

The Old Testament Use of Chroniclers

By David DeWitt

For example, 1 Chronicles 29:29 says, *Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer.* But we don't have books named the chronicles of Samuel, Nathan or Gad. We have their revelation in 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. We have the revelation of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, through a historical chronicler.

Also, most of the Old Testament was written in the third person. For example, Exodus 3:1 reads, *Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.* Since we know Moses wrote the Pentateuch (there are 22 references to it being the *Law of Moses* plus five where it is called *the book of Moses*), why does it not read, "Now I was pasturing the flock of Jethro my father-in-law"? **The most likely answer is because Moses' revelation is being recorded by a chronicler.**

There is one other key person involved in presenting us with the Old Testament - Ezra the scribe who came back to Jerusalem with the Jewish captives in the 400s B.C. (Ezra 7:6, 10 & 11). Ezra initially collected the books of the Old Testament. But Ezra was also a *scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel and the hand of the LORD his God was upon him* (Ezra 7:6 & 11; Nehemiah 12:26). Ezra's work included not just collecting the Old Testament Scripture but **translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading** (Nehemiah 8:8). Here are several probable cases of this.

- In Genesis 14:14 we read, *When Abram heard that his relative [his nephew Lot] had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.* Abraham live c. 2000 B.C. and Moses wrote about it in the 1400s B.C., but Dan was not called Dan until the Danites migrated there sometime after the 1300s B.C. Originally, the city was called Laish (Judges 18:29), but in Ezra's day it was known only as Dan. So apparently, *translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading*, Ezra called the city Dan.
- The same is true of Jerusalem. We read that Adoni-zedek the king of Jerusalem went to war against Joshua (Joshua 10:1, 3, 5, etc.). But at that time, Jerusalem was called Jebus (Judges 19:10).
- The same is true of Bethel. When Abraham first went there (Genesis 12:8), it was originally called Luz and later named Bethel by Jacob (Genesis 28:19).
- It was also probably true of the Egyptian city of Ramses, where the Israelites lived and built storage facilities for grain (Genesis 47:11; Exodus 1:11). The name Ramses was likely given to the city after a later Pharaoh by that name. **It is likely that Ezra simply used the later name.**
- The land of the Philistines is another designation.

For example, I live in a small town called Ferrysburg, Michigan. My grandfather also grew up in that town. If you visited me, I might explain that my grandfather grew up near Leppinks grocery store. Then you would immediately know where my grandfather grew up. But there was no Leppinks grocery store there when my grandfather grew up. In his day, it was actually Bramer's farm, but nobody knows it by that name today. If I said my grandfather grew up near Bramer's farm, you would have no idea what I was talking about. So, I (David) *translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading*, used Leppinks to describe the location. Both identifications would be correct, but only one could be understood.

We can conclude that we get the collection of books we call the 39 books of the Old Testament: (1) from a prophet of God, (2) sometimes recorded by a scribe, (3) sometimes written out in the third person by a chronicler, (4) with some translations from Ezra in the mid-400s B.C. (Nehemiah 8:2, 8 & 13). We also know what Ezra put down, *so that they [the people] understood the reading*, was the same text that Christ said, *not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from...until all is accomplished* (Matthew 5:18), and it was the same text passed along from Ezra that the apostles called Scripture, which was *inspired by God* (2 Timothy 3:16), generated by *men moved by the Holy Spirit [who] spoke from God* (2 Peter 1:21).