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What is the Difference between Kings and Chronicles?

It is clear to even the casual reader that the books of **First** and **Second Kings** share a great deal of similarities with the books of **First** and **Second Chronicles**. So much so, in fact, that some wonder why it is that we have both of these accounts of **Isra'el's** history in our Bibles.



Second Chronicles "overlaps" the books of **Kings** in many places. But the one thing that almost everyone agrees on is that the two sets of books were written at different times by different people. **According to Jewish tradition, Ezra wrote Chronicles and Jeremiah wrote Kings.** This tradition certainly reflects the truth of what I would wish to point out as the main area of difference between these two sets of books: **Kings** was written before the Babylonian captivity (before 586 BC), while **Chronicles** was written afterwards (before 516 BC). Additionally, **Kings** gives a detailed account of Jewish history from the death of David to the fall of Jerusalem, whereas **Chronicles** spreads a wider net covering, essentially, all Jewish history (dealt with through genealogy before David), ending at approximately the same time, though with the last part of **Chapter 36** recounting Cyrus the Great's decree for Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

Both **Kings** and **Chronicles** are inspired by **the Spirit of God**, but their purposes are slightly different. Just as in the case of **the Gospels** where we frequently find several different versions of the same story or incident, each giving unique details which are important for us to have and which serve the particular purpose of each inspired writer, so with **Kings** and **Chronicles**, the differences are to be attributed to the different emphases and particular purpose **the Spirit** has in mind in guiding the individual writers. In general terms, I think it is clear that **Kings** is more clearly a comprehensive divine history of the two kingdoms, summing up that history at its conclusion. **Chronicles**, on the other hand, is more of a selective and synoptic picture of the history of **Isra'el** at one glance, summing things up as a prelude to the future at the time of the reestablishment of the Jewish state.

As such, it is not surprising that certain things would be left out of **Chronicles** (having a tighter scope), or that **the Ruach** would lead the writer to include certain things of an explanatory and interpretive nature in those incidents which come in for detailed treatment. This is similar to **the Gospel** of **John**, for example, which contains much more detailed information on **Yeshua's** discourses prior to **His** crucifixion than is to be found in **the** other **Gospels**, but less of the comprehensive detail of **His** earlier ministry, and for a similar reason. Readers of **John** had read and had available the other **Gospels**, which were produced some years before. Likewise, readers of **Chronicles** had read and had available the books of **Kings, "Are [these things] not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? [**in other words, **the books of First** and **Second Kings]" (2 Chronicles 25:26).** And so just as **John** must include some of the same information for the purpose of having the narrative really "work" or flow and to link things together properly, but not all of the same detail (which would be otherwise available), so the writer of **Chronicles** leaves some things out, includes enough to make the narrative understandable, and is free (led, of course, by **the Spirit**) to put in additional details which expand on the story or incident in question from the standpoint of His own divine purpose and perspective.

Chronicles is concerned with restoration (being written, as mentioned, at the point when the Jewish state was being reestablished) and so these two chapters which you ask about make an excellent point for this comparison. In the first part of the account of Josiah's reign, **Second Kings** gives a more detailed coverage of Josiah's purging of the land from idolatry (cf.23:4-20: a key issue in the destruction of the kingdom, a focus of the writer of Kings – **Jeremiah, traditionally held to be the writer of Kings**, was, of course, a witness to all those tragic events and explaining

this destruction is a key theme). On the other hand, in the second half of the Josiah account, **Second Chronicles** gives a more detailed treatment of Josiah's reinstitution of the Passover (cf. 35:1-9: a key issue and element in the reestablishment of the Jewish state during that writer's time – **Ezra**, **traditionally held to be the writer of Chronicles**, was instrumental in reestablishing the worship of **ADONAI** in the process of rebuilding the Temple). There are, of course, other differences between the narratives as well (for example **Chronicles** gives a more detailed treatment of the death of Josiah), which further supports the explanation given above. **But my commentary on the Life of Solomon will be a harmony of First Kings and Second Chronicles to give a more complete picture.**

The essential point that I would wish to leave you with from all this is that everything in the Bible is important and that it is all **the Word of God**, included for a definite purpose, even in those cases where we might not at first see or understand that purpose **(Romans 15:4)**. Like all things in the Bible, the more we study, the clearer and the more blessed they become. Which is why we should all do exactly what you are now doing, read and reread the scriptures, pray and seek instruction, ever trusting **God** that **He** will make clear for us everything we need to know in **His** own good time and manner for our spiritual edification and growth **(2 Peter 3:18)**.[18]

Lastly, let me make five observations:

1. Kings begins with the death of **David**, **Chronicles** begins with the historical record from **Adam** to **Abraham**.

2. Kings gives equal focus to both **the kings** of **Isra'el** and **Judah**, while **Chronicles** is primarily interested in **the kings** of **Judah** and **the Davidic Covenant**.

3. Kings emphasizes the human perspective, while **Chronicles** emphasizes the **Godly** perspective.

4. Kings evaluates **the kings** by the standard of **the Torah**, while **Chronicles** evaluates **the kings** by the standard of **King David** and the worship of **ADONAI**.

5. Kings emphasizes **wars**, while **Chronicles** emphasizes **the Temple**.[19]