland!

 He had no sons – and so no Wallace is descended from him!

Segmented genealogies branch out and point to how we are distant “cousins”
 from way back when!

What the Chronicler has done is take all the genealogical material found in Scripture
 (along with a little extra information that we cannot find elsewhere)
 and compiled the Mother of all Genealogies!

If you want to understand how to live as God's people today,
then you must understand the history of yesterday.

And notice that the Chronicles *assumes* that you know *something* of that history!
He doesn't explain *any* of the history of Genesis through Judges.

And later, we will see that he assumes that you know Samuel-Kings as well.

Chronicles retells the story of Israel
from the vantage point of the temple –
with an emphasis on the priestly and cultic aspects of Jerusalem's history.

Chronicles celebrates the reigns of David and Solomon.

Samuel-Kings highlights the faults and flaws of Israel's greatest kings,
but the Chronicler overlooks their sins
in order to highlight their greatness.

Chronicles also emphasizes the southern kingdom of Judah.

Kings included the stories of both Judah and Israel,
and indeed the central story of Kings is the story of the house of Omri,
Ahab and Jezebel and all their shenanigans!

And how Elijah and Elisha prophesied against them...

It is not as though Chronicles ignores the northern kingdom –
but rather the Chronicler wishes to show that the northern kingdom
will come back in the end.

As Roddy Braun puts it, "all Israel ought to be one,
but their unity was to be based on their common worship of Yahweh
centered in the Jerusalem temple." (xxxvii)

Another theme that we will see throughout the book is the theme of retribution:
the idea that God judges all according to their deeds.

In Chronicles, you regularly see that good deeds are rewarded,
and evil deeds are punished –

and, lest you think that you are therefore damned for your evil deeds,
in the most famous of all the divergences between Kings and Chronicles,
even the most wicked king in Jerusalem (Manasseh)
could repent and find forgiveness from God!

From Adam to Israel

1 Chronicles 1 provides us with a genealogical summary of the book of Genesis.

The whole of Genesis is summarized here in 54 verses!

The structure of chapter 1,
not surprisingly,

mirrors that of the structure of the genealogies of Genesis.

Israel's "pre-history" consists of two sets of ten generations –
each of which concludes with a set of three heirs.

But there is a difference!

Genesis and Chronicles both conclude the first set of ten with the three sons of Noah,
but whereas Genesis ended the second set of ten with the sons of Terah,
Chronicles ends the second set of ten with the heirs of Abraham!

In other words, Chronicles retells the genealogy of Genesis 10-11
in a way that highlights Abraham.

This shows us that the Chronicler is not merely throwing together
all the genealogical material in Genesis without thought.
Rather, he is retelling Israel's story.

And when you retell your story, you highlight different things at different times.

Verses 4 and 24 function as the pivots of 1 Chronicles 1.

Verse 4, and the three sons of Noah.

Verse 24, and the two sons of Abraham (with the later addition of the sons of Keturah).

1. Adam to Noah and His Three Heirs (v1-23)

a. Ten Generations: Adam to Noah (v1-4)

¹ Adam, Seth, Enosh; ² Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; ³ Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; ⁴ Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

How do you like that for the beginning of a book?!

Adam.

What happens when I say that?

“Adam”

What goes through your mind?

“Our first parent”

“Adam and Eve in the Garden”

“the one who plunged us into sin and misery”

Only a few of the next several names would have been remembered –

Seth – the promised seed,

Enoch – walked with God

Methuselah the oldest man,

And Noah !

Noah who built the ark, and put all the animals inside...

Noah who planted a vineyard afterward,

and demonstrated that human nature had not fundamentally changed.

The thoughts of man's hearts are evil from his youth.

In other words,

in the first four verses of Chronicles
the Chronicler has reminded you of the original exile –
(Adam and Eve driven out of the Garden)
and the original catastrophic judgment that signaled the wrath of God against sin,
the Flood of Noah,
and all the readers of Chronicles say –
oh, wait, that’s what God has done to us!

Those ten generations encapsulate all of human history!
Creation, Fall, Redemption through Judgment and New Creation.

But that’s our story too!

Then in verses 5-23 we hear about the descendants of the three sons of Noah –
and like in Genesis, there are 70 (or 71) names,
pointing to the fullness of the Gentiles.

The 70 nations of the world are descended from Noah and his sons.
In other words, Israel’s story is rooted in humanity’s story.

b. The Three Heirs of Noah: The Table of the Nations (v5-23)

⁵ *The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.* ⁶*The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.* ⁷*The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.*

Verses 5-6 start with Japheth.

You may recognize several of these names from Ezekiel.
Magog, Tubal, Meshech and Tarshish are among those who recur elsewhere.
Most of the sons of Japheth live at a distance from Israel,
so they generally play a very limited role in Israel’s history.

