

A Survey Of The Bible

CED – 140

International College of Bible Theology

ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

Knowing in your heart that you are born-again, and followed by a statement of faith are the two prerequisites to studying and getting the most out of your ICBT materials. We at ICBT have developed this material to educate each Believer in the principles of God. Our goal is to provide each Believer with an avenue to enrich their personal lives and bring them closer to God.

Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? If you have not accepted Him as such, you must be aware of what Romans 3:23 tells you.

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

How do you go about it? You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

I John 5:13 gives an example in which to base your faith.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

What if you are just not sure? Romans 10:9-10 gives you the Scriptural mandate for becoming born-again.

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Take some time to consider this very carefully. Ask Jesus to come into your heart so that you will know the power of His Salvation and make your statement of faith today.

Once you become born-again, it is your responsibility to renew your mind with the Word of God. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that transformation of the mind can only take place in this temporal world by the Word of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Apostle Paul, giving instructions to his “son” Timothy states in 2 Timothy 2:15:

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What happens if we do these things? Ephesians 4:12-13 gives us the answer to this question.

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

By studying the Word of God, you will be equipped for service in the Kingdom of God and you will also be ready to take the position in the Body of Christ to which God has appointed you. You will be able to walk in unity with other Believers and you will be a vessel of honor to God that can rightly divide the word of truth.

If you are not saved and you do not know what to say, consider this simple prayer.

Lord, I know that I have need of a savior. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and the God raised Him from the dead three days later. I ask to be forgiven and for Jesus to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I believe now by faith that God has heard my prayer and I am born- again.

If you have prayed this prayer, you must accept by faith that your sins have been forgiven. It is important that you tell someone of your decision to accept the Lord. Also, it is our recommendation that you should attach yourself to a local church and undergo water baptism.

For those who have prayed this prayer with sincerity of heart, we welcome to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. May the blessings of God overtake you.

May God grant you wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in all of His ways.

ICBT Directors and Staff

THE VISION

As we have been commissioned by the prophet of old, we now set our hand to write the vision of International College of Bible Theology, so that: "He that runs may read it, the vision having been clearly written and made plain" Habakkuk 2:2.

- 1) **UNITY** - To build up the Body of Christ by networking with churches large and small, international as well as local ministries. This networking is to access seasoned leadership ministries to the small, local church, to encourage unity and fellowship among pastors, church leadership and para-church groups through active service.
- 2) **GOSPEL** - To go with the lifeline of the Gospel, to educate with love, integrity, and without compromise.
- 3) **ONE CROSS FOR ALL** - To cross the cultural, racial, and denominational lines for unity, fellowship, networking, and progress. To have an open door through ICBT to all who desire to join with us in a common goal and for the highest good. To proclaim one cross for all cultures, races, denominations, and peoples.
- 4) **GO YE** - To go wherever there is a need, to rich or poor, to majorities or minorities, to large or small churches, to free or bound, to go where many fail to go and to meet the needs before us.
- 5) **THE CALLED** - To make available opportunities to those called to minister and to expand their horizons through new associations and experiences. To aid new and/or younger ministers fulfilling God's call on their lives.
- 6) **EDUCATION** - God has charged us with propagating the Gospel to poor people, minorities, and small churches where many fail to go. This education is through foundational schools that teach the basics of Christianity as well as correspondence schooling for those seeking more in-depth levels in Christian teachings.
- 7) **APPLICATION** - To bring opportunity to students by making available to them teachings and information for practical application and beyond traditional confines.
- 8) **DREAM A DREAM** - To cause each person we associate with to catch a vision, to dream yet another dream, and to keep their eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.
- 9) **THE CALL** - To encourage each person to move out of his comfort zone, to be all he can be for Christ and to fulfill that call upon his life. To encourage each one to pursue his purpose, live up to his potential, and produce the fruit of the Spirit.

For Your Consideration

Many times when we read material or study in an area, it seems that the subject matter does not apply to us. This can be because we do not fit the particular age group, gender, or situation that is being talked about. However, there is good reason to learn from any materials that we study; especially the Bible and Bible-based study courses, such as you are embarking on now.

Paul wrote to us in First Corinthians, chapter ten (10) and verse eleven (11), "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." What Paul is saying here is that God had a purpose in everything He had the writers record for us. Everything that is written down will apply to us in some way or another, whether as a warning, as material for future ministry to someone who needs it, or simply to help us avoid a pitfall that the enemy places in front of us.

The same is true in the Bible courses of International College of Bible Theology. However, there is a possibility that some might think that something does not apply to them, because of the way the materials are written, when we use words that appear to refer to a particular gender. At times the material does apply to gender, as when it is talking about marriage relationships, or possibly the rearing of children. However, there is one area that does not refer to gender, though it may appear so.

In the courses, as well as the Bible, there are areas where the word "he" is used extensively. This is not necessarily designed to refer to gender. God is certainly no respecter of persons, and neither are we. The King James Bible especially, has a myriad of references that use the word "he" which are in no way gender significant. For instance, the Scripture that says, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: The soul that sinneth, it shall die" Ezldel18:4. We all know that women have souls, the same as men. However, the use of the words "father" and "son" here would seem to imply that women are left out. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Also, there is the use of "he" and "she" in terms of natural things. For instance, the Church is continually referred to as "she" in the Scriptures. "She" is pictured as the Bride of Christ. Isaiah 61: 10 speaks of the Bride who has adorned herself with her jewels. Of course, this does not preclude the male gender from being a part of the Church and those who are delivered from the destruction of the end times, the Great Tribulation (Re.21:2).

Ships are referred to as "she," airplanes as "she," yet pastors and elders as "he." Does this mean that women cannot be pastors or elders? No. It simply means that for ease of reference, there has been a gender applied to some words.

No one should feel left out or slighted because of this nuance in the English language. You will find that both genders are not referenced every time in the course materials you are studying, and will study through International College of Bible Theology. It is double referenced in some places, and in some it is not. It is by no means meant to leave out some precious souls, just because we did not double reference every time a gender was referred to.

International College
of
Bible Theology

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth"*
II Timothy 2:15

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A Survey of the Bible

104 pages of Commentary

6 Homework assignments

6 Quiz assignments

1 Midterm Exam

1 Final Exam

36 pages of Answer Keys for school sites only (Answer keys are not included in the student's copy of material).

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the Commentary.

Do Homework 1, which covers pages 9-18 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 1, which covers Homework 1.

Do Homework 2, which covers pages 18-40 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 2, which covers Homework 2.

Do Homework 3, which covers pages 40-70 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 3, which covers Homework 3.

Take Mid Term Exam, which covers Homework 1-3.

Do Homework 4, which covers pages 70-82 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 4, which covers Homework 4.

Do Homework 5, which covers pages 82-94 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 5, which covers Homework 5.

Do Homework 6, which covers pages 94-100 in the Commentary.

Do Quiz 6, which covers Homework 6.

Take Final Exam, which covers Homework 4-6.

13 weeks in a Trimester: 11 weeks of teaching and 2 weeks of testing. You will need to cover 9.5 pages per teaching session.

18 weeks in a Semester: 16 weeks of teaching and 2 weeks of testing. You will need to cover 6.5 pages per teaching session.

NOTE: The Instructor is encouraged to add his/her personality to the teaching sessions and to add knowledge to the Commentaries. The Instructor had some latitude if they desire to give some outside homework or essays. Before doing so, please check with the administrator of the school.

ALL TERM PAPERS MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN TO THE INSTRUCTOR BEFORE THE FINAL EXAM. NO GRADES WILL BE GIVEN FOR THE COURSE WITHOUT THE COMPLETION OF THE TERM PAPER.

Table of Contents

I.	The Bible	9
II.	The English Bible	10
III.	What the Bible is and What it is Not	17
IV.	Pentateuch- Books of the Law	18
V.	Old Testament Books of History	40
VI.	Books of Poetry	70
VII.	Major Prophets	72
VIII.	Minor Prophets	76
IX.	Gospels	82
X.	New Testament History	84
XI.	Pauline Epistles	85
XII.	General Epistles	94
XIII.	Revelation	98

I. THE BIBLE

The Bible has a great tradition and a magnificent heritage. It contains 66 books written over a period of several hundred years by different men. Yet the message, divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, is clearly the same throughout. The 66 books are One. The message of the Bible is the message of Jesus Christ who said *“I am the Way the Truth and the Life.”* It is the story of Salvation; the story of our redemption through Christ; the story of life, of peace, and of eternity.

The Bible is old; yet it is ever new. It is the most modern Book in the world today. There is a false notion that a book as ancient as the Bible cannot speak to the needs of modern man. Men somehow think that in an age of scientific achievement, when knowledge has increased more in the past 25 years than all preceding centuries put together, this ancient Book is out of date. But to all who read and love the Bible, it is relevant for our generation.

Millions of people today are searching for a reliable voice of authority. The Word of God is the only real authority we have. His Word sheds light on human nature, world problems and human suffering. But beyond that, it clearly reveals the Way to God.

It is in the Holy Scriptures that we find the answers to life’s ultimate questions: 1) Where did I come from?; 2) Why am I here?; 3) Where am I going?; 4) What is the purpose of my existence?

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is to come back to the Scripture as the basis of authority, and to study them prayerfully in dependence on the Holy Spirit. When we read God’s Word, God is speaking to us. William Lyon Phelps, called the most beloved professor in America, and one-time president of Yale University, made the oft-quoted statement, “I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible.” One of the greatest tragedies today is that, although the Bible is an available and open Book, it is a closed book to millions- either because they leave it unread or because they read it without applying its teaching to themselves. No greater tragedy can befall a man or a Nation than that of paying lip service to a Bible left unread or to a way of life not followed.

The Bible, the greatest document available for the human race, needs to be reopened, read and believed. A recent survey indicates that only 12% of the people who say they believe the Bible actually read it every day; 34% read it once a week, and 42% read it every once in a while.

The Bible is God’s written revelation of His will to man. Its central theme is Salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible contains 66 books written by 40 different authors, covering a period of approximately 1,600 years. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew with a few short passages in Aramaic. About 100 years before the Christian

era, the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek. The New Testament was written in the Greek language.

II. THE ENGLISH BIBLE HISTORY

The fascinating story of how we got the Bible in its present form actually starts thousands of years ago, as the transmission of Scripture from the original languages took place. Our starting point in this discussion of Bible history, however, is the advent of the Scripture in the English language with the “Morning star of the Reformation,” John Wycliffe.

The first hand-written English language Bible manuscripts were produced in the 1380’s A.D. by John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, scholar, and theologian. Wycliffe, (Wycliff, Wyclif), was well-known throughout Europe for his opposition to the teaching of the organized church (Roman), which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. With the help of his followers, called Lollards, and his assistant Purvey, and many faithful scribes, Wycliffe produced dozens of English language manuscript copies of the Scriptures. They were translated out of the Latin Vulgate, which was the only source text available to Wycliffe. The Pope was so infuriated by his teachings and his translation of the Bible into English, that 44 years after Wycliffe had died he ordered his bones to be dug-up, crushed, and scattered in the river!

One of Wycliffe’s followers, John Hus, promoted Wycliffe’s idea that people should be permitted to read the Bible in their own language, and they should oppose the tyranny of the Roman Church that threatened anyone possessing a non-Latin Bible with execution. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe’s Manuscript Bibles used as kindling for the fire. The last words of John Hus were that, “in 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” Almost exactly 100 years later, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses of contention, a list of 95 issues of heretical theology and crimes of the Roman Catholic Church, onto the church door at Wittenberg. The prophecy of Hus had come true! Martin Luther went on to be the first person to translate and publish the Bible in the commonly-spoken dialect of the German people; a translation more appealing than previous German Biblical translations. Foxes’ Book of Martyrs records that in that same year, 1517; seven people were burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic Church for the crime of teaching their children to say the Lord’s Prayer in English rather than Latin.

Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press in the late 1450’s and the first book to ever be printed in Mainz, Germany was the Bible. Gutenberg’s Bibles were surprisingly beautiful, as each leaf Gutenberg printed was later colorfully hand- illuminated. Born as Johann Gensfleisch (John Gooseflesh), he preferred to be known as “Johann Gutenberg” (John Beautiful Mountain). Ironically, though he had created what many believe to be the most important invention in history, Gutenberg was a victim of unscrupulous businessmen which left him in poverty. Nevertheless, the invention of the movable type printing press meant that Bibles and books could finally be effectively

produced in large quantities in a short period of time. This was essential to the success of the Reformation.

In the 1490's another Oxford professor, and the personal physician to King Henry the 7th and 8th, Thomas Linacre, decided to learn Greek. After reading the Gospel in Greek, and comparing it to the Latin Vulgate, he wrote in his diary, "Either this (the original Greek) is not the Gospel... or we are not Christians." The Latin had become so corrupt that it no longer even preserved the message of the Gospel- yet the Church still threatened to kill anyone who read the Scripture in any language other than Latin. This was doubly tragic since Latin was not the original language of the Scriptures.

In 1496, John Colet, another Oxford professor and the son of the Mayor of London, started reading the New Testament in Greek and translating it into English for his students at Oxford, and later for the public at Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. The people were hungry to hear the Word of God in a language they could understand, so that within six months there were 20,000 people packed in the Church and at least that many outside trying to get in! Sadly while the enormous and beautiful Saint Paul's Cathedral remains the main church in London today, a typical Sunday morning worship attendance is only around 200 people, and most of them are tourists. Fortunately for Colet, he was a powerful man with friends in high places, so he amazingly avoided execution.

In considering the experiences of Linacre and Colet, the great scholar Erasmus was so moved to correct the corrupt Latin Vulgate, that in 1516, with the help of printer John Froben, he published a Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament. The Latin part was not the corrupt Vulgate, but his own fresh rendering of the text from the more accurate and reliable Greek, which he had managed to collect from a half-dozen partial old Greek New Testament manuscripts he had acquired. That milestone was the first non-Latin Vulgate text of the Scripture to be produced in a millennium, and the first ever to come off a printing press. The 1516 Greek-Latin New Testament of Erasmus further focused attention on just how corrupt and inaccurate the Latin Vulgate had become, and how important it was to go back and use the original Greek New Testament and translate from that into the languages of the common people, whether that be English, German, or any other tongue. No sympathy for this "illegal activity" was to be found from Rome. The words of Pope Leo X's declaration were that "the fable of Christ was quite profitable to him" and he continued through the years to infuriate the people of God.

William Tyndale was the captain of the "Army of Reformers," and was their spiritual leader. Tyndale holds the distinction of being the first man to ever print the New Testament in the English language. Tyndale was a true scholar and a genius, so fluent in eight languages that it was said one would think anyone of them to be his native tongue. He has been frequently referred to as the "Architect of the English language", even more so than William Shakespeare, as so many of the phrases Tyndale coined are still in our language today.

Martin Luther had a small head-start on Tyndale, as Luther declared his intolerance for the Roman Church's corruption on Halloween In 1517, by nailing his 95 Theses of the contention to the Wittenberg Church door. Luther, who would be exiled in the months following the Diet of Worms Council in 1521 that was designed to martyr him, would translate the New Testament into German for the first time from the 1516 Greek-Latin New Testament of Erasmus, and publish it in September of 1522. Luther also published a German Pentateuch in 1523 and another edition of the German New Testament in 1529. In the 1530's he would go on to publish the entire Bible in German.

