



*The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Chronicles*

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# 1 Chronicles 1:1–2:2



**A**DAM, SETH, ENOSH, <sup>2</sup>Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, <sup>3</sup>Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah.

<sup>4</sup>The sons of Noah:

Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>5</sup>The sons of Japheth:

Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras.

<sup>6</sup>The sons of Gomer:

Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah.

<sup>7</sup>The sons of Javan:

Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim.

<sup>8</sup>The sons of Ham:

Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.

<sup>9</sup>The sons of Cush:

Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah and Sabteca.

The sons of Raamah:

Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>10</sup>Cush was the father of

Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on earth.

<sup>11</sup>Mizraim was the father of

the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,

<sup>12</sup>Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites.

<sup>13</sup>Canaan was the father of

Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, <sup>14</sup>Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, <sup>15</sup>Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,

<sup>16</sup>Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

<sup>17</sup>The sons of Shem:

Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

The sons of Aram:

Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech.

<sup>18</sup>Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,

and Shelah the father of Eber.

<sup>19</sup>Two sons were born to Eber:

One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

- <sup>20</sup>Joktan was the father of  
Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>21</sup>Hadoram,  
Uzal, Diklah, <sup>22</sup>Obal, Abimael, Sheba, <sup>23</sup>Ophir, Havilah  
and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.
- <sup>24</sup>Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah,  
<sup>25</sup>Eber, Peleg, Reu,  
<sup>26</sup>Serug, Nahor, Terah  
<sup>27</sup>and Abram (that is, Abraham).
- <sup>28</sup>The sons of Abraham:  
Isaac and Ishmael.
- <sup>29</sup>These were their descendants:  
Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mib-  
sam, <sup>30</sup>Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, <sup>31</sup>Jetur,  
Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael.
- <sup>32</sup>The sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine:  
Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.  
The sons of Jokshan:  
Sheba and Dedan.
- <sup>33</sup>The sons of Midian:  
Ephah, Epheser, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah.  
All these were descendants of Keturah.
- <sup>34</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac.  
The sons of Isaac:  
Esau and Israel.
- <sup>35</sup>The sons of Esau:  
Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam and Korah.
- <sup>36</sup>The sons of Eliphaz:  
Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz;  
by Timna: Amalek.
- <sup>37</sup>The sons of Reuel:  
Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah.
- <sup>38</sup>The sons of Seir:  
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan.
- <sup>39</sup>The sons of Lotan:  
Hori and Homam. Timna was Lotan's sister.
- <sup>40</sup>The sons of Shobal:  
Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.  
The sons of Zibeon:  
Aiah and Anah.
- <sup>41</sup>The son of Anah:  
Dishon.

The sons of Dishon:

Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.

<sup>42</sup>The sons of Ezer:

Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.

The sons of Dishan:

Uz and Aran.

<sup>43</sup>These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned:

Bela son of Beor, whose city was named Dinhabah.

<sup>44</sup>When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah succeeded him as king.

<sup>45</sup>When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king.

<sup>46</sup>When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith.

<sup>47</sup>When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king.

<sup>48</sup>When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king.

<sup>49</sup>When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Acbor succeeded him as king.

<sup>50</sup>When Baal-Hanan died, Hadad succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.

<sup>51</sup>Hadad also died.

The chiefs of Edom were:

Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, <sup>52</sup>Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

<sup>53</sup>Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, <sup>54</sup>Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

<sup>2:1</sup>These were the sons of Israel:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, <sup>2</sup>Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad and Asher.



BIBLICAL SCHOLARS HAVE long noted that the genealogies of the prologue to *Chronicles* (1 Chron. 1–9) are a mini-commentary of sorts on the book of *Genesis*. This understanding is largely based on the phrase “these are the generations of,” which provides a

structural framework for the narratives of Genesis (e.g., Gen. 5:1; 10:1 RSV). In most cases, the Chronicler borrows from earlier genealogical sources and pares the listings to a register of names only (e.g., Gen. 5:1–32; cf. 1 Chron. 1:1–4). God is everywhere assumed but nowhere mentioned in genealogies. The Chronicler also takes it for granted that his audience knows well the stories and personalities associated with the names logged in the genealogies. This fact is important to understanding the rest of the Chronicles as well. The highly selective retelling of Israel's history presupposes the Chronicler's audience knows their Hebrew Bible.