⁸ *The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.* ⁹*The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.* ¹⁰*Cush fathered Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man.*

The sons of Ham (verses 8-16) follow Genesis very closely –
even in the comment about Nimrod.
Chronicles deletes all the other comments from Genesis 10,
but includes this one comment about Nimrod.

Why?

I would suggest that it is to help orient us.
While the Chronicler deletes *most* of the asides from Genesis,
he keeps some that help remind us where we are.
Nimrod was the first on earth to be a mighty man.

¹¹ Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹²Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Capthorim. ¹³Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, ¹⁴and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁵the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁶the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

Verses 11-16 then speak of the sons of Egypt and Canaan,
pointing to the sons of Ham
(and especially the sons of Egypt and Canaan)
as the ancient adversaries of Israel.

¹⁷ The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. And the sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech. ¹⁸Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. ¹⁹To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg (for in his days the earth was divided), and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁰Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²¹Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²²Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²³Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.

Verses 17-23 then speak of the sons of Shem –
following Genesis 10,
even keeping the comment about Peleg.

The division of the earth in the days of Peleg is crucial.
These genealogies in 1 Chronicles are all about recounting
a story of division.

In the structure of the two parts of chapter 1,
there is a sort of balance.
Ten generations – concluding with a generation divided into three heirs –
and then the details of those three heirs,
concluding with an extensive description of a sideline.

The thirteen sons of Joktan in verses 20-23 seem somewhat irrelevant,
until you look at the following genealogy of Abraham.

Abraham's genealogy concludes with an extensive discussion of the sideline of Esau.

Even so, Shem's genealogy that concludes the first part
includes extensive discussion of the sideline of Joktan.

2. Noah to Abraham and His Three Heirs (24-54)

a. Ten Generations: Shem to Abraham (24-27)

²⁴ Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; ²⁵Eber, Peleg, Reu; ²⁶Serug, Nahor, Terah; ²⁷Abram, that is,

Abraham.

Verses 24-27 follow the exact same structure as verses 1-3 –
ten names followed by the sons of the tenth man.

But whereas in Genesis 11, the tenth man was Terah
(with his three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran),
here the tenth man is Abram
(with his three heirs, Isaac, Ishmael, and the sons of Keturah).

Incidentally, the reason for this difference is rather fascinating!
In our modern texts of Genesis there are only nine names from Shem to Terah.
Luke, in his gospel, follows the LXX, which adds the name of Cainan
in between Arphaxad and Shelah.

One explanation is that the name of Cainan was originally in the text of Genesis,
but that his name had dropped out of certain Hebrew copies of Genesis
by the time of the Chronicler.

Alternately, it is possible that the Chronicler himself was the one who left Cainan out
in order to make the generations equal 10,

and that some later scribe of Genesis took Chronicles as the authoritative version
and thus deleted Cainan from the Hebrew text of Genesis!

But however you explain the textual questions,
the result for Chronicles is quite clear:

Abraham and his sons are the central focus of the second half of chapter 1,
just like Noah and his sons were the central focus of the first half.

And finally, in verse 27, we find the first words in Chronicles
that were not simply copied from Genesis:
“that is, Abraham.”

Every Israelite would have known that Abram is Abraham –
but by saying it, the Chronicler highlights the centrality of Abraham in his genealogy.
Indeed, in Hebrew the name of Abraham is repeated three times in a span of five words.
Abram hu Abraham. Beney Abraham...

So in case you were wondering, we’re talking about Abraham now!
God had told Abraham that he would be father of many nations.
The fulfillment of that promise is found
as verses 29-54 then lay out the descendants of Abraham,
focusing especially on the sons of Ishmael and Keturah (more than Isaac).

b. The Three Heirs of Abraham (v28-54)

²⁸*The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael.* ²⁹ *These are their genealogies: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth, and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,* ³⁰*Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,* ³¹*Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.* ³² *The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan.* ³³*The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the descendants of Keturah.*

Note that Abraham is named three times in these verses:

Verse 28 (with the naming of Isaac and Ishmael),
verse 32 (with the reference to Keturah who *bore* sons for Abraham),
and verse 34 (with the specific verb “to beget” regarding Isaac).

In other words, Abraham receives special attention in the way the genealogy is formed.

Anyone listening to this chapter would immediately pick up on the centrality of Abraham (and especially on the theme of begetting sons!)

In verses 28-33 we hear about

Ishmael and the sons of Keturah
who appear to have resided largely in the south toward Arabia.
Various of these tribes appear throughout scripture
(Kedar, Midian, Sheba, and Dedan are among the most famous)

Verses 28-33 are taken from Genesis 25

Verses 34-54 come from Genesis 36.