William Tyndale wanted to use the same 1516 Erasmus text as a source to translate and print the New Testament in English for the first time in history. Tyndale showed up on Luther's door step in Germany in 1525, and by year's end had translated the New Testament into English. Tyndale had been forced to flee England, because of the wide-spread rumor that his English New Testament project was underway, causing inquisitors and bounty hunters to be constantly on Tyndale's trail to arrest him and prevent his project. God caused their plans to fail, and in 1525-1526 the Tyndale New Testament became the first printed edition of the Scripture in the English language. Subsequent printings of the Tyndale New Testament in the 1530's were often elaborately illustrated.

Those printed Bibles were burned as soon as the Bishop could confiscate them, but copies trickled through and actually ended up in the bedroom of King Henry VIII. The more the king and Bishop resisted its distribution, the more fascinated the public at large became. The Roman Church declared it contained thousands of errors as they torched hundreds of New Testaments confiscated by the clergy, while in fact they burned them because they could find no errors at all. One risked death by burning if caught in mere possession of Tyndale's forbidden Books.

Having God's Word available to the public in the language of the common man, English, would mean disaster to the Church. No longer would they control access to the Scriptures. If people were able to read the Bible in their own tongue, the Church's income and power would crumble. They could not possibly continue to get away with selling indulgences or selling the release of loved ones from a church-manufactured "Purgatory". People would begin to challenge the Church's authority if the Church were exposed as frauds and thieves. The contradictions between what God's Word said, and what the priests taught would open the public's eyes and the truth would set them free from the grip of fear that the institutional church held. Salvation through faith, not works or donations, would be understood. The need for priests would vanish through the priesthood of all believers. The veneration of Church-canonized Saints and Mary would be called into question. The availability of the Scriptures in English was the biggest threat imaginable to the wicked Church. Neither side would give up without a fight.

Today there are only two known copies left of Tyndale's 1525-1526 First Edition. Any copies printed prior to 1570 are extremely valuable. Tyndale's flight was an inspiration to freedom-loving Englishman who drew courage from the 11 years that he was hunted. Books and Bibles flowed into England in bales of cotton and sacks of flour. Ironically,

Tyndale's biggest customer was the king's men, who would buy up every copy available to burn them... and Tyndale used their money to print even more! In the end Tyndale was caught. He was betrayed by an Englishman that he had befriended. Tyndale was incarcerated for 500 days before he was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536. Tyndale's last words were, "Oh Lord, open the king of England's eyes". This prayer would be answered just three years later in 1539 when King Henry VIII finally allowed, and even funded, the printing of an English Bible known as the "Great Bible". But before that could happen, Para Myles began the Coverdale Bible. Too, John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers had remained loyal disciples the last six years of Tyndale's life, and they carried the English Bible project forward and even accelerated it. Coverdale finished translating the Old Testament, and in 1535 he printed the first complete Bible in the English language, making use of Luther's German text and Latin as sources. Thus, the first complete English Bible was printed on October 4, 1535 and is known as the Coverdale Bible.

John Rogers went on to print the second complete Bible in 1537. It was, however, the first English Bible translated from the original Biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. He printed it under the pseudonym "Thomas Matthew", an assumed name that had been used by Tyndale at one time, as a considerable part of that Bible was the translation of Tyndale, whose writings had been condemned by the English authorities. It is a composite made-up of Tyndale's Pentateuch and New Testament (1534-1535 editions), and Coverdale's Bible and some of Roger's own translation of the text. It remains known most commonly as the Matthew-Tyndale Bible. It went through a second-edition printing in 1549.

In 1539, Thomas Cranmer, The Archbishop of Canterbury, hired Myles Coverdale at the request of King Henry VIII to publish the "Great Bible". It became the first English Bible authorized for public use as it was distributed to every church, chained to the pulpit, and a reader was even provided so that the illiterate could hear the Word of God in plain English. It would be seen that William Tyndale's last wish had been granted, just three years after his martyrdom. Cranmer's Bible, published by Coverdale, and was known as the Great Bible due to its great size, which measured over 14 inches tall. Seven editions of this version were printed between April of 1539 and December of 1541. King Henry VIII had no change of conscience regarding publishing the Bible in English. His motives were more sinister, but the Lord sometimes uses the evil intentions of men to bring about His glory. King Henry VIII had in fact requested that the Pope permit him to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. The Pope refused. King Henry responded by marrying his mistress anyway, later having two of his many wives executed, and thumbing his nose at the Pope by renouncing Roman Catholicism. He took England out from under Rome's religious control, declaring himself as the reigning head of state and also the new head of the Church. With this new branch of the Christian Church, or the Church of England, King Henry acted essentially as its "Pope." His first act was to further defy the wishes of Rome by funding the printing of the Scriptures in English, the first legal English Bible, just for spite.

After King Henry VIII, King Edward VI took the throne, and after his death, the reign of Queen “Bloody” Mary was the next obstacle to the printing of the Bible in English. She was possessed in her quest to return England to the Roman church. In 1555, John “Thomas Matthew” Rogers and Thomas Crammer were both burned at the stake. Mary went on to burn reformers at the stake by the hundreds for the “crime” of being a Protestant. This era was known as the Marian Exile, and the refugees fled from England with little hope of ever seeing their home or friends again.

In the 1550’s, the Church at Geneva, Switzerland was very sympathetic to the reformer refugees and was one of only few safe havens for a desperate people. Many of them met in Geneva led by Myles Coverdale and John Foxe, publisher of the famous Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, which is to this day the only exhaustive reference work on the persecution and Martyrdom of Early Christians and Protestants from the first century up to the mid-16th century, as well as Thomas Sampson and William Whittingham. There, with the protection of the great theologian John Calvin and John Knox, they continued in exile.

The New Testament was completed in 1557, and the complete Bible was first published in 1560, coming to be known as the Geneva Bible. Due to a passage in Genesis describing the clothing God fashioned for Adam and Eve upon expulsion from the Garden of Eden as “breeches”, an antiquated form of “britches”, some people referred to the Geneva Bible as the Breeches Bible.

The Geneva Bible was the first Bible to add numbered verses to the chapters so that referencing specific passages would be easier. Every chapter was also accompanied by extensive marginal notes and references so thorough and complete that the Geneva Bible is also considered the first English “study Bible”. William Shakespeare quoted hundreds of times in his plays from the Geneva translation of the Bible. The Geneva Bible became the Bible of choice for over 100 years of English speaking Christians. Between 1560 and 1644 at least 144 editions of this Bible were published.

Examination of the 1611 King James Bible shows clearly that its translators were influenced much more by the Geneva Bible than by any other source. The Geneva Bible itself retains over 90% of William Tyndale’s original English translation. The Geneva Bible remained more popular than the King James Version until decades after its original release in 1611. The Geneva Bible holds the honor of being the first Bible taken to America, and the Bible of the Puritans and Pilgrims. It is truly the “Bible of the Protestant Reformation”. Strangely, the famous Geneva Bible has been out-of-print since 1644, so the only way to obtain one is to either purchase an original printing of the Geneva Bible, or a less costly facsimile reproduction of the original 1560 Geneva Bible.

With the end of Queen Mary’s bloody reign, the reformers could safely return to England. The Anglican Church, now under Queen Elizabeth I, reluctantly tolerated the printing and distribution of the Geneva version Bible in England. The marginal notes, which were vehemently against the institutional church of the day, did not rest well with the rulers of the day. Another version with a less inflammatory tone was desired, and

copies of the Great Bible were getting to be decades old. In 1568, a version of the great Bible known as the Bishop's Bible was introduced. Despite 19 editions being printed between 1568 and 1606, this Bible, referred to as the "rough draft of the King James version", never gained much of a foothold of popularity among the people. The Geneva may have simply been too much to compete with.

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I, Prince James VI of Scotland became King James II of England. The Protestant clergy approached the king in 1604 and announced their desire for a new translation to replace the Bishop's Bible, first printed in 1568. They knew that the Geneva version had won the hearts of the people because of its exhaustive commentary. However, they did not want the controversial marginal notes which proclaimed the Pope as the Anti-Christ. The leaders of the church desired a Bible for the people, with Scriptural references only for word clarification or cross-references.

That "translation to end all translations", for a while at least, was the result of the combined effort of about 50 scholars. They took into consideration: 1) The Tyndale New Testament; 2) The Coverdale Bible; 3) The Matthews Bible; 4) The Great Bible; 5) The Geneva Bible; 6) the Rheims New Testament. The great revision of the Bishop's Bible had begun. From 1605 to 1606 the scholars engaged in private research. From 1607 to 1609 the work was assembled. In 1610 the work went to press and in 1611 the first of the huge (16 inch tall) pulpit folios, known today as "The 1611 King James Bible," came off the printing press. A typographical discrepancy in Ruth 3:5 rendered a pronoun "he" instead of "she" in that verse in some printings. That caused some of the 1611 First Editions to be known by collectors as "He" Bibles, and others as "She" Bibles. Starting just one year after the huge 1611 pulpit-size King James Bibles were printed and chained to every church pulpit in England, printing began on the earliest normal size printings of the King James Bible. Those were produced so individuals could have their own personal copy of the Bible.

The Anglican Church's King James Bible took decades to overcome the more popular Protestant Church's Geneva Bible. One of the greatest ironies of history is that many Protestant Christian churches today embrace the King James Bible exclusively as the "only" legitimate English language translation, yet it is not even a Protestant translation! It was printed to compete with the Protestant Geneva Bible, authorized by those who throughout most of English history were hostile to Protestants and killed them. While many Protestants are quick to assign the full blame of persecution to the Roman Catholic Church, it should be noted that even after England broke from Roman Catholicism in the 1500's, the Church of England (The Anglican Church) continued to persecute Protestants throughout the 1600's.

One famous example of this is John Bunyan, who while in prison for the crime of preaching the Gospel, wrote one of Christian history's greatest books, Pilgrim's Progress. Throughout the 1600's, as the Puritans and the Pilgrims fled the religious persecution of England to cross the Atlantic and start a new, free nation in America, they took with them their precious Geneva Bible, and rejected the King's Bible. America was founded upon the Geneva Bible.

For over 250 years, until the appearance of the English Revised Version of 1881-1885, the King James Version was the most revered Bible. One little-known fact is that for the past 200 years, all King James Bibles published in America are actually the 1769 Baskerville spelling and wording revision of the 1611. The original “1611” preface is deceptively included by the publishers, and no mention of the fact that it is really the 1769 version is to be found, because that might hurt sales. The only way to obtain a true, unaltered 1611 version is either purchase an original pre-1769 printing of the King James Bible, or a less costly, facsimile reproduction, of the original 1611 King James Bible.

Up until the 1880’s every Protestant Bible contained 80 books. The intertestamental books, written hundreds of years before Christ, called “The Apocrypha”, were part of virtually every printing of the Tyndale-Matthews Bible, the Great Bible, the Bishops Bible, the Protestant Geneva Bible, and the King James Bible until their removal in the 1800’s. The original 1611 King James contained the Apocrypha, and King James threatened anyone who dared to print the Bible without the Apocrypha with heavy fines and a year in jail. Only for the last 120 years has those books been removed from the Protestant Bible. This has left most modern-day Christians believing the popular myth that there is something “Roman Catholic” about the Apocrypha. There is, however, no truth in that myth, and no widely-accepted reason for the removal of the Apocrypha in the 1880’s has ever been officially issued by a mainline Protestant denomination.

The American Standard Version (A.S.V.) was published in 1901. It was also widely-accepted and embraced by churches throughout North America for many decades as the leading modern-English version of the Bible. In 1971, it was again revised and called New American Standard Version Bible (N.A.S.V. or N.A.S.). This New American Standard Bible is considered, by nearly all evangelical Christian scholars and translators today, to be the most accurate, word for word translation of the original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into the modern English language that has ever been produced. It remains the most popular version among theologians, professors, scholars, and seminary students today. Some, however, have taken issue with it because it is so direct and literal a translation (focused on accuracy), that it does not flow as easily in conversational English.

Since that time, there has been some proliferation of translations. In 1973, the New International Version (N.I.V.) was produced, which was offered as a “dynamic equivalent” translation into modern English. It uses a “phrase-for-phrase” system and is easy to read, even for a Junior High School reading level. It was meant to appeal to a broader, and in some instances less-educated, cross-section of the general public. Critics of the N.I.V. often jokingly refer to it as the “Nearly Inspired Version”, but that has not stopped it from becoming the best-selling modern-English translation of the Bible ever published.

In 1982, Thomas Nelson publishers produced what they called the “New King James Version”. Their original intent was to keep the basic wording of the King James Version,

while only changing the most obscure words and the Elizabethan “thee, thy, thou “ pronouns. This was an interesting marketing ploy, however, upon discovering that this was not enough of a change for them to be able to legally copyright the result, they had to make more significant revisions, which defeated their purpose in the first place. It was never taken seriously by scholars, but it has enjoyed some degree of public acceptance, simply because of its clever “New King James Version” marketing name.

In 2002, a major attempt was made to bridge the gap between the simple readability of the N.I.V., and the extremely precise accuracy of the N.A.S.B. This translation is called the English Standard Version (E.S.V.) and has rapidly gained popularity for its readability and accuracy. The 21st Century will certainly continue to bring new translations of God’s Word in the modern English language.

III. WHAT THE BIBLE IS AND IS NOT

The Bible is God’s inspired revelation of the origin and destiny of all things. It is the power of God unto eternal Salvation and the only infallible source of present help for body, soul, and spirit. It is God’s will and Testament to men of all ages, revealing the plan of God for man here and now and in the next life. It is the record of God’s dealings with man; past, present, and future.

As a literary composition, the Bible is the most remarkable Book ever made. It is a divine library of 66 books, some of considerable size, and others no larger than a tract. These Books include: various forms of literature, history, biography, poetry, proverbial saying, hymns, letters, and direction for elaborate ritualistic worship, laws, parables, riddles, allegories, prophecy, drama, and all other forms of human expressions. They embrace all manner of literary styles. It cannot be excelled from any standpoint.

It is the Book that contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of Salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts binding, its histories true, and its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It is the Word of God. It is given to us in this life and will be opened at the judgment, and will last forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the least to the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

The Bible is not an amulet, charm, fetish or a thing that will work wonders by its very presence without any voluntary agency. The Bible claims that if one will study and practice it that it will work wonders in the life now and hereafter. It will not benefit a man by its presence any more than a spring of cool water to a thirsty man in the desert will benefit him if he refuses to drink.

The Bible is not a book of chronological events or one unbroken series of divine utterances. It was given piecemeal, here a little and there a little, to many men through some 18 or more centuries. In spite of this it forms a perfect unity. It is not a Book of heavenly utterances in supernatural language. It is God’s revelation in the simplest

human language possible. The Bible is not a book of mysteries, for it explains its mysteries and is self-interpreting, so that no mystery remains in it. The Bible is not a Book that says one thing and means another. It has generally only one meaning. If a few passages have a double meaning, that is quite clear from the passage itself or from parallel passages. One cannot, as is commonly believed, get a thousand different meaning from any one passage.

The Bible is not a specimen of God's skill as a writer or logician. It is a book written by men whom God used to record His Revelation. God used those men by giving them freedom of expression to use their own language and ways of expressing truth. The writers were God's penmen, not God's pens. All that inspiration guarantees is unity of thought, not the sameness of words and expressions.