Selman has noted that the pivot points of the introductory genealogy are names of great significance in the early history of God's people, including Adam (1:1), Noah (1:4), Abraham (1:27, 28, 32, 34), and Israel (or Jacob, 1:34; 2:1). Further, he has observed that each section of the genealogy is arranged in such a way that the person providing the link from Adam to Israel is mentioned last in each generation.<sup>1</sup> This means that the sequence of names does not always correspond with birth order as presented in the Genesis narratives.

More important are the theological threads unifying this opening genealogy. (1) The nations are introduced in such a way that all peoples are placed inside rather than outside the purposes of God's electing love. (2) The nation of Israel lies at the center of the genealogical scheme. Thus, the Israel of the Chronicler's day is united with the earlier Israel and with the nations.

The genealogical prologue found in 1 Chronicles 1–9 contains the most extensive and complex genealogies of the Bible. According to Robert Wilson, "a genealogy is a written or oral expression of the descent of a person or persons from an ancestor or ancestors."<sup>2</sup> Particular terminology is sometimes used to characterize the composition of biblical genealogies, such as:

- breadth, a listing of a single generation of descendants from a common ancestor (e.g., 2:1)
- depth, a listing of successive generations, commonly four to six (e.g., 3:10–16)
- linear, displaying depth alone (e.g., 2:10)
- segmented, displaying both breadth and depth (e.g., 3:17–24)
- descending, or proceeding from parent to child (e.g., 9:39–44)
- ascending, or moving from child to parent (e.g., 9:14–16)<sup>3</sup>

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1. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 89–90.

2. Robert Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 9.

3. *Ibid.*, 18–26; cf. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 1–5; Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*, 249–51.

The basic purpose of the genealogy is to identify kinship relationships between individuals, families, and people groups. Marshall Johnson has isolated nine distinct functions that genealogies serve in the Old Testament:

- demonstrate existing relationships between Israel and neighboring tribes by establishing common ancestors (e.g., the relationship of Lot's descendants to Israel, Gen. 19:36–38)
- connecting isolated traditions of Israelite origins into a coherent literary unit by means of an inclusive genealogical system (e.g., the *toledot* formulas in Genesis [5:1; 10:1; etc.])
- bridge chronological gaps in the biblical narratives (e.g., Ruth 4:18–22)
- serve as chronological controls for the dating of key Old Testament events (e.g., the date of the book of Esther in relationship to the Babylonian exile, Est. 2:5–6—although the selective nature of biblical genealogies may compromise the accuracy of the genealogy as a chronological device)
- perform a specific political and/or military function, as in the taking of a census (e.g., Num. 1:3–46)
- legitimize an individual or family in an office or enhance the stature of an individual by linkage to an important clan or individual of the past (e.g., Zeph. 1:1)
- establish and preserve the ethnic purity of the Hebrew community, as in the case of the records found in Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g., Ezra 7)
- assert the importance of the continuity of God's people through a period of national calamity (prominent in Chronicles, e.g., the line of David in 1 Chron. 3:17–24)
- express order, structure, and movement in history according to a divinely prearranged plan (e.g., identifying Haman, the son of Hammedatha, as an Agagite, Est. 3:1, 10).<sup>4</sup>

It is evident the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9 serve multiple purposes, especially in legitimizing the authority of Levitical priesthood as the rightful successors to the royal authority of Davidic kingship and in asserting the continuity of the Hebrew people through the national distress of the Babylonian exile. There is even a sense in which the juxtaposition of certain genealogies (e.g., that of Esau and Israel or Saul and David) works to express movement in history according to God's redemptive plan.

A child was named immediately upon birth during Old Testament times, and the name was usually chosen by the mother (e.g., Gen. 35:18;

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4. Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 77–82.

1 Sam. 1:20).<sup>5</sup> The ancients understood the name to signify the essence of a thing or a person. The naming process involved knowledge of the thing or person named and power over that entity once the name was ascribed (e.g., Pharaoh's naming Joseph as Zaphenath-Paneah, Gen. 41:45).

