

## Difficulties in Chronicles

1. Chronicles contains a number of difficulties that seem on the surface to be errors. “The accuracy of the book of Chronicles has been called into question more than any other book of the Old Testament except Genesis.” (Hill & Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*)
  - a. Some accuse Chronicles of bias in omitting or adding key material.
    - i. We get a very different overall picture of David and Solomon in Chronicles vs. Samuel-Kings.
      - (1) David’s sin with Bathsheba isn’t mentioned in Chronicles.
      - (2) Solomon’s apostasy with his many wives isn’t mentioned in Chronicles.
    - ii. 2 Chron. 33:18-20 describes Manasseh’s repentance, and this significant development isn’t even mentioned in Kings.
  - b. Some accuse Chronicles of errors and exaggeration in reporting numbers.
    - i. 2 Chron. 3:15 vs. 1 Kg. 7:15-16. Pillars in front of the temple 35 cubits high vs. 18.
    - ii. 1 Chron. 22:14 says that David amassed 100,000 talents of gold for the temple, a weight of 75 lbs. per talent. This is worth about \$100 billion dollars right now!
  - c. We need to be aware of these problems so we won’t be caught off guard when we encounter them.
  - d. We need to be aware of some possible solutions so we can be prepared when critics dismiss the reliability of the Scriptures on the basis of these superficial differences.
2. We should acknowledge some obvious starting points for dealing with these difficulties.
  - a. The Chronicler was a careful historian who used many sources and often actually named his sources. We should give him the benefit of the doubt even apart from a guarantee of inerrancy.
    - i. At least five types of sources are cited: genealogical records; letters and official documents; poems, prayers, speeches, and songs; official histories; and prophetic writings.
      - (1) 2 Chron. 33:18-10 cites two different sources!
      - (2) 1 Chron. 29:29 – three different prophetic chronicles
    - ii. These include Samuel-Kings. (2 Kings 20:10-21:4 vs. 2 Chron. 32:30-33:4.)
  - b. The Chronicler assumes that his readers would be familiar with his sources.
    - i. They would be familiar with the inspired writings of Samuel-Kings.
    - ii. They could check the sources.
  - c. The Chronicler has a different purpose than just writing a general history.
    - i. The fact that the Chronicler assumes his audience knows his sources and he draws from the selectively shows that he has a specific purpose.
    - ii. The overall focus of Chronicles is on the legitimacy of the priesthood and temple worship and on the continuity between the covenant people of God of earlier times and the people living in the land after returning from the exile.
    - iii. Chronicles is written to post-exilic Israel. Chronicles seeks to answer the question of whether God is done with Israel. What connection does Israel have with God’s promises after the exile? What vision and hope should they have for the future? The Chronicler makes his case through the history of Israel that God will continue his work in Israel according to their faithful response to him. Chronicles is written

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- iv. Ex: When I want to inspire my sons to love and protect their siblings, I tell them about the time I tried to stop my neighbor from throwing a table knife at my sister and how I beat him up when he actually threw it and hit her in the head with it (as well as a 7-yr-old can beat up a 5-yr-old). I don't tell them about the time I tricked my sister into opening her mouth, and I put a dirt clod in it.
  - v. This explains the omissions with David and Solomon and the addition of the Manasseh material.
  - d. The Chronicler grounds his lessons in history. He has no interest in making up stories to serve his purposes.
3. We believe the Scriptures are inerrant (without error). But what does that mean?
- a. Classic statement on inerrancy – The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>).
    - i. 2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
    - ii. 4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
  - b. Inerrancy is a doctrine about the original writings, not the copies. 2 Tim. 3:16-17. It is possible that some of our copies may contain copy errors.
    - i. WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.
    - ii. WE DENY that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.
  - c. We must be content to wait for further study to clarify copy errors and to wait for further light to explain some occasional assertions that are hard to understand. *This will be illustrated by some of the examples we consider.*
4. We can explain many of the concerns about the Chronicler's use of numbers.
- a. The wrong book may have been named "Numbers." Chronicles cites 629 different numbers!
    - i. Of these 629 numbers, 213 have OT parallels.
    - ii. We can check these parallels and see how well the Chronicler handles numbers. If

he is careful with these numbers we can cross-check, this gives us confidence in his handling of numbers that we can't check.