The Bible is not a book of systematic discourses on any subject, but it does give divine information on practically every subject that one might collect together here and there. There is perfect harmony in this Book, and everything about the subject that man really needs to know, is clear. The Bible is not a Book that conforms to the tastes, customs, or habit of any one nation or people, or for any one age or period of time. It is a Book to which all people in all ages can conform, and yet retain their own peculiar customs and habits that are not sinful and contrary to the will of God.

IV. PENTATEUCH- BOOKS OF THE LAW

A. Book of Genesis

Genesis is the seed-plot of the Word of God. The title Genesis, which is Greek, "origin", and the first word in the Hebrew of Genesis is translated "in the beginning" – words which indicate both the scope and the limits of the Book. It tells us the beginning of everything except God. Another thing to notice is that it tells only of the beginnings. There is no finality here. Upon its truths all the future revelation of God to man is built up.

Satan has special enmity for the Book of Genesis, for it exposes him as the enemy of God and the deceiver of the human race, foretelling his destruction. The beginning of the world, the beginning of the human race, the beginning of sin in the world, the beginning of the promise of redemption, the beginning of family life, the beginning of a man-made civilization, the beginning of the Hebrew race; these are all contained in Genesis. Adam began with God, and fell through disobedience. Abel began with God by the blood sacrifice. Noah began with God by way of the Ark. Abraham began with God when he built altars. These all made new beginnings for the race.

Genesis is the record of the beginning of all these things. No wonder that when men, because of spiritual blindness, reject God's revelation in the record of beginnings, they worship chance as the creator, beasts as their ancestors, and fallen humanity as the flower of natural evolution.

Genesis begins with “God, but ends in a coffin.” This Book is a history of man’s failure, but God meets every failure and is a glorious Savior. We find that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Genesis gives us at least 2000 years of record. It is not entirely history; it is spiritual interpretation of history. In two chapters God flashes on the wall an account of the creation of the world and of man. From there on we see the Story of Redemption.

Genesis is the foundational Book to the rest of the Bible. Its important theological themes include the doctrines of God, Creation, man, sin, and salvation. It teaches the importance of substitutionary atonement and of faith in God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. It also records the first Messianic prophecies for a Redeemer who would be born of the seed of a woman (3:15).

We noted Satan’s reasons for attacking this majestic Book. Its authorship by Moses, its scientific accuracy, and its literal testimony to human sin as deliberate disobedience to God have all been bitterly assailed. The Word of God, however, definitely declares Genesis to be one of the living oracles delivered to Moses. To its infallible truth and its testimony to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus set His seal (Jn.5:46-47).

Where Genesis goes, a divine Creator, a divine creation, a divinely promised Redeemer, and a divinely inspired Bible must also go. Around its sacred pages is the protection of the Holy Spirit of God who inspired its words. Many origins are recorded in the first 11 chapters: 1) the natural universe; 2) human life; 3) sin; 4) death; 5) redemption; 6) civilization; 7) nations; 8) languages.

The remainder of the Book, from chapter 12, deals with the beginnings of the Hebrew race, first in its founding through Abraham, then in its subsequent development and history through the figures of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. This great Hebrew nation was founded with a definite purpose; that through it the whole world should be blessed. God promised Abraham, a believer in Him, that his descendants: 1) should inherit the land of Canaan; 2) should become a great nation; 3) that through them all nations should be blessed.

Adam and Eve were created in a state of innocence but with the power of choice. They were tested under the most favorable circumstance. They were endowed with clear minds and pure hearts, with the ability to do right. God gave them His own presence and fellowship. But, Satan the author of sin, acting through a serpent, tempted them to doubt God’s Word. They yielded to the temptation and failed the test. Their sin entered the world. Satan still influences men to disobey God. The result of their sin is described in chapter three, where they are: 1) separated from God; 2) the ground was cursed; 3) sorrow filled their hearts.

In mercy God promised one would redeem men from sin. The seed of the woman, the virgin-born Jesus, would come to destroy the works of the devil

(v.15). Genesis 3:21 contains a picture in miniature of the whole plan of redemption for man through the shed blood of our substitute. The “coats of skin” could not have been obtained except through the death of an innocent victim. The verse throws light on Hebrews 11:4, indicating there is no covering for sin except by blood.

Immediately after “the fall” men began to offer sacrifices unto the Lord, No doubt those sacrifices were ordered of God. They were for the purpose of keeping before man the fact of his fall and of the coming Sacrifice. It would be by the shedding of blood that he could be redeemed from sin and death.

1. The first civilization (Ge.4:16-22);

The civilization before the flood is called the antediluvian civilization; it perished in the judgment of the flood. It was the civilization started by Cain and it ended in destruction. The Bible teaches and archaeologists confirm that the people of the world before the flood were not savages. They had attained to a considerable degree of civilization. Everything in material civilization is touched on in Genesis 4:16-22. While not much is known about the antediluvians, yet some of their actual places of abode have been discovered and some relics of their handiwork have been uncovered, giving evidence of a civilization such as the Bible describes. In the cities of Ur, Kish, and Fara, the layer of silt left by the flood has been found by Professor Wooley, an archaeologist sent out by the British Museum and Pennsylvania University. Underneath the flood deposit in Ur, layers of rubbish full of brick were found. The same is true of the other two cities. Genesis 4:16-22 mentions that time of civilization.

2. The flood (Ge.5-9);

The account of the flood in the Bible is very plain and straight forward. The story is not told because it is startling or interesting, but because it is an incident in the history of redemption which the Bible relates. Evil had grown rampant, threatening to destroy everything that was good. Only one righteous man remained, Noah. God sent the flood to restore good upon the earth.

While Adam and Eve had yielded to an outward temptation, now men yielded to temptation which was within. God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. God here separated the righteous from the wicked, taking the first step toward a chosen nation.

God had been long suffering in His patience with men. The Holy Spirit had striven with men. Noah had warned them for 120 years while he was building the ark. Even after Noah and his wife and his three sons and their

wives, taking with them two of every unclean animal, had entered into the ark of safety, there was a respite of seven days before the flood came. God's mercies continued to be refused and so men had to perish. Noah was saved from the flood by the ark, a perfect type of Christ, our Ark of safety. When Noah came out of the Ark, the first thing he did was erect to an altar and worship God.

Out of the fearful judgment of the earth by the flood, God saved eight persons. He gave the purified earth to them with ample power to govern it. He gave them control of every living thing on earth and sea. Man was responsible to govern the world for God and the greatest responsibility God gave was taking of a life for a life. God established capital punishment for homicide. God has never changed this for world government and never substituted life imprisonment. That was man's idea.

Sir Charles Marston, as a decipherer of ancient clues, searches for the truth concerning the Scripture by his spade and pen. Sir Charles often serves to silence the critics of the Bible. Records of many persons that scientists have said never existed have been brought to light; many places that they said never were only Bible names have been unearthed. Marston tells us that the scene of the events recorded in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis appears to be laid around the river Euphrates. The surrounding country is called Shinar, or Chaldea, or Mesopotamia. We have known it as Babylonia; today it is called Iraq.

This land of sandy deserts is where the Euphrates flows down to the Persian Gulf. Those deserts are studded with ruins of ancient cities, and scored with the channels of old irrigation canals. Excavation has revealed the ruins of a vast civilization which existed about 5000 B.C. These evidences of an era, until lately almost forgotten, have been left by two peoples- the Sumerians and the Semites. The Semites take their name from Shem, the eldest son of Noah, and the Hebrews race, from which Abraham sprang, was a branch of this people.

Archaeological discovery in Mesopotamia bares evidence of the flood, both in the cuneiform writings and in the actual flood deposits. The cuneiform libraries seem to have given us ample accounts of, and references to that catastrophe. A clay prism has also been found on which are inscribe the names of the ten kings who reigned before the flood.

Dr. Langdon's expedition found evidences of the flood at Kish near ancient Babylon. Dr. Wooley's discoveries of the deposits were made while excavating Ur of the Chaldees, a good deal farther south, about half-way between Bagdad and the Persian Gulf. The excavations at Kish revealed two distinct flood strata, the one 19 feet below the other. Dr. Langdon associates the Ur deposits with the lower level of Kish. He reports that

Babylonian and Assyrian scribes frequently refer to the age “before the flood”. One king praised himself as one “who loved to read the writings of the ages before the flood.”

After the flood the world was given a new start. But instead of spreading out and re-peopling the earth as God had commanded, they began to build the Tower of Babel in defiance of God. They thought they could establish an empire that would be independent of God. In judgment God sent a confusion of tongues and scattered them abroad. The race was then divided into nations speaking different languages according to Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem’s sons settled in Arabia and to the east; Ham’s sons settled in Africa; Japheth’s sons settled in Europe. Josephus, the Jewish historian, declares that the Tower of Babel was built because the people did not want to submit to God.

As we read the story in Genesis 11:1-9, the narrative seems to imply that the people were at cross purposes with God. As a result there was this confusion of tongues and dispersion abroad. A difference in language tends to separate people in more ways than one and to check progress in commerce, in arts and in civilization.

Genesis answers the great questions of the soul: 1) where did man come from?; 2) where did sin come from?; 3) how can a sinful man get back to God?; 4) how can man please God? God met man’s need with marvelous promises of sovereign grace. It is therefore fitting that the Bible’s first Book should show us the failure of man under every condition met by the salvation of God.

Genesis covers more time than any other book in the Bible. It opens with the words: “*In the beginning God created*” (1:1), and ends with “*in a coffin in Egypt*” (50:26). Thus it covers the whole plight of man, who was created in God’s image to live forever, but because of sin became destined for the grave. The Book leaves the reader anxiously anticipating the redemptive intervention of God.

B. Book of Exodus

Exodus follows Genesis in much the same relation as the New Testament stands to the Old Testament. Genesis tells of man’s failure under every test and in every condition; Exodus is the thrilling epic of God hastening to the rescue of man. It tells of the redeeming work of a sovereign God. Exodus is preeminently the book of redemption in the Old Testament. It begins in darkness and gloom, yet ends in glory; it commences by telling how God came down in grace to deliver an enslaved people, and ends by declaring how God came down in glory to dwell in the midst of a redeemed people.

Exodus means “way out.” Without Genesis the Book of Exodus has no meaning. It begins with the word “Now” which really means “And” as the story is just continuing. This Book, like many other books of the Old Testament, begins with the word “And.” That seems to point to the fact that each author was not just recording his own story but only his part of a great drama which began in the events of the past and looked forward to that which would come. Take the five Books of Moses- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Each book is about something and those five things are vitally related to one another.

Some things to remember in the Book of Exodus are:

1. Moses- Moody said that Moses spent 40 years thinking he was somebody, 40 years learning he was nobody, and 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody.
2. The Law- the last half of the Book (19-40) teaches us that the redeemed must do the will of their Redeemer, consecrating themselves to His service, and submitting to His control. Therefore, the moral law was given, followed by the ceremonial law which was provision for the violator of the moral law.
3. The Tabernacle- God gave the Tabernacle as a detailed picture of the Redeemer to come, in His many offices, and as a dwelling place for His visible glory on earth. Its wonderful typology is rich in Christian truth.

The Bondage of Exodus is shown in 1:1-22. As the Book opens, three and a half centuries have passed since the closing scene of Genesis. The Book of Genesis is a family history while Exodus is a national history, but we have no account given during the long period of silence. The patriarch, Abraham, died when Jacob, his grandson, was 15 years old. Jacob’s favorite son, Joseph, had been sold as a slave into Egypt and had risen to great power and influence. The sons of Jacob had gained great favor because of their brother Joseph. There were only 70 persons that went down into Egypt, but before they left Egypt, the people had grown into a nation of 600,000.

When Joseph died and a new dynasty came to the throne in Egypt, the wealth and great numbers of the children of Israel made them objects of suspicion in the eyes of the Egyptians. The Pharaoh, wishing to break with them, reduced them to a slavery of the worst sort. This was hard for a people who had lived as free men with every favor upon them. They remembered the promises God had given to Abraham and his descendants, which made that bondage doubly hard to understand.

The story told in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy shows that God did not forget the promise which He made to Abraham, “*I will make of thee a great nation*” (Ge.12:2).

The family records of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob no doubt had been carried into Egypt, and there became a part of Israel’s national annals. Through the long years of bondage, they clung to the promise that one day Canaan would be their home. We see God coming down to deliver the people from Egypt. The individuals and families had been organized into a nation and God was going to give them laws with which to govern themselves and take them back to the Land.

The Exodus takes place in chapters three and four. The preparation that had to be made for moving so a great host, 600,000 men, plus children and a mixed multitude that went up also with them was a great chore. They had flocks, and herds, even very much cattle (Ex.12:37-38). No doubt it was a well-organized expedition. Moses had appealed to Pharaoh again and again to let the children of Israel go free, with the plagues and negotiations that Moses made with Pharaoh lasting some time. The plagues taught the children of Israel some great things, besides forcing Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go.

The pattern of our salvation, designed by God before the foundation of the world, is shown in Exodus. It is the historical picture of divine grace in the redemption of man by God to Himself through Jesus Christ, Who is at once our Great Apostle, of whom Moses is the type, and High Priest, of which Aaron is the type. The story of Exodus is repeated in every soul that seeks deliverance. From this point of view, the Book is human. The things that happened were by way of figure and they were written for our admonition.

The Passover (Ex.12-19) is the clearest Old Testament picture of our individual salvation through faith in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this portion of Scripture we see the basis for calling Christ the Lamb of God, Christ our Passover, and the many tender references to His Crucifixion as the death of our own Passover Lamb. As the Passover chapter is the heart of the Book, so is the whole Book a pattern of our salvation; it is the prominent feature of Exodus. Perhaps the children of Israel did not know the significance of the feast the night before they left Egypt, but they believed God and obeyed.

God had sent ten plagues on Egypt in order to make Pharaoh willing to let His people go. Almost a year had passed and with each plague there was a hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. Finally God said that the first born in all Egypt should die. It would have fallen on the Hebrews too, had they not killed the paschal lamb and been protected by its blood of redemption. Each family was to take a lamb. It was not the spotlessness of the living lamb that saved them. It was not Christ’s sinless life that saves us either, but His death on the Cross.

They had to sprinkle the blood. It is not enough for the lamb to be slain. The blood was sufficient but not efficient unless applied. Every Israelite individually had to apply it to his own household. The hyssop, a common weed obtainable by everyone, is typical of faith. The blood on the lintel is that which saved; not what they thought about it but what they did with it counted. It was not feelings or personal worthiness; but one thing saved them, the blood.

They had to eat the lamb. After the blood was shed and sprinkled, there was direction for nourishment, and so with us. Salvation was first, then feeding, fellowship, worship, walk and service. Feeding did not save them, but blood first; then nourishment was possible.

They had to remove all the leaven. Just so, Scripture cries out, *“Search me... and see if there is any wicked way in me.”* Leaven is always a type of sin. The leaven of the Pharisees was criticized by Jesus (Mt.16:6). *“Purge out therefore the old leaven”* indicated the unrighteousness that must be removed from our lives if we are to eat with God.

There were bitter herbs, indicating how Christ tasted the bitter cup for us. Some bitterness, we too must suffer. No chastening for the present seems to be joyous. The lamb was to be feasted upon; not raw, not unbaked, but a suffering lamb who passed through fire. Nothing was to be left, eaten in haste and nothing remaining. Not a bone broken! Christ’s body was broken but not His bones.