Since the name denoted essential being, a child's name was chosen with great care. A person's name revealed the character and personality as well as the reputation, authority, vocation, and even the destiny of the bearer. At times unusual circumstances surrounding the birth inspired a child's name (e.g., Isaac, Gen. 21:6–7; Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:20). On occasion the shifting fortunes in a person's life situation or the transformation of a person's character prompted a name change (e.g., Jacob becomes Israel, Gen. 32:28; Naomi becomes Mara, Ruth 1:20).

Many Old Testament names are theophoric; that is, they contain some element of a divine name or title indicating one's religious loyalty (e.g., Josiah [= "Yahweh will give"], 1 Chron. 3:14; Elkanah [= "God has created"], 1 Chron. 6:23; Merib-Baal ["the Lord/Baal contends"], 1 Chron. 8:34). All this is a part of the worldview of the Chronicler's audience. The genealogy is not simply a catalog of the names of dead ancestors. Rather, it represents a rich history of family, clan, and nation told and retold through the life and story represented by the personal names of individuals who form an integral part of the larger story of the Israelite community.

The Chronicler's panoramic sweep of ancient history from Adam to Noah to Abraham and Israel transports the audience into the accounts of the book of Genesis. There the emphasis was on God's dealings with humanity both in terms of creation and redemption. The same is true for the Chronicler, especially as he traces the names of key players in the unfolding drama of God's redemptive plan for humanity. The stories behind the names in the genealogies may hint at themes and ideas important to the Chronicler. For example, Enoch "walked" with God (1 Chron. 1:3; cf. Gen. 5:24), a repeated phrase in the Chronicler's evaluation of the kings of Judah (e.g., 2 Chron. 17:3; 21:12; etc.). Perhaps Nimrod the "mighty warrior" (1 Chron. 1:10; cf. Gen. 10:8–9) inspires the descriptions of the mighty warriors of David's day (e.g., 1 Chron. 12:8, 21, 28, etc.).

The reference to Noah, his sons, and their descendants further develops the links between the Chronicler's genealogical prologue and the Genesis narratives (1 Chron. 1:4–27). The proliferation of people (groups) registered under the names of Japheth, Ham, and Shem calls to mind the creation mandate to populate the earth (Gen. 1:28) and later echoed to those survivors of

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5. The custom of naming (the male child) at the time of circumcision (eight days after birth) is a later Jewish practice (cf. Luke 1:59; 2:21).

the great Flood (Gen. 9:7). The genealogy of Noah also functions to introduce Abraham through the line of Shem (1 Chron. 1:17, 27).

Equally important are the great theological themes the story of Noah establishes, themes that course through the rest of the Bible—especially the covenant relationship with God (Gen. 9:11) and the twin truths of God's judgment of human sin and rebellion and his sustaining grace in preserving the righteous (Gen. 6:7–8).

In terms of recorded material, Abraham (1 Chron. 1:28–33) receives less attention in the opening genealogy than does Esau and Seir (1:34–54). Nonetheless, the family of Abraham is located strategically in the middle of the listing of names from Adam (1:1) to Israel (2:1) and appropriately paired with the family of Esau as a foil, illustrating contrasting responses to covenant relationship with Yahweh. If we keep in mind the stories represented by the names, in one sense the genealogy of Abraham is flanked by destruction: Noah and the Flood at the front end and Esau and the eventual obliteration of the Edomites on the other.

Not coincidentally, the listing of the twelve sons of Israel follows the genealogy of Esau, a reminder that the Hebrews persist as the people of God. Although the Chronicler gives Abraham prominence as the father of the Israelites, the genealogy has included all the descendants of Abraham as confirmation of God's fulfillment of the promise to make Abraham the father of many nations (cf. Gen. 17:3–6). Interestingly, the genealogy of Abraham mentions Keturah, the concubine of Abraham (1 Chron. 1:32; v. 28 assumes knowledge of Hagar and Sarah as wives of Abraham). The citation is unusual in that Old Testament genealogies primarily document family history from male descendant to male descendant without reference to mothers. Theologically, however, this name and the other names of women in the Chronicler's genealogies may be a subtle reference to their role in the "offspring of the woman" theology for restoring humanity to Eden (Gen. 3:15–16). This theme is continued in both Kings and Chronicles, as the mothers of the Judahite kings (only) are recorded in accession formulas.