³⁴*Abraham fathered Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel.* ³⁵ *The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.* ³⁶*The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, Kenaz, and of Timna, Amalek.* ³⁷*The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.*

Here again we see how the Chronicler has taken the genealogical material from Genesis and repeated it.

But the way he has structured it brings out certain things.

For instance,

12 sons of Ishmael
13 sons of Keturah (like the 13 sons of Joktan at the end of the first part!)
17 sons of Isaac

So there are 44 descendents of Abraham (including Ishmael and Isaac) – so far –
but the story of Abraham is not yet over!

Verses 38-42 are fascinating!

(I know – you don't normally consider genealogy to be fascinating!)

³⁸ *The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.* ³⁹ *The sons of Lotan: Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.* ⁴⁰ *The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah.* ⁴¹ *The son of Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.* ⁴² *The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.*

The “sons of Seir” ...

Wait!

Hold on!

In Genesis 36 the “sons of Seir” make sense:

they are the native rulers of Seir *before* Esau moved there.

But here, detached from any context,

they seem out of place.

We *could* say that the Chronicler is simply taking over all the genealogical material from Genesis – so he simply takes this too.

There's only one problem:

the Chronicler does *not* take *all* the genealogical material from Genesis!

He leaves many things out.

So why does he include this?

You could start with the numbers:

There are 26 sons of Seir.

44 of Abraham and 26 of Seir makes 70.

But on what basis would you add Seir to Abraham's descendents?

Seir is *not* a descendent of Abraham!

The answer is found in the one name that occurs in both lists:

Timna.

In verse 36 she appears in the list of names –

almost as if she is to be included as one of the sons of Eliphaz!

Only if you know the story would you recall that Timna

was the *concubine* of Eliphaz and the *mother* of Amalek.

But you do get some help from the second appearance of her name in verse 39 as the sister of Lotan (the daughter of Seir).

The daughter of Seir was a concubine of the son of Esau –

now, in those days, if a woman is a concubine,

then that tells you that she is socially inferior to her husband,

thus demonstrating Seir's subordination to Edom!

If you took a king or chieftain's daughter as your concubine,

you had better have the army to back you up!

So, the naming of Timna helps us see that Seir has been added to the house of Abraham.

But there's another reason why we have all this attention to Edom and Seir.

Let's just assume for a moment that you already know the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

You know who the Edomites are:

they live across the Dead Sea to the south and east;
they have mocked and slandered the LORD your God for generations;
when the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar,
they rejoiced and were glad.

Psalms 137 commented on the Edomites:

“Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem,
how they said “raze it, raze it to its very foundations!””

Verses 38-42 contain a list of names long forgotten.

None of them would have had any significant meaning for those who heard them!

And *that* is significant!

Remember O Israel, the sons of Edom –

how God gave to them the hill-country of Seir –
how God displaced their enemies and gave them the land.
And for more than a thousand years,
Edom has remained in the hill-country of Seir.

Remember Edom, O Israel –

because if God has done this for those he *hates*
(Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated),
how much more will the LORD do for those he *loves!*

And if you need more evidence of what the Chronicler is doing with Esau,
keep reading!

Because verses 43-51 then relate the kings of Edom
before any king reigned over the people of Israel.

⁴³ *These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the people of Israel: Bela the son of Beor, the name of his city being Dinhabah.* ⁴⁴ *Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place.* ⁴⁵ *Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.* ⁴⁶ *Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place, the name of his city being Avith.* ⁴⁷ *Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place.* ⁴⁸ *Samalah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the*

Euphrates reigned in his place. ⁴⁹Shaul died, and Baal-hanan, the son of Achbor, reigned in his place. ⁵⁰Baal-hanan died, and Hadad reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pai; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. ⁵¹And Hadad died.

Note that here the Chronicler retains the additional information from Genesis.

After all, the Chronicler will be recounting the history of the kings of Judah, and so he starts with this summary of the kings of Edom – again, reminding Israel that if God is faithful to the ones he hates, how much more will he be faithful to the ones he loves.

Verses 51-54 then relate the chiefs of Edom in summary.

The chiefs of Edom were: chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁵²Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁵³Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁵⁴Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom.

Chapter 2 will then go on to talk about the sons of Israel.

But this emphasis on Edom in chapter one is designed to remind us of our context.

One of the central questions of the book of Chronicles is

“who and what are the people of God?”

the Chronicler answers,

“I will show you that the church, the community of those who know God, ‘the blessed company of all faithful people,’ can be traced back from our day through every generation of our ancestors to the very beginnings of history; and its essential nature is throughout unaffected by the revolutions of time.”
(Willcock, 27)

That is what we need to see as well.

This is the story of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And therefore, it your story as well.

“When Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory.”