They were to be ready to leave. They ate the food standing- not knowing where they would go. All provision was made for the journey. What a contrast that night! Peaceful feasting in the houses of Israel: awful mourning in the houses of Egypt. We have read here of the Passover and next came the passage. The Passover sealed them and the passage through the Red Sea steeled them. They left Egypt under the blood as marked men. They passed through the Red Sea directed, determined men. God led them out and shut the door behind them.

We see in Exodus the giving of the Law (Ex.20-24). In Exodus we see the law given, broken and restored. Up to this time in Israel’s history all has been grace and mercy. God had heard the cry of their bondage and answered them. God selected a leader and trained him. God defeated their enemies. God fed them and yet they rebelled. Now a new order of things brought about Sinai. The Law demands nothing short of perfection. The psalmist says the *“law of the Lord is perfect.”* Only one man since it was given has been able to keep it perfectly. Christ not only kept the Law, but He paid the complete penalty for the broken Law. Christ suffered that we might be spared.

The Law was given so we might know our exceeding sinfulness. The Law did not make man sin, but it showed him that he was a sinner. The Law is God’s mirror to show us our exceeding sinfulness. *“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”* There are two mountain peaks which

stand over against each other in God's Word. First is Mount Sinai with all of its horror thundered forth the law. Opposite that mountain God places Calvary. Calvary took away all the fire and thunder and made possible a meeting place between God and the sinner. We each have a choice as to how we shall approach God, either by law or by blood. There was no provision made in the Law for failure. It was all or nothing; the whole Law or a broken thing. One flaw in a character mars the perfection God requires under the Law. God's Laws may be divided into two parts: 1) Laws regarding man's attitude toward God; 2) Laws regarding man's attitude towards his fellow men.

We are told that God gave all these Words. God gave the whole testimony and the man assumed the whole responsibility of keeping it. Why did Israel accept the Law rather than cry mercy? Human pride always makes us think that we can please God by ourselves. Before Israel even received the Law or started to keep it, they were dancing around the golden calf, and worshipping a god they had made (Ex.32:1-10, 18).

In Exodus we see the building of the Tent of Meeting (Ex.25-40). We must use our imagination and reason as we enter the holy precincts and gaze upon the significant furniture. God told Moses He wished a sanctuary or holy dwelling place which should point to Christ and tell of His person and work. That included:

1. The outer court;

In the outer court we see the brazen altar on which the burnt offerings were sacrificed (Ex.27:1-8). The laver was there for the cleansing of the priests before they could enter into the holy place to render their service. (Ex.30:18).

2. The holy place;

Herein was the golden candlestick (Ex.25:31-40), typifying Christ, the Light of the World and the table of shewbread (Ex.25: 23-30). Christ is the Bread of Life; also we see the golden altar of incense (Ex.30:1-10), symbolizing Christ's intercession for us.

3. The holy of holies;

Now if we draw back the beautiful veil (which typifies the body of Christ). We will see the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence. Into that holy of holies, the High Priest went only once a year to sprinkle the blood Atonement. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Christ is not only our High Priest, but that He was also our Atonement, and so we can go into the holy of holies, the presence of God, at any time with boldness.

The Tabernacle itself, with the cloud of glory over it, taught the people that God was dwelling in their midst (Ex.25:8). The Tabernacle was the common center and the rallying point which could/would be moved from time to time. The Ten Commandments (Decalogue-Ex.20:1-17), was in the Ark. The distinctive feature of the Decalogue sets forth monotheism, worship of one true God, not even allowing the Israelites images. This set Israel apart in sharp contrast to the pagan practices of surrounding nations.

C. Book of Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus is God's picture book for the children of Israel to help them in their religious training. Every picture pointed forward to the work of Jesus Christ. The title of Leviticus suggests the subject matter of the Book, the Levites and priest and their service in Tabernacle. It is also called the Book of Laws.

God had given Moses, in the Book of Exodus, the exact instructions as how to build the Tabernacle and about the institution of the priesthood to carry on the service in that holy place. Leviticus begins with "And". As this Book opens, the children of Israel are still at Mount Sinai. God was continuing to give His instructions for orderly worship in the Tabernacle. In Genesis we saw man ruined. In Exodus, we saw man redeemed. Now, in Leviticus, we see man worshipping. This Book is a timely book, for it insists on keeping the body holy as well as the soul. It teaches that the redeemed ones must be holy because their Redeemer is holy. It gives us not only the key for our spiritual life and its holy walk, but it surprises us with real lessons in hygiene and sanitation for the care of the body. The Jews are wonderful evidence of the result of this in their long and vigorous lives.

Leviticus is a divine Book. The opening verse affords us clues to the whole; the Lord called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the Tabernacle of the congregation. Leviticus is God speaking to us through the Tabernacle and its meaning. It is also a personal Book. The second verse intimates this; *"If any man of you brings an offering unto the Lord."* Notice, He expects each person to bring his own gift. The way is often as important as the gift.

There are five offerings seen in Leviticus. One of the most important questions in life is, "How may an unholy people approach a holy God?" At the very beginning of the Book we see God making provision for His people to approach Him in worship. This Book shows redeemed Israel that the way to God is by sacrifice and to walk with God by separation.

Is it not strange that deep down in every heart there is a sense of guilt and the feeling of a need of doing something to secure pardon or gain favor of the one wronged? The pagan brings his sacrifice to the altar of his gods, for he realizes that he cannot do anything about his sin himself. He must make atonement for it. The mothers of India used to throw their baby into the Ganges to please their

gods. The British government put a stop to this. The pagan cannot see beyond his sacrifice. When we look at the sacrifices in this Book, we find that they are only a type. They point to the perfect sacrifice for sin, which was to be made at Calvary.

All the sacrifices in this Book point to the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29). Sin may be forgiven, but it must receive its penalty. The wages of sin is death (Ro.6:23). Sin keeps us from drawing near to God. He is too pure to behold evil. There can be no fellowship between God and the sinner until sin has been dealt with; the only way is sacrifice. Without shedding of blood there is no remission (He.9:22).

The offerings start with the burnt offering and end with the trespass offering. The burnt offering is a type of Christ offering Himself, without spot, to God. There were daily burnt offerings. Christ offered Himself in the sinner's stead (Le.1:4). That was an offering of dedication. It came first because sacrifice must come first. No one begins with God until he has yielded all to God. That was the most common sacrifice in the ancient Temple.

The meal offering was next (Le.2). That is the sacrifice of daily devotion as the burnt offering typifies Christ in life. The fine flour speaks of the character of Christ- His perfection in thought, in word, in action. Let us feed on the perfect meal offering. We must come to Him first with our whole burnt offering. Then we keep coming with our continual meal offering. It is our very best, our gift of life. Notice, the slain offering must come first. Abel brought it, while Cain did not.

The peace offering was next (Le.3). Christ is our peace. He has made peace through the Blood of His Cross (Co.1:20). That offering represents fellowship and communion with God. It is an offering of thanksgiving.

Next was the sin offering (Le.4; 5). This shows Christ on the Cross in the sinner's stead. In this offering we see an acknowledgement of sin; *"if a soul shall sin... let him bring"* (Le.4:2-3). The offering is for expiation. In the other offerings the offerer comes as a worshipper, but here as a convicted sinner. God holds us accountable for our sins. We are like criminals who have been tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Though placed last, the sin and trespass offerings are included in all that goes before. The only reason burnt offerings, meal offerings or peace offerings can be made is that the blood of pardon has been shed. God has accepted the one offering of His Son, which every lesser offering typified. The heathen bought a sacrifice to his god; the Christian accepts the sacrifice for his God.

Next is the trespass offering (Le.5:14-6:7). Christ has even taken care of our sin against others. The blood of the trespass offering cleanses the conscience, and sends the trespasser back to the one he has wronged, not only with the principal but with the fifth part added (Le.6:5). The injurer is forgiven and the injured

becomes an actual gainer. It is a grave error to suppose that we are safe and right if we live up to our own conscience. God has scales with which to measure us, and we can never comprehend His holiness. None of these sacrifices forgave sin. They only pointed forward to the true sacrifice, God's very own Son (He.10). We will notice that bullocks, oxen, goats, sheep, turtle doves, and pigeons were mentioned for sacrifice. The offering was determined by the ability of the one who brought it. What we bring is our sin; what Christ brings is the offering and the Atonement for sin.

In Exodus the priest is brought to light (Le.8-10). We have been studying the subject of sacrifice, but no man could bring his own sacrifice to God. He had to bring it to the priest and the priest, in turn, would offer it to God. God chose one tribe out of the 12 to care for the Tabernacle. That was the tribe of Levi. One family of Levites, Aaron's, were designated as the priests. The priests had charge of the sacrifices and were supported by the tithes of the people. The priests went from man to God with the prayers and praises of the people. He stood for them and pleaded their cause.

The burdened Israelite who desired to approach God brought his animal to the court of the Tabernacle. At the altar of burnt offerings he laid his hand on the animal's head to express his penitence and consecration. The animal was killed and its blood sprinkled on the altar. The priest representing the worshipper then went to the laver, in which he washed his hands, thus indicating the clean life that should follow the forgiveness of sins. He entered the holy place, passed by sacred furnishings, the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and came to the altar of incense, where prayer was offered.

There was a designated High Priest also. One day in the year the High Priest passed beyond the Veil that separated the holy and the most holy place and stood before the mercy seat, with the blood of the atonement, to intercede for the people. The priest could not consecrate himself. Moses acted for God in that service. Each priest presented his body a living sacrifice for service just as Paul charged us in Romans (12:1-2).

The priest had charge of the sacrifices. The Levites were their assistants. They took care of the Tabernacle, formed choirs, and were guides and instructors in the temple. Notice the opening of Leviticus 10. At the very beginning of the history of the work of the priesthood, there were evidences of failure. Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord "*which he commanded them not*", and they were swiftly slain by fire. We read in Leviticus 10:3 that Aaron held his peace. He was their father; but he dared not question God. We talk too much before God. We must learn to walk softly in the divine presence. The other priests were solemnly charged to show no signs of mourning and to abide at their posts. The priests were the ministers of the sacrifices that we have been studying. Each was a picture of the great sacrifice of Christ for the sin of the world.

Our Great High Priest is also shown in Leviticus. Animal sacrifices are no longer necessary because all sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ. Therefore priests are no longer necessary. Christ Himself is the Great High Priest for man (He.2:17; 4:15). He is the only mediator between God and man. There is no one who can put himself between God and man. We are kings and priests (1Pe.2:5). Christ is our High Priest and He is at the right hand of God today making intercession for us. We approach God by Him and Him alone. When we see Christ as sacrifice, we see beauty and completeness. When we see Christ as Priest, we see His divine perfection touched with the feeling of our infirmities (He.4:15). As Sacrifice, He establishes the relationship of His people with God.

We read of this perfect and eternal Priesthood in the Book of Hebrews. Heaven, not earth is the sphere of Christ's Priestly ministry. He never appeared in the Temple on earth to offer sacrifice. He went there to preach and teach but not to sacrifice. Except in the sense that all believers are priests (1Pe.2:5), there is no such thing as a priest on earth. The believer is a spiritual priest. It is not necessary that any child of God go before any man on earth to obtain entrance into the presence of God. Every Christian has the right to enter because he knows Jesus Christ. The Lord said *"I am the Way."* *"Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* The God -appointed priests belonged to the tribe of Levi.

As the first part of the Book has to do with offerings and those who offer, so the last part of the Book deals with feasts and feasters. Five great festivals are mentioned in Leviticus 23. The sacrifices speak of the blood that saves. The feasts speak of the food that sustains; both are of God. The sacrifices correspond to the cup of the Lord's Supper that reminds us of Christ's death on the cross whereby we are redeemed. The bread of the communion witnesses to His life of which we are partakers.

1. Feast of the Sabbath (Le.23:1-3);

The Sabbath was given the foremost place. It was a perpetually recurring feast to be obeyed through the whole year on every seventh day. It was a day of worship and rest, celebrating the finished work in God in creation. Christians celebrate the first day of the week or the day our Lord rose from the grave. Thus we celebrate the finished work of redemption.

2. Feast of Passover (Le.23:4-5);

The Passover spoke of redemption and was celebrated every spring at our memory of the Resurrection. It was an independence celebration for the children of Israel. They celebrated it by a great service of worship to God. Every Jew who could went to Jerusalem. It lasted one day, but the feast of unleavened bread which immediately followed lasted seven days.

With these the year commenced. The Jews were still celebrating this feast when our Lord was on the earth (Lk.2:41-52; Mt.26:19; Jn.13). The Jews today celebrate this same feast. They are still looking for their Messiah.

3. Feast of Trumpets (Le.23:23-25);

This was New Year's Day for the children of Israel. It was celebrated in the fall about October. This feast pointed forward to the future gathering of the dispersed people of Israel (Zec.14).

4. Feast of Pentecost (Le.23:15-22);

This feast was observed 50 days after the feast of the first fruits. This feast of the first fruits typified Christ's resurrection and ours (1Co.15:20). It was 50 days after Christ's resurrection that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and the Church was born. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. The death and resurrection of Christ had to be accomplished before the descent of the Holy Spirit.

5. Day of Atonement (Le. 23-26-32);

This was the greatest day in the history of God's chosen people. On this day the sins of the nation were confessed. Confession is always the first step toward righteousness. It reveals a right attitude toward sin. It leads to a desire for forgiveness and His forgiveness (1Jn.1:9). On that day Jehovah's relationship to His people was established and all the sins, failures, and weaknesses of the people were atoned for. The blood was shed and the sins of the people were covered so that God could take up His abode in the midst of His people in spite of their uncleanness.

We learn in Leviticus that God was hidden behind a veil in the Tabernacle and man was at a distance. (Le.16:2). The way was not yet open for man to approach God. Now we have boldness and access (Ep.3:12). We can run into God's presence at any time, for Christ has made the way possible for us. In the Book of Leviticus, God was shut in from man and man was shut out from God. This was the only day in the year when the high priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies. He went in with an offering for the atonement (covering) of the sin of the people. That offering "covered" the sins of the people until the great sacrifice on Calvary was made.

6. Feast of Tabernacles (Le.23:33-36);

This was the last feast of the year. It commemorated the time when the children of Israel lived in tents during their wilderness journey. It was celebrated in the fall of the year and lasted an entire week. The people lived in booths out of doors and heard the reading of the Law.

The feast of the Passover and the Feast of the Tabernacles kept before the children of Israel the marvelous way in which they were delivered from Egypt and were sustained in the wilderness. God did not want them to forget the way in which the gods of Egypt were utterly discredited and the great nation of Egypt humbled. The feast of Tabernacles recalled to their mind that by their own disobedience they were compelled to wander forty (40) years in the wilderness, but in spite of their unbelief God was faithful in caring for them. Those days reminded them of their dependence upon Jehovah and the blessings that would come if they would be obedient to His will.

7. Sabbatical year (Le.25);

This was the year of meditation and devotion. It was a year-long Sabbath. The purpose and character of the Sabbath was magnified. God impressed it upon the minds of the people, keeping them from any kind of labor, which He required every seven years. God wanted to impress upon them that the very land was holy unto Him. That is why Palestine is called the Holy Land. There was quiet over the whole land during those days. All breathed the spirit of rest and meditation and all industry ceased. Every day was like the Sabbath, and the minds of the people were kept on the things of the Lord. The Law was read. There were no debts to worry or mar the spirit of the people during this holy year. This time exerted a tremendous influence upon the lives of the people.