The genealogies of Esau and Edom combine four separate catalogs, each with Esau as the common element (1 Chron. 1:35–54). The list of Esau's descendants (vv. 35–37; cf. Gen. 36:10–14) is followed by that of Seir, ancient neighbors of the Edomites and ancestors of the Horites (vv. 38–42; cf. Gen. 14:6; 36:20–28; Deut. 2:12, 22). The record of Edomite rulers (1 Chron. 1:43–54; cf. Gen. 36:31–43) attests the prominence of that nation in Old Testament history (cf. Num. 20:14–21; Jer. 49:7–22). Indeed, the legacy of the Edomites was entwined with Israel from the birth of Esau (Gen. 25:23–26) to the ruin of Edom during the early postexilic period for aiding and abetting the Babylonians in the sack of Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 137:7).

The extensive register of names demonstrates that Esau has multiplied, but “that was as nothing compared to the miracle that God had worked for his brother’s family.”<sup>6</sup> The repetition of the fact that each Edomite king “died” is significant as well. The Edomite kings died, and in one sense so did the nation of Edom, as it was destroyed or absorbed by the Nabatean Arabs (sometime between 550 and 400 B.C.). The kings of Judah died as well, but the people of Israel survived the collapse of Davidic kingship, returned to Jerusalem, and rebuilt the city. The Chronicler’s juxtaposition of Esau’s and Israel’s genealogies may be an allusion to the prophet Malachi’s assessment of the twins with respect to covenant relationship with God: “I have loved [chosen] Jacob, but Esau I have hated [rejected]” (Mal. 1:2–3).

The final passage of the section simply lists the twelve sons of Jacob, later named Israel (Gen. 32:28; see chart below). The Chronicler only uses the name “Israel” for the patriarch in the retelling of his history of God’s people. Since a change of name in the Old Testament often indicates a change in one’s character or station in life, it may be that the Chronicler suggests the same for the remnant of the Israelites after the Exile.

Like Jacob, they too have experienced a transformation in that the Babylonian exile has cured God’s people of the sin of idolatry. The catalog of the twelve sons of Israel sets the stage for the remainder of the genealogies comprising the prologue of Chronicles. Both Zebulun and Dan are slighted by the Chronicler, and Naphtali’s descendants are mentioned in a single verse (7:13). This selectivity in the presentation of the genealogical records further underscores the Chronicler’s pointed interests in the lineage of Judah and the institution of kingship and the lineage of Levi and the office of the priesthood.