- b. One of the accusations against the Chronicler is that he exaggerates the numbers, possibly to make the history of Israel seem more glorious.
  - i. "One of the main problems in Chronicles is bound up with the numbers contained in it. Many are impossibly large, some disagree with Samuel and Kings, others are incompatible with the discoveries of archaeology... Numbers, however, from a thousand upwards were used not merely as round figures, but also hyperbolically [explain]..." (H. L. Ellison, "I and II Chronicles," in *The New Bible Commentary*).
  - ii. Hyperbole is used many times in Scripture. Abraham promised offspring like the sand on the seashore. All the books in the world couldn't contain everything that Jesus did. 2Ch 1:15 "And the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah."
  - iii. The conventions of historical reporting do not allow for hyperbole in reporting numbers when other numbers are to be taken literally. This would be deliberately misleading.
- c. Out of 213 numbers with parallels, 194 of them agree exactly; only 19 appear to disagree. This should cause us to be cautious about dismissing these 19.
  - i. Out of these 19, 11 are higher in Chronicles and 6 are higher elsewhere. (One is a difference in units, and one is repeated.)
  - ii. These 19 can be explained plausibly in a few different ways:
    - (1) actually different things being counted
    - (2) different ways of counting
    - (3) different level of precision
    - (4) copy (scribal) errorNote that we may not know with certainty the correct explanation. The point is that these do not serve as proof of an error and therefore shouldn't undermine our confidence in the Scriptures rightly understood.
  - iii. 1 Chron. 21:5 vs. 2 Sam. 24:9. 1,100,000 troops vs. 800,000. Judah's 470,000 vs. 500,000.
    - (1) Note that 1 Chron. speaks of *all* Israel. In 1 Chron. 27:1-15 another 288,000 troops are mentioned. So Chronicles may have included those who already served in the standing army, whereas Samuel did not.
    - (2) Chronicles and Samuel use a different level of precision – 2 digits vs. 1 digit.
  - iv. (Opt) 1 Chron. 21:25 vs. 2 Sam. 24:24. These are vastly different sums. But in Chronicles, the price is for the whole site, which some believe may have included the whole area of Mt. Moriah. (Floor vs. site is distinguished in 1 Chron. 21:21 and 22.)
  - v. 2 Chron. 3:15 vs. 1 Kg. 7:15-16. Pillars in front of the temple 35 cubits high vs. 18. Probably a scribal error. Numbers 18 and 35 look similar in Aramaic.
- d. If so many numbers match exactly, and the few that don't can be explained in a plausible way, we gain more confidence in numbers that we can't cross-reference.
  - i. Most of these numbers raise no concerns at all.

- ii. Many of the others can be explained in a fairly straightforward way.
  - iii. The number of military men – 2 Chron. 14:9.
    - (1) A study of the word “thousand” and its development shows that the term originated with the concept of “to be familiar with” or “in company with,” like a herd. It became associated with a herd or large crowd and then more specifically a thousand. A chief of a thousand was referred to by a very similar word, and it may have become shorthand to refer to a man capable of leading a thousand as a “thousand.” So these “thousand thousands” were actually a thousand men capable of leading a thousand – highly skilled warriors.
    - (2) In many cases in which this word is used, a further explanation is given that these men were specially trained or specially armed men (bowmen, spearman).
    - (3) 300 chariots don’t go with 1,000,000 men. The careful note of 300 lends credence to the Chronicler’s care with numbers.
    - (4) Which shows more glory, to exaggerate the number of Israel’s soldiers or the number of men defeated by Israel?
    - (5) This explanation applies to many passages in which the military might of Israel seems unbelievably large. 2 Chron. 17:12-14 makes more sense this way.
  - iv. The \$100 billion in gold should be seen as a providential provision for the magnificent scope of the temple.
    - (1) Ancient Asiatic kingdoms amassed huge quantities of gold.
    - (2) Ancient documents show that Cyrus the Persian carried off 500,000 talents of gold in his campaign through Asia, 5 times the amount claimed in Chronicles for the temple.
5. These difficulties cause us at times to scratch our heads but shouldn’t cause us to lose confidence in the accuracy of the Word. If anything, closer investigation always seems to yield a plausible explanation when enough information is available.
- a. Copy errors are insignificant.
  - b. We should give attention to the Word because God has so graciously given us an exact revelation of his will and ways and preserved it down through history for us right here in Auburn and Opelika in 2008.