8. Year of Jubilee (Le.25:8-24);

This was celebrated every 50th year. It was inaugurated on the Day of Atonement with the blowing of the trumpets. As in the Sabbatical year the land was not cultivated. All slaves of Hebrew blood were freed at the blowing of the trumpets. Jewish writers tell us that the year of Jubilee was observed at the time of the fall of Judah in 586 B.C. (Is.5:7-16; 61:1-2; Ezk.7:12-13; 46:16-18).

Another outstanding event was the restoration to the original owner of all land that had in any way been taken away. That is, it was returned to the family to whom it had been assigned in the original distribution. What a wise provision it was from an economic standpoint. But God no doubt had a more far reaching plan bearing upon the coming of the Messiah. Every tribal and family register must be carefully kept so that the rights of all would be protected. This would apply to Judah, the tribe from which the Messiah was to come. From these registers our Lord's natural descent could be exactly traced.

This book is for a redeemed people, showing how God was to be approached and worshipped. The Book of Exodus is the book of redemption, but the Book of Leviticus tells how the redeemed ones can worship God. Only through the blood of Christ can we have access to God. God demands a holiness which Christ alone can give, for “He is our Holiness”.

D. Book of Numbers

This book might be called the wilderness wandering, from Sinai to the border of Canaan, the Land of Promise, covering about 40 years. It has also been called the Book of the March and the Roll Call (Nu.33:1-2). It might, too, be called the Book of murmurings because from beginning to end it is filled with the spirit of rebellion against God (Ps.95:10).

Numbers is indeed the Book of the wilderness, recording the pitiable failure of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, and the consequent wanderings and experiences of the people in the wilderness. It records the pilgrimage warfare, service, and failure of the second generation of the nation after the Exodus from Egypt. This however, is not all the message of Numbers. The first ten chapters give us divine legislation; chapters 11 to 20 tell the story of the nation’s failure; but the closing chapters of the Book records Israel’s return to Jehovah’s favor and final victory.

While the annals of many powerful nations of that same time are lost to the world, these of a comparative handful of people are preserved. The reason for this is because the Messiah who would redeem the world was to come from this people. This is the reason God was patient with them, preserving them for Himself. The things which happened to them were examples unto us (1Co.10). Israel’s history is an object lesson to us illustrating God’s dealing with us today.

The key thought in Numbers is discipline. Numbers is the 4th Book of Moses. As the Book opens we see the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. The Law had been given and the Tabernacle had been built, with the priests assigned to their service. The teachings of this Book are very applicable to the Christian life.

Order is heaven’s first law. We see God numbering and arranging the tribes (chp. 1-2), choosing and assigning duties to the priests and Levites (chp.3-4). God is the Author of order. The thought of God numbering His people and gathering them about Himself is most precious to our hearts. He dwelt in the camp. The 12 tribes guarded the Tabernacle of the Lord. The Levites encamped directly around the court, and Moses and Aaron and the priests guarded the entrance whereby God was approached.

The circumference of the camp arranged in this way and facing the Tabernacle is supposed to have been 12 miles. What an imposing sight the camp must have been to the outward eye, in the midst of the desert, with God stretching over

them in a cloud by day and in fire by night (Nu.9:15-23). He was their night light and their day shade. Their shoes did not wear out nor did their garments wax old. But most glorious thing was that God was in the midst.

In the first chapter, Moses was commanded to take a census. The Lord knows all by name that are His (2Ti. 2:19; Php.4:3). Even the hairs of our head are numbered. Christ numbers His jewels and knows who are His. A book of remembrance was written before Him (Ma.3:16).

Here were about 603,550 men 20 years and up who were fit for war, plus the aged, infants, and women, on a sterile desert, with not a blade of grass or a drop of water; they had no visible means of support. How were they to trace their way through a howling waste wilderness where there was no path? God was there. God's presence provides everything. How were they to be fed and cared for? What about their clothing? God was there. God is the only figure that counts.

It is much like our life as a Christian today. We are passing through a moral wilderness with only the trail of Jesus before us; *"I am the Way..."* (Jn.14:6). He will guide us step by step. There is no uncertainty, for He said, *"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness"* (Jn.8:12).

God gave His children a cloud to guide them by day and a pillar of fire by night. It is interesting to see how they were guided a step at a time. They did not know when they were to go and when to stop, but the Ark of the Covenant, signifying God's presence, went on before them (Nu.10:33).

Sin crept into this well-ordered camp life. The people began to murmur against God. God sent judgment of fire (Nu.11:1-3). Then they complained about their food, for it seemed monotonous. They longed for the garlic and onions of Egypt and they wanted fish. As a result of their complaining, God sent quail for 30 days. They made gluttons of themselves and while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague (Nu.11:33). Many became ill and died.

Then we read of the sin of Aaron, the high priest, and Miriam, the sister of Moses. God had chosen Moses to be the leader of this great people and Aaron and Miriam were only his assistants. Jealousy crept into their hearts. They wanted more honor. Miriam's terrible punishment would have killed her, but Moses interceded, and she had leprosy for seven days only (Nu.12:1-16).

The Ark of the Covenant is the Word of God in the midst. The sound of the silver trumpet is the witness of a faithful prophet. The pillar of fire and the cloud is the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Tabernacle and its ordinances make up the worship of the sanctuary. Christ *"the Apostle and High Priest"* of our profession gives significance to it all. We make many mistakes and are capable

of wandering far from God, so He gives us attendants and guides. Who does not need them?

The wilderness wanderings are documented in chapters 13-20. After one year at Mount Sinai the Israelites journeyed to Kadesh. This is at the southern border of the Promised Land. Afraid to enter they turned back and wandered in the wilderness to the south and east till all that generation died. When the cloud of God's presence lifted, they marched, finally approaching Canaan from the east of the Dead Sea.

Moses sent spies into the Land and when the spies came back and told them about the giants in the land and the high walled cities, their hearts failed them. They would not listen to Joshua and Caleb who agreed with all that was told, but added *"let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it"* (Nu.13:30). But the people would not trust God and wanted to return into Egypt. When they refused to enter Canaan, the door was closed to them. It meant wandering in the wilderness until that generation died off, except Joshua and Caleb. They were only 11 days travel from the Land of promise, but they turned back, choosing 40 years of wandering.

God took the children of Israel out of Egypt so that He could take them into the Promised Land. They could have gone into the Land in a few days; not more than two or three weeks, but the spy's evil report brought fear which disqualified them to take over the Land of Promise. Fear will keep us from enjoying all that God wants to give us. We have no reason to fear what might happen if we will but put our trust completely in Christ. This record tells the story of many a Christian's life and in part the story of every life. Giants of selfishness and greed, far out ranking the Anakims, oppose our advance. But, when the returns are all in, the fact remains that there is One with us stronger than they. Like the ten, we can be pessimistic, non-believers; or like the two, optimistic believers. Like the ten we can put difficulties between us and God and say we are not able, or like the two, we can put God between the difficulties and ourselves and say we are able! We should never compare our own abilities with the "giants" that appear, but rather commit them to the great arm of God.

Numbers 33 is the pitiful log book of their journey, departing from Hazeroth, and pitching in Rithmah. And then they departed from Rithmah and pitched at Rimmon-parez. And they departed Rimmon-parez, and pitched in Libnah, etc., to the end of this dismal chapter! Going, going, pitching, and departing but never arriving anywhere; it was an endless circle of aimless wandering with no success. When we doubt God we find this to be our experience, too. Far too many wander around but never accomplish anything. It is like a swinging door- lots of motion but going no place.

Before this scene ends we find Israel murmuring again, this time because of the shortage of water. They complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron and said they

wished they had never been brought out of Egypt. The land was so dry and parched and there was no water to drink. Moses and Aaron again went to God. He told Moses to take his rod and speak to the rock before the people, and the rock would give forth water. Moses' patience was at an end. The people had complained about everything. In a fit of anger Moses called the people rebels and instead of speaking to the rock he struck it twice. The water gushed out. Even though Moses disobeyed, God was faithful and kept His promise. In that district the Turkish army put a pipeline and got their water during World War I. Kadesh-Barnea is a beautiful oasis. Ruins of the ancient city of Kadesh are to be found there today.

Sometimes even children of God fail under testing. Moses' error was great, yet it showed him to be just like us. Moses put himself up as God, "*Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?*" (Nu.20:10) That dishonored Jehovah God and gave a wrong type to the crucifixion of Christ, who would only be "struck" once. Because Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it, he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land.

Israel was complaining again, although over and over again God had proven to them that His way is best. Discontent and murmuring seem to have been ingrained habits of the children of Israel. Grumbling is the easiest thing in the world to learn. What is the use of grumbling? It never makes a heavy burden lighter, but instead, it always adds to them. They battled with the Canaanites and became discouraged. Then they grumbled because they had to march around the land of Edom instead of through it. They growled again against God and against Moses because they loathed the manna (Nu.21:5.). They were never content. This time God sent fiery serpents among the people, which caused suffering and death. After they confessed their sin, Moses prayed for the deliverance of His people. God did not take away the serpents but told Moses to make a brass serpent and fasten it to a pole so that all could see it; as soon as they looked up, they would live (Nu.21:6-9).

The Bible reveals that the whole human family has felt the serpent's sting of sin which brings death. The only way man can live is by looking to the One who took upon Himself the likeness of men and was lifted upon the Cross to take the sting of death for us. If we look on Him, our Savior, we shall live (Jn.3:14-15).

E. Book of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy portrays Jesus Christ, our True Prophet. The Book shows the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. Everything depends on obedience. Life itself, possession of the Promised Land, victory over foes as well as prosperity and happiness depended then, and now, on obedience. We find this Book teaching the inflexibility of the Law. "*Thou shalt*" and "*Thou shalt not*" occurs again and again. It shows a blessing if men would obey and a curse if they did not obey.

The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of the reiterating of the Law, as well as the song of Moses which he gave as his farewell to the children of Israel. Those noble orations were given as he stood on the great divide between his earthly and heavenly life. He was looking from Pisgah's top over a century of the past crammed full of epoch-creating events. Then he turned his gaze upon the future of the people he was about to leave.

The Book contains a most interesting and instructive summary of the wilderness history of Israel, and in the last chapter we find an account of Moses himself. By looking at the account given in Exodus and Numbers, we find that Deuteronomy gives the divine rather than the human view.

Deuteronomy is a Book of Remembrance. The name Deuteronomy means "second law," which indicates that the law is repeated. This Moses did to remind the people as to what God had done for them and what they were to do to serve Him when they reached the Promised Land. It omits the things that relate to the priest and Levites and includes the things the people should know. Deuteronomy relates the final preparation for entering the Land and covers only about two months, including the 30 days of mourning for Moses.

Moses delivered his counsels probably within a period of seven days and about a month before the passage of Jordan (De.1:13). Moses was the writer but not the author of the Pentateuch. Over 500 times in these first five books we find expressions like these, "The Lord spoke" or "God said," etc. God is the Divine Author of the Bible.

The Christian heart always quickens its beat when it comes to Deuteronomy, for this Book was a favorite with our Savior. From this Book He quoted in His conflict with the adversary. Their passages were His weapon with which He repelled the tempter (Mt.4:1-11; Lk.4:1-13; De.8:3; 6:16; 6:13. 10:20). Thus this Book, God's book on obedience and Moses last charge to his people, seems to have about it the peculiar blessing and protection of Christ Himself.

Nothing in literature matches the majesty of its eloquence and no other Old Testament book has a more powerful appeal for the spiritual life. No book in all the Word of God pictures better the life which is lived according to God's will, and the blessings showered upon the soul who comes into richness and fullness of spiritual living along the rugged pathway of simple obedience.

1. Moses first address- "looking back";

As the Book opens we see the children of Israel on the border of the land of Canaan, in a place where 11 days journey, some 40 years ago, could have brought them. What winding and turning their travel had been. How often we have to go over the same ground again and again. We marvel at

Israel's slowness. We can rather marvel at our own! We can be kept back by unbelief also. We should be ashamed at the time it takes us to learn our lessons. God is such a faithful teacher and never lets us pass on to another grade until we are ready. How deplorable is unbelief! God never fails us when we put our trust in Him, but He often does no mighty works because of our unbelief (Mt.13:58).

Several hundred years before, God had promised to Abraham and his seed a rich and wondrous Land upon whose borders they were standing (Ge.17:8). Now they were ready to enter in after all those years of anticipation and hope. The closing chapters of Numbers found them camped by the Jordan, waiting to go over into the goodly "and itself. As we shall see, God was putting the conditions of their entering and holding the Land before the children of Israel in Deuteronomy, summed up in one word- obedience.

Only Caleb and Joshua were left from that generation that had come out of Egypt. All the others had died. The younger men who now lived had suffered hardships in the wilderness wandering and were ready and anxious for conquest! But Moses had to rehearse the Law to them. He knew his work was finished, for God has told him another would lead them into Canaan (Nu.20:12). Moses was now 120 years old, yet his eyes were not dim, nor his natural force abated (De.34:7).

Moses gave the children of Israel a look back. He recalled the history of Israel and reviewed their wanderings. He reminded them of God's faithfulness and urged them to be grateful and obedient. He likened God's care of them to a loving father who cherished his little one, lest they should be lost in the wilderness. He had supplied all their needs (De.2:7).

He appealed to them to serve and obey God and His words still echo down the corridors of time. Moses' work was done. He had spent the last 40 years of his life by delivering his people from bondage of Egypt and guiding them through the many dangers that confronted them. He trained them, gave them a form of government, laws, and religious institutions and molded them into a nation. The children of Israel were now at the end of their wandering, in the plain east of Jordan, overlooking the Land they would possess. It lay before them in the glories of the springtime, but the impassable Jordan River stood between them and it, while walled cities rose up with seemingly impregnable strength. The Israelites were like young men leaving school or college, about to enter upon their life's work.

2. Moses second address- "looking up";

In Deuteronomy 12:1 we see the key to this section. "*These are the statues and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land.*" Israel

was going into a new Land and everything would depend on their constant and intelligent obedience to God who was giving them the Land. Moses set forth the Law simply and clearly so that it would take hold of the people. God was telling them that they were His people and that He loved and had chosen them. He was in the midst of them, protecting them. All He asked was that they would obey Him, which was for their own good. He told them they were to be holy for He is holy. Since God's people are His, He wants them to walk in the world in the way that benefits them, separating themselves from evil (De.14). They should show charity toward their fellow Israelite (De.15), and gather together to worship (De.16; He.10:26). Today there are "believers" who are careless about church going and worship. This speaks of spiritual decay. God requires discipline (De.17).

God showed the Israelites that their highest duty was to exhibit the spirit of loving obedience. They were to be thankful, yes, really thankful. They were to be full of joy and gladness. Why should they not be joyful in the best Land on earth and with such a God as Jehovah? Surely they ought to be glad and love their God with all their heart. But Moses heart was burdened because he knew that Israel had a hard heart and the people were self-willed (De.31:24-29). How many children in these days of ours should die, under the solemn command of Deuteronomy 21:18-21 (see also 2Ti.3:1-9)? A disobedient child who is rebellious toward his parents is an abomination in God's sight.

If we read Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and compare it with John 19:31, we see why Christ was accursed as He hung between heaven and earth on the cross. He became a curse because He was bearing our sin (Ga.3:10-13; 2Co.5:21).