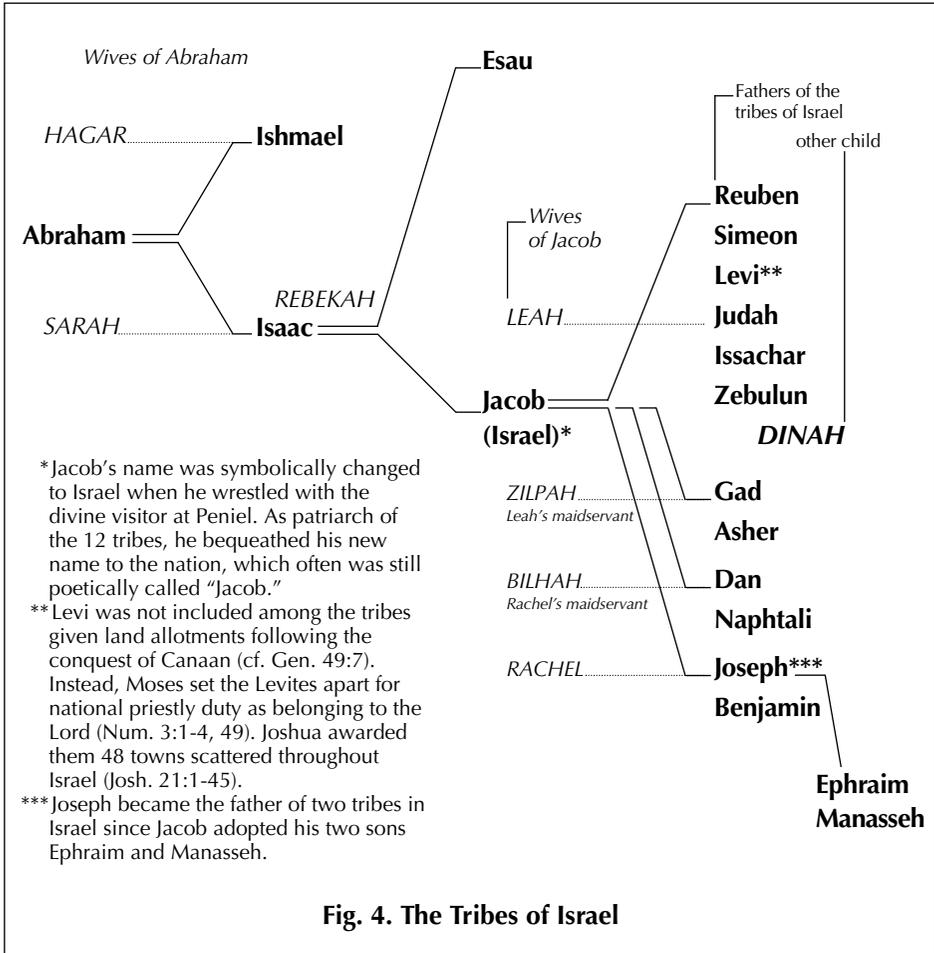
THE GENEALOGIES OF 1 Chronicles 1–9 suggest an important point of transition between the Chronicler’s context and our own related to the psychosocial conflict known as an “identity crisis.”<sup>7</sup> According to Erikson, “identity” may refer to the sense of sameness or continuity between one’s past and present selves, the integration of one’s private and public selves, or the relationship between one’s present self and one’s future self.<sup>8</sup> In a nondiagnostic sense, an identity crisis may be described

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6. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 93.

7. Understanding the term *identity crisis* in the less technical sense of “an aggravated life crisis rather than a psychological disorder”; see W. E. Atwater, *Adolescence*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 138.

8. See Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), esp. “The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity,” 91–141.



as a personal sense of confusion about one's defining characteristics and social role. On the individual level this confusion may involve a loss of continuity with one's basic personality traits or some form of disconnection with one of the distinctive selves of personhood (e.g., the private self with the public self). The nation addressed by the Chronicler demonstrates a "collective identity," especially with respect to the notion of continuity or sameness between past, present, and future "self." At the corporate level, then, an identity crisis may signify the dislocation of an entity from the constituting principles outlined in its original charter.

The Chronicler's audience is plagued by such a crisis. Israel's "identity" both in terms of a crucial defining characteristic and consequent social role had been associated with Davidic kingship for several centuries. The Babylonian

exile and its aftermath has disrupted Israelite continuity with this basic “personality trait” and resulted in a state of national confusion concerning the identity of the Jews as the people of God.

All Israelites were keenly aware of the several important elements contained in their constituting charter or covenant, especially the divine promise about perpetual Davidic kingship and the central role of Israel among the nations (2 Sam. 7:5–16). Neither are true for the Jews at the time of the Chronicler’s writing. The symptoms of this identity crisis in postexilic Israel are evidenced in numerous ways, including the abandonment of corporate religious ideals for personal comforts (cf. Neh. 13:15–18; Hag. 1:3–11) and the spirit of malaise that characterizes the Israelite approach to other basic principles of their covenantal charter, such as tithing, social justice, and interracial marriage (cf. Ezra 9:1–2; Neh. 5:1–11; Mal. 3:5–9).