3. Moses third address- "looking out";

Here we see Moses giving the people solemn warnings. He first spoke of the blessings that the children of Israel would enjoy if they would be obedient. He then told them the results of disobedience. Misfortune would follow them in everything they would undertake, in business, in farming, and in health without obedience. They would suffer for their disobedience to God (28:15-68).

Deuteronomy 28 traces what Israel might have been through obedience, and is yet to be in the Millennial Age to come (Is.60-62; Zec.14:8-21; Je.31: 1-9; De.30:1-10; Ro.11:25-31). Verses 47-49 tell of the Roman invasion in A.D. 70 under Titus. That was indeed a bloody page in history. Verses 63-67 describe the Jews today. God spoke that more than 3,000 years ago. Chapter 28 leaves Israel where that nation is today-scattered (v.64).

- a. “Scattered”- they shall be scattered from one end of the earth to the other. Today the Jews are everywhere; German Jews, Russian Jews, Italian Jews, American Jews, etc.;
- b. “Restless”- no rest for the Jew in these countries (v.65);
- c. ”Sorrowful”- the Jews today have a trembling heart and sorrow fills them. Think of the way they have been treated in many countries (v.65, 67) God foretold all this of them.

Moses spoke to Joshua his attendant through the wilderness. He was one of the spies who dared to believe God. He was now 80 years old and Moses committed to him the leadership of His people (De.31:7-8). The charge that Moses gave to the people and to Joshua was built on one great fact, *“The Lord is with you; be strong.”* If God is present, fear is baseless. Moses, 120 years of age, stood a witness to the grace of God. He sang a song of Israel leaving Egypt (Ex.15), and then closed his life’s work with another. He wrote a third which we know as the 90th Psalm. Christians have always had a song! And in heaven throughout the ages everyone will sing!

After the song and final words of blessing, Moses went up to Nebo’s heights and there God showed him the Promised Land toward which his face had so long been set toward. Moses died there and God buried the workman but carried on the work. Whether Moses himself wrote Deuteronomy 34 by revelation or whether Joshua added it later is immaterial. Moses climbed Mt. Pisgah, saw the Land, died there and the Lord buried him. The horde of slaves made into a nation by Moses wept for him 30 days. Had it not been for their perversity they might still have had him with them. Likely Moses grave was hidden because it would have become the object of superstitious idolatry.

V. OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS OF HISTORY

A. Book of Joshua

Joshua portrays Jesus Christ, captain of our salvation. When we open the Book of Joshua we are beginning the second division of the Old Testament, the books of history. No Book has more encouragement and wisdom for the soldier of the cross than this Book of Joshua. It is full of spiritual truth. Joshua is the Book of conquest or the Battlefield of the children of Israel in Canaan. This Book relates the settlement of the children of Israel in Canaan, proving God’s faithfulness in keeping His promise with Abraham (Ge.12:1-3).

This Book bears the name of Joshua, the hero of the conquest of the Land. The name Joshua was originally Hosea, meaning “salvation,” or Jehoshua, “God’s

salvation.” Joshua is called the servant of Jehovah, one by whom God issued His orders, and by whom He accomplished His purposes- God’s prime minister. This Book takes up immediately from Deuteronomy, a continuation of the history of the chosen people. The chosen people were led out of bondage by Moses, and led into the Promise Land by Joshua. In this Book, Israel not only overcomes the enemy but occupies the Land which God promised them.

Joshua completed what Moses began. God never leaves His work unfinished. Remember that great craftsmen always have another tool sharpened and ready for use. Service awaits everyone. We can always honor God best by taking up our task with a strong and resolute heart that trusts God. Moses was dead, but the march must continue under Joshua. Moses was dead and there was gloom in the camp. Joshua was challenged by the magnitude of his task. To go forward under such conditions would mean failure. When great hearts fail, faint hearts will flee; but not with God. God had been getting Joshua ready for his years in the leadership position. He was born in slavery in Egypt but God led him out and made him a co-laborer of Moses. He was always a valiant captain. He was one that was almost stoned to death because he urged the children of Israel to advance into Canaan 40 years earlier (Nu.14:6-10).

As we study this Book of Joshua we should remember that God gives, while man takes. This Book deals with overcoming the enemy and occupying the Land. God said, “Take it all.” The Book has a two part outline: 1) Conquest of the Promised Land (1-12); 2) Occupation of the Promised Land (13-24).

The mobilization of the army took place at the border of the Land. In Joshua 1:2 we find the children of Israel right on the border, near the banks of the Jordan. The boundaries of the Land were given in Joshua 1:4: 1) Wilderness on the south; 2) Lebanon Mountains on the north; 3) Euphrates River on the east; 4) Mediterranean on the west.

Joshua must have felt some loneliness as his wise leader, counselor and friend was gone. But God said to him. *“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest”* (Jos.1:5, 9). Moses was dead, but it was time to go over Jordan (Jos.1:2). Israel had to wait until Moses was out of the way. To the Christian, Moses represents the Law. Joshua represents Christ. Christ alone can lead us into the inheritance that is ours (Ep.2:9). All Christians should simply lean on their faithful Yeshua and follow Him only. Christ wants to lead us into what He has purchased for us on the cross. It takes Moses and Joshua together to present to us typically the finished work of Christ.

All Israel awaited Joshua’s order to go. Joshua sent men through the camp to tell them that in three days they would cross the Jordan, and to be prepared for the journey (Jos.1:10-11). God called Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the Land. We have the words which must have come to him in answer to a prayer for

help in his great undertaking. *“I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”* (Jos.1:5). These are just as true for us. God’s command to Joshua is specific: 1) set your foot down (Jos.1:3); 2) take it all (1:4); 3) be on the move (1:2); 4) take the sword (1:8); go possess (1:11).

The Book of the Law was Joshua’s Bible. Our Bible is far more complete and we know more about God’s will because Christ has interpreted it for us. But the command is still pertinent, to meditate upon the Word day and night (1:8). Joshua called the officers together and gave them detailed direction. Their agreement with Joshua was complete and they were ready for service (1:16).

We see both Joshua and the people prepared for the journey. Remember, Joshua was one of the spies 40 years earlier, but at that time he sent only two scouts to bring a report of the Land. Joshua asked them especially to find out the strength of Jericho, for that was the first stronghold they would have to attack after crossing the river. The spies aroused suspicion but were saved from death by Rahab who hid them under flax that was spread on the roof of her house. The spies learned from Rahab that all the city was in terror of the Israelites and they promised that they would spare her and her household when the city was taken. Rahab let them down over the city wall on which her house was built, and they returned to tell Joshua the good news that all the inhabitants of the country fainted because of them (Jos.2:24).

Rahab hung a scarlet cord out of her window that her house might be marked and spared when the city was destroyed. The red speaks of safety through the blood (He.9:19-22; Jos.2:21). There are hints of redemption from every casement window of God’s Word. Rahab was saved not by character but by blood. We find this woman’s name in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt.1:5).

Encouraged by the report the spies had brought the Israelites moved from their encampment at Shittim to a spot within a mile of the swollen Jordan. At dawn the officers passed through the camp and ordered all to watch the Ark and follow it at a distance of 2,000 cubits, that *“...ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore”* (Jos.3:4). Joshua instructed the people to sanctify themselves, for tomorrow the Lord would do wonders among them (Jos.3:5). Having followed the cloud in the wilderness, they would now follow the Ark of the Covenant which represented the presence of Jehovah.

At the beginning of the Exodus from Egypt there was a crossing of the Red sea. At the close of the Exodus, there was a crossing of the Jordan River; both were most memorable events in the history of the children of Israel. It was the time of the overflow of the Jordan, and the people of Jericho must have thought it impossible for them to cross or they would have been there to oppose them. There were no bridges and only a few fords, and those were not passable at that season of the year. While the spies had crossed and re-crossed by swimming, how could a great host with women and children and baggage cross? God had a

way and gave directions for the people to follow. Joshua, at God's direction, told the priests to take up the Ark and step into the Jordan. When the soles of their feet touched the waters of the Jordan, they stood on dry ground and all Israel passed over dry shod (Jos.3:9-17). God is always doing the impossible and His bidding is His enabling. From the river bed, the place where the priests feet stood firm, the stones were taken and piled up on the other shore as a lasting memorial of the wonders God did for them (Jos.4:3). No formal prayer is recorded, but memorial stones were set up. The people wanted to perpetuate the memory of their great Deliverer and His acts at the Jordan.

Jericho was not far from the Jordan, some 20 minute walk from the encampment at Gilgal. The walls had to come down so that the Israelites might proceed in taking the Land, for Jericho was the key to southern Canaan. How could this be brought about? To the Israelites God's directions seem strange, but they kept steadily at the part assigned them. They were confident that their leader knew what they did not, and that they would soon enter the city. The wall was in two parts. On a natural rock foundation a massive six foot thick wall was erected. Enormous blocks were employed in some parts of the outer wall. The inner wall was separated from the outer wall by a space of from 12 to 15 feet and was itself 12 feet thick. The fortification wall proper was built of clay bricks. The wall originally reached about 30 feet high. It would have been visible over the plain for miles.

The procession of priest, Ark, men and trumpets that marched around the city daily were the only visible means for its capture. How futile must such a march have seemed to the people of Jericho, yes, and likely to the Israelites themselves, but they kept their mouths shut, for God knew what He would do. Some would try to explain that the fall of Jericho was no miracle but a simple scientific fact. Whether that is the case or not, the miracle remains that the wall went straight into the ground. God accomplished the destruction with or without "scientific" means. The glory is the Lord's, not Joshua's. When the people obeyed the command of the Lord given by Joshua, they saw God's power in action.

The seven trumpets, leading a procession seven days and seven times on the seventh day, showed the Israelites that this was Jehovah's plan of conquest. God put an invisible band around the foundation of that city wall and tightened it, and when God does that to the foundation of any structure, national or personal, beware. It is not hard work that is needed; it is for the want of vision that we fail. It is easy to blow a trumpet, a little thing to walk around a wall. The hard thing is to see the good in it. No one wants long delays. We love to see things happen instantly. If there must be six days of marching around the walls, the seventh day will come when the walls will fall. God gives us victories through ways that seem utterly foolish to us (1Co.1:17-29).

The capture of Jericho gave the Israelites entrance to central Canaan. The next place strategically important was Ai which commanded the entrance into the valley leading into Western Canaan. Here too, Joshua sent spies to Ai to learn the situation. Made overconfident by their recent success, they gave counsel that only 2 or 3,000 should go up and smite Ai, as the city was small and apparently weak. The small force was sent up the steep ascent, but when the garrison at Ai sailed forth and attacked them, the Israelites fled without striking a blow. In the disaster all saw the withdrawal of God's guiding hand. They soon learned that they could not trust their own strength alone. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord..."* (Zec.4:6). One man's sin caused Israel's defeat. Achan had hidden the wedge of gold and some garments. He alone was guilty, yet we read that *"Israel hath sinned"* (Jos.7:11). Beware touching the cursed (dedicated) thing.

No one's sin affects him alone. None of us live to ourselves. The sin of one becomes the sin of the community. Know this; there has never been one sin committed on this earth for which the man who committed it did not suffer. We may escape the law of man, but never the Law of God.

From this began the southern campaign. The Israelites went out a second time to Ai, after dealing with Achan's sin. The second time they were victorious. The taking of Ai showed real military strategy. In working for the Lord there must always be recognition of the value of the best in human reason, but strategy without obedience is worth nothing. We should learn, as D.L. Moody said, "Work as if everything depended upon you, and pray as if everything depended upon God".

The fame of Israel began to spread far and wide. The kings of Canaan formed a league against the oncoming hosts. The treaty with the Gibeonites, who played a trick on the Israelites, was a setback, but Joshua condemned the Gibeonites to become the hewers of wood and drawers of water for Israel (Jos.9:21). Then Joshua routed the allied army. A hail storm and prolonged daylight was God's way of helping His warriors (Jos.10:10-11, 13). Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, which was his way of receiving from God the lengthened day that was needed (Jos.10:12). Ordinary things come to a standstill when God's work is on.

Following this was the northern campaign. With all of southern Canaan in Israel's possession, a new confederacy had to be faced and conquered. The northern kings had joined together and tried to break the power of the conquering Israelites. But in divine strength Joshua and the Israelites routed them all. This did not all happen at once, but at last the Land rested from war (Jos.11:23).

We see in Joshua God judging the wicked Canaanites. Until recently, it was supposed that Canaan was at that time a country of semi-barbarians. Now we know that as early as 3500 B.C. Canaan was subject to Babylonian rulers, and the Babylonian language and civilization had been adopted there. After that was

Egyptian domination and we know the high culture of Egypt. At that period Canaan had already behind it a long civilized past. The country was filled with schools and libraries, with richly furnished palaces, and workshops of artisans. The cities in the coast had their fleets, partly of merchant men, partly of the known world.

Next we see the division of the Land under Joshua. He was now an old man, about ninety years of age, and he realized that the conquest of the Land was by no means complete. There yet remained much land to be possessed. In order that the children of Israel might do this, he divided it among them.

Caleb now was 85 years old. Joshua and Caleb were alone among the spies because they had dared to trust God. Caleb asked his friend Joshua for the high and walled cities (Jos.14:12). As he said, *“Give me my mountain.”* He valued his inheritance because of the work it offered and the opportunity that it gave him for conquering it. Joshua’s recognition of his friend and of his right to a choice possession was quick and generous. He granted him the mountain and blessed his aged friend. Caleb was old but he gloried in the hardness of the task. Caleb was the happiest man in the camp because he had overcome so much and yet had places to conquer. Horace Mann said, *“Difficulties are things which show what men are.”*

The Lord has never promised His children that they will have an easy time serving Him. In fact, Christ said *“In the world ye shall have tribulation...”* (Jn.16:33). The promise is not for ease; the promise is for victory. We grow in adversity, for we learn to trust the Lord more. We are to *“Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2Ti.2:3). Caleb had wholly followed the Lord (Jos.14:8). We might call attention to the fact that the cities of refuge that God planned, spoken of in Numbers, and Deuteronomy, were now set apart (Nu.35).

As with Moses, now Joshua said his farewell. Joshua knew that he would not live much longer. He wanted to give the people some last words of admonition. He called first the Leaders and then all the people together and urged them to remember the power and faithfulness of God and admonished them to be faithful to Him. He warned them against apostasy. He told them to *“...choose you this day that ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites.”* Then he added, *“...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Jos.24:15). It is a good thing to have people make an open confession and commit themselves to a solemn promise. These older men who had made an open confession were true to their promises. It is a great help for young people to stand and make a public confession of Christ and unite with the Church. When we have made a definite commitment, it gives us something to live up to (Ro.10:9-10.) The people said that day that they too would serve the Lord.

At 110 years of age Joshua died. The Book closes with death and three graves: 1) Joshua, the great leader of Israel; 2) Eleazer, the priest; 3) Joseph, whose bones the children had carried with them from Egypt and which were now buried in the Land of Promise. It was a great tribute to a great leader, and Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua (Jos.24: 31). The Book of Joshua is a record of God's faithfulness to His Covenant people. It underscores the need of the believer to be obedient if he would appropriate all that God has designed for him. It is throughout a testimony to the might and grace of a sovereign and holy God.

B. Book of Judges

Someone has called the Book of Judges the account of the Dark Ages of the Israelites. The people forsook God and God forsook the people (Jg.2:13-23). Judges covers the period after the death of their great leader, Joshua, to the ascension of Saul to the throne of Israel. The people were ruled by the judges whom God raised up to deliver His oppressed people. In those days there was no king in Israel (Jg.17:6). Judges covers the history of the first 350 years in the Land and gives us a record of great exploits.

It was a new hour in the history of Israel. They had come from bondage in Egypt to the 40 years of wandering, then to become settlers in a land of their own. The change was not as easy for them as they expected it to be. The Book of Judges is, in a way another beginning, where we see a new nation adjusting to her national life. It is filled with struggle and disasters but the moral courage of the people grew. There is a decided monotony in the description of each successive stage of sin in Israel, but there is an equally remarkable variety in the instruments and methods of deliverance which God used. There is something different in the story of each judge.

There are 15 judges- Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Adbon, Samson, Eli and Samuel. Abimelech, a petty ruler, was not called of God to judge. There are three types of Judges: 1) the Warrior-Judge as Gideon and Samson; 2) the Priest Judge as Eli; 3) the Prophet-Judge as Samuel. The chief judges were Deborah, Gideon, Samson and Samuel. The 15 judges ruled approximately 350 years. They were not just one governor after another, but were raised up as deliverers on different occasions, in different parts of the land and there could have been overlapping of the times of their rule.

There is a phrase running through the whole book- "*Every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Jg.17:6, etc.). We find the people falling away from Jehovah and worshipping the gods of the nation round about them (Jg.2:13). They forgot that God had chosen them for a purpose- to tell the world the truth that there is but one true God. In punishment for their sins God would deliver them into the hand of a nation. Then under the oppression of those enemies they would cry to God for mercy and He would hear them and send a judge to deliver

them. The Book is full of rebellion, punishment, misery, and deliverance. The Book begins with compromise and ends with confusion. That is what happens in every un-surrendered life. After reading Judges we may think that the whole 350 or so years were spent in rebellion and sin. But if we read it carefully, we will see that only about 100 years were spent in true disloyalty to God.

1. First apostasy (8 years);

The Israelites settled among the Syrian nations. They seemed too ready to live at peace (Jg.3:5-8). They intermarried to make their position safer. They traded with the Amorites, Hivites, and Perizzites. They determined boundary lines to make things run smoothly, but then accepted their neighbors religion (Jg.3:7) and bad customs. Soon God allowed the Mesopotamians to oppress them (Jg.3:8) The Israelites then realized that they had a God from whom they had departed, and were a prodigal people. They had left God whose presence before had assured them victory. For eight years they were under the oppression of those northern nations, which grew worse, year by year.

It was from the far south that God sent help in answer to their pitiful cry (Jg.3:9). The deliverer was Othniel, who was Caleb's nephew. No doubt he had frequent skirmishes with the Arab marauders from the wilderness. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war (Jg.3:10). First he prayed and then went out to battle. When we see an army bow in prayer, as the Swiss did at Morat, the Scots at Bannockburn, and General MacArthur's troops in the Philippines, we can see that they have faith and courage, but also feel their dependence on God.

Othniel's first concern was to put away the idolatry of Israel and teach them the law of the Lord and remind them of their calling as a nation. Soon success and victory was theirs (Jg.3:10-11). Othniel was one of the best judges. He pointed Israel to a higher level of confidence in God and His plans. Forty years of rest followed. No man can do real service for his country who does not fear God and love righteousness more than the country.

2. Second apostasy (18 years);

God used different kinds of men to deliver His people. Israel's second judge, Ehud, was in marked contrast to Othniel, the judge without reproach. The long peace which the country enjoyed after the Mesopotamian army had been driven out allowed the people to be at ease and to lapse again in spiritual weakness (Jg.3:12). This time the Moabites led the attack. The punishment lasted for 18 years. Again the people cried to God, and Ehud, with whom Shamgar's name is associated, was the

deliverer (Jg.3:15). This left-handed Benjamite chose his own method of action and assassinated the Moabite King. While his crime stinks in our nostrils, for 80 years there was then rest for Israel (Jg.3:30).

3. Third apostasy (20 years);

A prophetess arose in Israel (Jg.4:4), one of those rare women whose heart burns with enthusiasm when men's hearts are despondent. Many a queen has reigned with honor and struck a deep note which has aroused nations. Israel had been oppressed for 20 years (Jg.4:3). The oppression was terrible under Sisera; again they cried and God heard. This time the story of deliverance is filled with romance and song. Deborah had gained the confidence of the people to such a degree that they had appointed her as Judge. Deborah called Barak to help her. Together they delivered Israel from the oppression. The Land had been so filled with Canaanites spoils that the highways could not be used. War was everywhere, and the Israelites were defenseless and crushed; but God delivered them.

After Jabin, king of Canaan, was defeated and his 900 chariots turned into plough-shears, we might expect that Israel would at last make a real start to accomplish her true career. The tribes had their third lesson and should know by now the danger of leaving God. Without God they were as weak as babes. Yet they would not continue to bend themselves to Him for more than 40 years. The true reformer had not yet come. Deborah's work was not in vain. She was destroying the heathen altars and improving the Land. Everywhere they were plowing new ground, building houses, and repairing roads. But they were falling into the old habit of friendly association with the Canaanites.

4. Fourth apostasy (7 years);

The fourth apostasy came (Jg. 6:1), and the deliverer God chose was Gideon, a humble farmer. The Midianites had held the Israelites under bondage for seven years. So terrible was it that the people hid themselves in caves and dens and were hunted in the mountains (Jg.6:2). Again they cried unto the Lord and Gideon was called to act as the deliverer. He broke down the altar of Baal and restored the worship of God. The story of the conflict is one of the most fascinating in history. By use of his band of 300, with their pitchers and horns, he defeated the enemy (Jg.7: 7-34). After the great victory over the Midianites they sought to make Gideon king. He refused. Gideon was not perfect. We find in the record some things that he should not have done, but he did have faith in Jehovah that God could honor and He gave his name a place in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews chapter eleven.

5. Fifth apostasy (civil war);

A fifth time we see the people falling into the sin of idolatry by worshiping Baalim, almost immediately upon the death of Gideon. The children of Israel turned again and went a whoring after Baalim (Jg.8:33). How often the personal influence of the hero is everything while he is alive but confusion follows on his death. Gideon was one of the successful judges to maintain order, and the country was quiet 40 years. But no sooner was Gideon's funeral over than discord began. There was no rightful ruler to follow. Gideon left many sons but not one of them could take his place. Abimelech, as a son of Gideon, unprincipled and brutal, secured the allegiance of the men at Shechem and usurped the position of king. He ruled three years in tyranny. He was slain by a woman and a period of 45 years of quietness followed under the leadership of Tola and Jair. The men who are busy are the men who have moved the world upward.

6. Sixth apostasy (18 years);

In the sixth apostasy we find the people almost entirely given over to idolatry. Their condition was appalling. God sent judgment this time from the Philistines for 18 years. At last, sorely distressed, they cried to God. For the first time it is recorded that He refused to hear them and reminded them of how repeatedly He had delivered them (Jg.10:13). The true attitude of Jehovah toward them is found in the statement that His "...soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Jg.10:16).

Deliverance came through Jephthah. The Hebrews have always produced men of passionate religious fervor. Men often rise to great faith and then sink to earthly passions. We have the type in Deborah, David, Elijah, and Jephthah. Jephthah's history is full of interest. He was a man of heroic daring. Judges 11:30-40 tell of his vow that he made concerning his only child. After his great victory Jephthah judged Israel but six years.

7. Seventh apostasy (40 years);

The seventh apostasy opens with the words that "*Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord*" (Jg.13:1). This time they were disciplined by the Philistines under whose awful oppression they lived for 40 years. Here we read the story of Samson, a story filled with opportunity and failure. This man was appointed of God before birth to deliver Israel from the Philistines (13:5). In those days everything was dependent upon physical strength. That was what made a leader great. In this case God used it to begin the deliverance from the Philistines. Everything should have been in Samson's favor, but he entered into an unholy allegiance which meant his downfall. The final fall occurred at Gaza (Jg.16).

Nothing is more pathetic than Samson, blind and bound, grinding in the house of the Philistines, when he ought to have been delivering his nation from them (Jg.16:20-21). The last chapter proves that the children of Israel had lost the way to God's house, so low they had sunk. We find faithlessness, failure and forfeiture here, but God loves His own.

The history of the Church through the ages has been like this, with Luther, Knox and Wesley as deliverers. The biography of many Christians in just the common run of life is like this. God opens doors and gives grace for great task. Then we forget Him and begin to have our interests in the world about us. This brings loss and defeat, but God hears our cry of repentance and restores us to favor.

The Book of Judges is an action-packed account of the failure of the children of Israel to maintain the high spiritual standards handed down by Moses and Joshua. They not only failed to conquer the land of Canaan as God had challenged them to do but also fell into idolatry and sinful practices of the Canaanites. Their growing disobedience and spiritual apostasy brought on a progressive moral degeneration, seen repeatedly in the various accounts of their oppression and in the historical appendixes that make up the closing portion of the Book. God would teach His people through this period that "rest" was fully available and provided for by Himself, but must be entered into by an obedient people.

C. Book of Ruth

This story should be read in connection with the first chapters of Judges as no doubt it gives us an idea of the domestic life of Israel in a period of anarchy. Samuel may have been the author of this Book, but it is unknown where or when it was written. It records the events during the rule of Gideon or Jephthah. This Book, written on a separate scroll, was read at Pentecost, the harvest Festival.

Ruth was the great grandmother of David. This Book establishes the lineage of David, the ancestor of Christ. It tells of the beginning of the Messianic Family, within the Messianic nation into which over a thousand years later the Messiah was to be born. There are some interesting things to notice in this Book. Ruth was a Moabitess. Those people were descendants of Lot. They were heathens. God, in establishing the family which was to produce the world's Savior, chose a woman of integrity from a heathen nation, led her to Bethlehem and made her the bride of Boaz. That is God's grace. He adopts the Gentiles into Christ's family. Of course, we know Ruth was born a heathen, but through her first husband, or Naomi, she learned of the true God.

Boaz was the son of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho (Mt.1:5). Thus we see that David's great grandfather was half Canaanite, found in the blood line of the Messiah. Ruth is one of two books in the Bible in which a woman is the principal

character. The Book of Ruth provides several analogies between the work of the Kinsman-redeemer of ancient Israel and that of Jesus Christ, Who serves as the saving Mediator for all men. It also assures the believer of God's continuing love for a helpless mankind and of His willingness to meet man's needs.

A great deal of helpful information for today's Christian woman may also be found in the example of Ruth, whose virtues of godliness, purity, humility, honesty, fidelity, and thoughtfulness remain an exemplary standard for all. Similarly, Boaz becomes for the Christian man a model of God-given strength, honor, graciousness, courtesy, and compassion that can give encouragement for becoming a believing gentleman in the finest sense of the word.

D. Book of First Samuel

Crucial was the threat of Philistine supremacy over Israel. Settled in the maritime plain in the southwestern part of Palestine, the Philistines began to overrun the Israelites in the days of Samson. With Israelites lacking centralized national leadership, they failed in repulsing the Philistines. Even though Samson was endowed with super natural power, he failed to use this to the best advantage of Israel's national interest.

Philistine superiority over Israel is best explained by the fact that they held the secret of smelting iron. Although the Hittites in Asia Minor has been iron founders before 1200 B.C., the Philistines were the first to use the process in Palestine. They guarded that monopoly carefully and as a result held Israel at their mercy (1Sa.13:19-22). Thus the Israelites were dependent upon the Philistines for the production of spears and swords as well as the sharpening of their farm implements.

Politically the Philistines occupied at least five cities in the maritime plain which were independently ruled by a "Lord." The names of these cities Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath appear in the biblical records. The Scriptures reflect this struggle between the Philistines and the Israelites during several generations. Under the leadership of Eli, Samuel, and Saul, the tribes of Israel were united to some extent in their resistance against the Philistines. There were times when it seemed as though the Israelites were on the verge of being subjected to hopeless slavery. By about 1000 B.C., under David, the power of the Philistines was broken.

1. Eli as priest and judge;

Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was erected in the days of Joshua, apparently continued to be Israel's religious center. There Eli served as high priest and provided religious and civil leadership for the people. Although the narrative already was focused upon Samuel, the conditions

existing during the days of Eli are vividly portrayed, namely religious apostasy and impending judgment.

Israel's following God was at an all-time low when Eli was in charge. He failed to teach his sons to revere God as Moses had clearly instructed Israelite parents to do (De.4-6). Of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, it is said that *"they knew not the Lord"* (2:12). Nevertheless, they were allowed to assumed priestly responsibilities, taking advantage of the people as they came to sacrifice and worship. Not only did they rob God in demanding the priestly portion before sacrifice was made, but they conducted themselves in such a manner that the people abhorred bringing their sacrifice to Shiloh. They profaned the sanctuary with the business and debauchery common in Canaanite religion. Consequently, it is not surprising Israel continued to degenerate into increasingly corrupt religious practices.

The laxity of Eli provoked God's judgment. Twice he was warned, as an unnamed prophet clearly pointed out to Eli that he was honoring his sons more than he honored God (2:29). His lack of parental discipline extended to his priestly office as the sons assumed responsibilities at the Tabernacle. With the call of Samuel, a second message of warning was conveyed to Eli (1Sa.3).

The Day of Judgment affected the entire nation. In the course of a battle against the Philistines, the sons of Eli yielded to the pressure of the people to take the Ark of the Covenant out of the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and bring it onto the battlefield, hoping this would force God to give them victory. The defeat of Israel was crushing. The Ark was lost, the sons of Eli were slain and the report of those reverses for Israel shocked Eli so that he fell off of his seat and died, breaking his neck. In all likelihood, Shiloh was destroyed. When the Ark was returned, it was placed in a private home. No mention is made of Shiloh or the Tabernacle. Shortly after that, a priest officiated at Nob (21:1). So demoralizing was the defeat of Israel that when Eli's daughter-in-law gave birth to a son she named him "Ichabod" because she said that God's blessing had been withdrawn from Israel.

2. Samuel as prophet, priest and judge;

Samuel has a unique place in Israel's history. He was the last of the judges who exercised civil jurisdiction over Israel in that capacity. Although he was not of the lineage of Aaron, he officiated as the leading priest. He also gained renown as a prophet who influenced the kings of Israel in succeeding generations.

Samuel erected an altar in his home of Ramah. Although the Ark was returned, it was stored in the home of Abinadab until the time of David. Samuel established circuits throughout Israel in performing his priestly duties and effective teaching ministry. Places mentioned in the Biblical account are: Mizpah, Ramah, Gilgal, Bethlehem, Bethel, and Beersheba. In the course of time prophetic bands gathered about Samuel, as all Israel from Dan to Beersheba became conscious of the fact that he was established as a prophet of the Lord.

The purging of Canaanite cultic worship from the ranks of Israel was also effected under the influence of Samuel. When Samuel gathered the Israelites for convocation of prayer, fasting, and sacrifice at Mizpah, the Philistines attacked. In the midst of the battle, the Philistines were confused and fled as a result of a severe thunderstorm. Samuel acknowledged God's help and intervention by erecting a stone which he named "Ebenezer" meaning "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*" (1Sa.7:12). Not again did the Philistines attack the Israelites while Samuel was in charge of Israel.