According to McConville, the basic function of the biblical genealogy is to demonstrate that the divine promises and purposes are still operative in God’s overall plan.<sup>9</sup> The Chronicler counters the identity crisis in postexilic Israel, in part, by appealing to the genealogical history of the Jews. The recitation of the ancient genealogies serves to build historical and theological connections between postexilic Israel and her earliest ancestors, reestablishing the continuity of the later community with the true “people of God.” The links to Adam and Noah affirm the realization of the divine purposes related to the creation mandate for filling the earth and ruling over it (Gen. 1:26–28). Likewise, the ligature to Abraham and Israel (i.e., Jacob) assures the postexilic Jewish community that they are the heirs of the covenant promises of God made to the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:3–14; 26:3–4; etc.).

Theologically for the Chronicler, the issue is the continuity of Yahweh’s kingship over creation and all the nations, not merely Davidic kingship in Israel. For this reason, he frames the retelling of the history of Israel between the genealogy excerpted from the Table of Nations (1 Chron. 1; cf. Gen. 10) and the decree of King Cyrus of Persia (2 Chron. 36:22–23). The “nations” serve as the bookends for the story of kingship in Israel, indicating that they

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9. J. Gordon McConville, *I and II Chronicles* (DSBOT; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 7; we must not overlook the cultural significance of the genealogy, however, in the “honor” and “shame” society of the biblical world. For example, the honor to which one is born into is “ascribed” honor. Honor that has been achieved or earned is understood as “acquired” honor. The genealogies of Chronicles include both the idea of “ascribed” honor (e.g., Er as Judah’s “firstborn” son, 2:3) and “acquired” honor (e.g., Nimrod who became known as a “mighty warrior” for his exploits, 1:10). It is important to note that “shame” may be acquired as well, as in the case of Achar (or Achan, 2:7; cf. John Pilch, *Introducing the Cultural Context of the Old Testament* [New York: Paulist, 1991], 52–53).

too stand inside the unfolding plan of God's redemption of fallen creation. In addition, Israel's role as the "elect of God" remains secure in the reality of God's sovereignty over all the peoples of the earth. God has chosen one nation so he might bless all nations. The opening genealogy of *Chronicles* is a simple reminder of that fact. Israel's identity crisis during the postexilic period is primarily a matter of poor theology, not bad psychology.

Ultimately, the Chronicler's recitation of genealogies is a lesson in God's faithfulness to the word of his covenant promise. Israel's worth and dignity, her "identity" so to speak, lies outside the changing circumstances of history and in the character and plan of God Almighty. This truth sets the stage for one of the key themes of the books of *Chronicles*, the proper worship of Yahweh as the Lord of creation, the Sovereign of the nations, and the God of Israel.



**IDENTITY CONFUSION.** The identity crisis in postexilic Judah was only secondarily a matter of historical circumstance. Granted, Davidic kingship no longer defined Israel, and the Persian Empire still controlled the fate of the Jewish people. Yet the real crisis in postexilic Judah was one of theological understanding. The Chronicler's generation had misinterpreted the message of the earlier prophets concerning the nature and the timing of the restoration of Israel. This misunderstanding of God's revelation for the future of Israel led to a distorted perception of the current situation confronting God's people. Like the first generation of expatriates who returned from Babylonia, they had expected much but had experienced little (Hag. 1:9). Naturally, blame was displaced away from unkept individual or corporate covenant responsibilities and onto God and his failure to make good on the word of his promises (cf. Hag. 1:4; Zech. 7:5–7; Mal. 3:14).

Specifically, the several generations of Jews from the time of Haggai and Zerubbabel to the Chronicler had been expecting the reinstatement of Davidic kingship and the restoration of national Israel (cf. Hag. 2:20–22). Clearly this is what Jeremiah and Ezekiel predicted after the return from Babylonian captivity (cf. Jer. 33:15–22; Ezek. 34:20–25). Later, the prophets Zechariah and Malachi essentially told their constituencies to "hang in there," for God would soon inaugurate the new Davidic kingdom and restore the fortunes of Israel (i.e., "the day is coming"; cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Mal. 3:1; 4:1). But by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, there is no longer any mention of a Davidic king or a restored Hebrew nation. The postexilic community has resigned itself to hierocratic or priestly rule as well as economic and political subordination in the vast Persian Empire.