3. Saul as king;

Reluctantly, Samuel listened and finally consented to Israel's desire for a king. Samuel implored the people not to impose upon themselves a Canaanite institution that was alien to their own way of life. Sensitive to divine guidance, Samuel agreed and turned the affairs of state over to a new leader (1Sa.8:7-22).

Saul was the people's choice to be Israel's first king (God directed), after the people clamored for a leader like unto other nations. Saul was privately anointed and publicly acclaimed during convocation at Mizpah. The nature of kingship in Israel, however, was uniquely set forth in the statement that Saul was to be "*...captain of His (God's) inheritance*" (1Sa.9:16; 10:1).

The deliverance of Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonite threat under the leadership of Saul projected the new king into the national limelight. In a public meeting at Gilgal after that victory, Samuel publicly endorsed Saul as king with the warning that prosperity was dependent upon the obedience of the king as well as his subjects to the Law of Moses. That message was confirmed by a sudden rain and thunder during the wheat harvest, about May 15 to June 15. This was considered as a miracle since normally Palestine has virtually no rain from April to October. Samuel, however, assured his people of his sincere interest in their future welfare in his public statement, "*God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.*"

Saul led the nation in numerous military victories. On a hill three miles north of Jerusalem he established Gibeah as a strong palace-fort which apparently served as his capital while he was king of Israel. Saul routed the Philistines at Michmash and defeated numerous other nations in addition to the Amalekites (1Sa.14:47-48).

King Saul had numerous advantages in his favor as he assumed the kingship. He was successful as a military leader and gained the national acclaim of his people. He also had the spiritual support of the nationally known prophet Samuel, who assured the king as well as the people of intercessory prayer. Success and public acclaim, however, did not obscure the personal weaknesses in Saul's character. Those became evident in his impatience to wait for Samuel at Gilgal where Saul assumed priestly duties and his disobedience to God's command through the prophet to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Sternly, Samuel rebuked him in the warning that "...to obey is better than sacrifice..." In failing to recognize his sacred trust, Saul was reminded that he had forfeited the kingdom.

4. David's rise to national fame;

David's anointing as king by Samuel was unknown to Saul. In that experience the prophet Samuel was taught the lesson that man is prone to look on the outward appearance but the Lord appraises the heart. David, in his youthful days, had extensive preparation. During that time he not only learned how to play instruments, but also to develop his trust in the Lord when he killed a lion and a bear with his bare hands. At the same time he learned to place his trust in God for divine aid. On an errand of serving his older brothers who were in the army, David heard Goliath challenging the Israelites. David reasoned that God would help him kill the giant, even as He did the lion and bear. By killing Goliath, David suddenly gained national recognition. While David had been brought before the king on previous occasions as a musician to calm Saul's troubled spirit, he then served the royal court on a permanent basis.

Saul yielded to jealousy as David rose to national fame. When subtle schemes devised to ensnare David failed repeatedly, Saul began to persecute David. In the meantime one of the noblest friendships in the Old Testament developed between Jonathan and David, making it possible for the latter to be constantly aware of the king's malicious designs. Eventually, David was forced to take refuge in the Judean desert. During the times that Saul pursued David and his men, David twice had the opportunity to take the king's life but always refrained from it, affirming that he would not touch the Lord's anointed.

David's fear that Saul might overtake him unaware caused him to seek refuge in the land of the Philistines. During the last year and a half of Saul's reign David was granted permission by Achish to reside in the Philistine city of Ziklag. He was denied, however, the privilege of joining the Philistines in their warfare against Saul. When the Philistines faced the Israelite armies which were encamped on Mount Gilboa, Saul had more to fear than the enemy whom he had previously defeated. Saul, long ago ignoring Samuel, was panic stricken as he turned to God and received no answer by dream, by Urim or by prophet. In desperation he turned to spiritualistic mediums which he himself had banned in the past. As Samuel had predicted, Saul's life ended with dismal nights as he renewed his encounter with the Philistines. The invaders won a decisive victory, gaining control of the fertile valley of Megiddo from the coast to the Jordan River, occupying numerous cities. Tragic was the termination of the reign of Israel's first king. Although God allowed him to be chosen, and anointed him by the praying prophet Samuel, Saul failed to realize that obedience was essential in the sacred and unique trust afforded him by God to be captain over His inheritance (10:1).

E. Book of Second Samuel

David was the outstanding king in the entire history of Israel in Old Testament times. His reign represents the epitome of Israel's national achievements and is so recognized throughout the Holy Scriptures. Politically and religiously, David distinguished himself as a great leader. He was successful in uniting the tribe of Israel into an effective union and extending its territory from the river of Egypt and the Gulf of Aqaba to the Phoenician coast and the land of Hamath. Through military success and friendly overtures, David gained for Israel international respect and recognition that remained unchallenged until the death of Solomon.

Religiously, David organized the priests and Levites for effective participation in the ritual and ceremonial activities of the entire nation. Even though he was denied the privilege of building the Temple, since he was a "...*man of war*," David made elaborate preparation for its erection during the reign of Solomon. Two books in the Old Testament report the account of David's reign. Second Samuel depicts the Davidic exclusive account of the sin, crime, and rebellion in the royal family. First Chronicles traces the genealogical background of the twelve tribes and focuses attention upon David as the first king of the ruling dynasty of Israel. Saul is hardly mentioned. Much attention is given to the political and religious organization of Israel and the extensive description of David's preparation for building the Temple.

Israel was in serious trouble when they lost their king and three of his sons in Saul's last battle with the Philistines. Abner, who had served as captain of Saul's army, was able to restore enough order to have Ishbosheth (Eshbaal) anointed as king in Gilead east of the Jordan. Philistine interference or occupation may

have delayed the accession of Saul's son for five years, since he ruled only two years during the seven and a half years that David reigned at Hebron.

David was in Philistia when news reached him of Saul's death. After mourning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David returned to Hebron where he was anointed as king by the leaders of Judah. Although civil strife prevailed in Israel with the tribe of Judah supporting David and the rest of the nation loyal to Ishbosheth, mediation was soon effected when all Israel realized that David held no animosity toward the family of Saul. In the course of these negotiations, both Abner and Ishbosheth were slain without the consent of David. After seven and a half years David gained recognition of all the tribes of Israel without malice or vengeance.

David's kingship at Hebron may have been no serious concern of the Philistines, but when David won the acclaim and recognition of the entire nation of Israel the Philistines were seriously alarmed. Twice David defeated them and may have found their opposition an aid to the unification of Israel.

Jerusalem had remained a Jebusite stronghold throughout the time that Israel had occupied Canaan. David decided that this would be a strategic location for the national capital. Joab succeeded in expelling the Jebusites and as a reward became commander of David's army. The particular site which David occupied was known as Ophel and may have been higher at that time than the hill to the north where the Temple was built under Solomon. The fortress was known as the "city of David" (1Ch.11:7), and was frequently referred to as Zion in subsequent Old Testament literature because it represented the seat of authority in Israel.

When David assumed national leadership, he organized the entire nation. The men who had been with him as fugitives and at Hebron were now appointed as princes and leaders. He built a magnificent palace in Jerusalem, contracting with the Phoenicians for his material (2Sa.5:11-12). Jerusalem was also made the religious center of Israel. In time, the Ark was brought to Jerusalem and housed in a tent or Tabernacle. Priest and Levites were assigned their respective duties, and worship was reestablished on a national scale.

David was vitally interested in building a Temple. Although Nathan the prophet at first approved, he was subsequently divinely instructed that building of the Temple would be postponed until David's son was established on the throne. This was because David was essentially a man of war, and though he was a man after God's own heart, David's son, Solomon, would build the Temple. The magnitude of the promise made to David, however, extends far beyond the scope and time of Solomon's kingdom. David was assured that his throne would be established forever. Sin and iniquity in David's posterity would be temporarily judged and punished, but God promised not to withdraw His mercy indefinitely. No earthly kingdom or dynasty has ever had eternal duration. Neither did the earthly throne of David, without linking his lineage to Jesus, who is specifically

identified in the New Testament as the son of David. This assurance, given to David through the prophet Nathan, constitutes another link in the series of Messianic promises given in Old Testament times.

The expansion of Davidic rule from the tribal boundaries of Judah to a vast empire stretching its domain from the River of Egypt and the Gulf of Aqaba to regions of the Euphrates receives scant attention in the Biblical record. Historically, however, this is very significant since the Davidic and Solomonic kingdom of Israel was the leading nation in the Fertile Crescent, at the beginning of the 10th century B.C. The observation that the Philistines had the monopoly on iron in the days of Samuel (1Sa.13:19-20), and that near the end of David's reign it was freely used in Israel (1Ch.22:3), suggest that a long chapter could have been written on the economic revolution in Israel. David's period as a fugitive and Philistine resident afforded him with the formula and methods used by the Philistines in the production of arms.

In addition to defeating the Philistines and the Edomites, David subdued the Moabites and the Amalekites, exacting silver and gold from them. David also defeated the Ammonites and Arameans, extending his power east and north to gain control of the trade routes that came through Damascus and other points. With Phoenicians who carried on lucrative naval trade, David concluded a treaty.

The story of Mephibosheth, given in the narratives of Israel's expansion, illustrates David's magnanimous attitude toward his predecessor's descendants. David not only allotted Mephibosheth a pension from the royal treasure, but also provided a home for him in Jerusalem. Mephibosheth received special consideration during a famine that came as a judgment upon Israel for Saul's terrible crime of attempting to exterminate the Gibeonites with whom Joshua had made a covenant. Realizing that this sin required atonement (Nu.35:31), David allowed the Gibeonites to execute seven of Saul's descendants. Mephibosheth, however, was spared. At this time David transferred the bones of Saul and Jonathan to the family sepulcher in Benjamin.

As king of Israel David did not fail to acknowledge God as the One who granted Israel military victories and material prosperity. In a Psalm of thanksgiving David expressed his praise. That represents but a sample of many Psalms that he composed on various occasions during his varied career as shepherd boy, a servant in the royal court, a fugitive of Israel and finally as the architect king and builder of Israel's largest empire.

Character imperfection in the leaders of Israel is not minimized in the Bible. Indulging in sin, David could not escape the judgments of God, but when he acknowledged his iniquity as a penitent sinner, he requalified self as a man who pleased God (1Sa.13:14). David practiced polygamy (2Sa.3:2-5; 11:27). In Davidic times a harem at the royal court was a status symbol and freely practiced by surrounding nations. Kings were especially warned about multiplicity of wives

(De.17:17). For David, the marriages to Michal the daughter of Saul and Maacah the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur, had a political implication. Like others, David had to suffer the consequences as the crimes of incest, murder and rebellion unfolded in his family life.

From the human standpoint, David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah constituted a perfect crime. Not accountable to anyone in his kingdom, David very likely concealed these developments from everyone but temporarily failed to recognize that his thoughts and deeds were known to God. For a despot in a heathen nation, adultery and murder might have passed unchallenged, but not so in Israel where kingship was a sacred trust. When confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet, David repented. David's spiritual crises found lofty expressions in Psalm 32 and 51. He was granted forgiveness, but grave indeed were the domestic consequences (2Sa.12:11). The grace of God is seen in the fact that God spared David from death by stoning which was scriptural punishment for adultery. It is further seen in that David's illegitimate child was overshadowed by Bathsheba's giving birth to Solomon who later became king.

David's lack of discipline and self-restraint set a poor example for his sons who became involved in immorality and murder. Amnon's immoral behavior with his half-sister resulted in his assassination by Absalom. Incurring David's disfavor, Absalom found refuge with Talmi, his grandfather in Geshur, for three years but then returned to Jerusalem through Joab's mediation. After spending about four years in Jerusalem in a public relations effort to win the hearts of the people, Absalom staged a rebellion against David which appeared to have all the marks of success when David was taken by surprise and forced to flee Jerusalem. David was a brilliant militarist. Given time to organize his forces, David routed the armies of his rebellious son and Absalom was killed. David, who mourned his son's death instead of celebrating the victory, was rebuked by Joab for neglecting the welfare of the Israelites who had given him loyal support. After another rebellion led by Sheba, a Benjamite, was suppressed, David recovered his throne.

Through nearly a decade following David's crime, the solemn words spoken by Nathan the prophet were realistically fulfilled. God indeed had forgiven and pardoned David's sin, but he had to suffer the consequences that fermented in his own house.

David had made elaborate plans and detailed arrangements for building the Temple. Although he had defeated surrounding nation in his expansion of the empire, David had made a treaty with the Phoenicians who carried on extensive naval commerce throughout the Mediterranean world. With the Phoenicians, David negotiated for the materials to build the Temple, Local and foreign labor was organized for that purpose and even the details for religious worship in the proposed structure were carefully outlined.

The military census of Israel and the punitive consequences for the king and his people were closely related to David's elaborate plans for building the Temple. Even though the reason for divine punishment upon the king and his people was not clearly stated, it seems as though David was motivated by pride and reliance on military strength for Israel's national achievements. Perhaps Israel was punished for the rebellions under Absalom and Sheba. Although Joab objected to taking the census, David overruled.

Punishment for this sin was announced by Gad the prophet. Given the choice of punishment, David resigned himself and his nation to God's mercy. During the days of judgment, David and the elders offered intercessory prayer on the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, directly north of Jerusalem. Instructed by Gad, David became conscious of a divine response as the pestilence ceased. The site of Mount Moriah was designated by David as the location for the altar of burnt offerings and the Temple. Very likely this was the spot where Abraham, approximately a millennium earlier, had been willing to offer his son Isaac. Although Mount Moriah was outside the city of Zion (Jerusalem) as originally occupied by David, it was included in the capital city under Solomon.

David reflected on the fact that he had been a man of war and bloodshed. The first seven and a half years at Hebron had been a period of preparation and civil strife. During the next decade, Jerusalem was established as the national capital and many surrounding nations were defeated in the expansion of the kingdom. David's sin and the subsequent rebellions may have disrupted the major part of the third decade as David focused his attention upon the preparation for building the Temple that he was not permitted to erect. David charged Solomon with the responsibility to obey the Law as it had been given to Moses and to acknowledge his accountability to God. In a public assembly, David charged the princes and priesthood to recognize Solomon as his successor.

The last words of David (2Sa.23:1-7), reveal the greatness of Israel's most honored hero. He spoke prophetically about the eternal endurance of his kingdom. God had spoken to him, affirming an everlasting Covenant. This testimony by David would have made a fitting epitaph for his tomb.

F. Book of First Kings

Peace and prosperity describe the golden era of Solomon's reign over Israel. He reaped the benefits of his father's military efforts in uniting the nation, expanding the borders of Israel, and gaining international recognition. Solomon's reign of 40 years, as given in these two accounts, is difficult to outline in any chronological order. The building and dedication of the Temple, which occurred during the first decade, receives the most consideration in these records. The building of the palace was completed 13 years later. Since a chronological perspective of the content is very hard, we consider topically the accounts in First Kings.

Solomon inherited the throne of his father David, enlisted the support of Joab and Abiathar, the priest at Jerusalem, to have himself anointed as king. The appeal of the prophet Nathan and Solomon's mother Bathsheba to David resulted in recognizing Solomon as king. He was anointed on the eastern slope of the Mount of Ophel by Zadok, the officiating priest at Gibeah. In a public acclaim, "*Long live King Solomon*", the people of Jerusalem expressed their support so effectively that the supporters of Adonijah dispersed. In a subsequent convocation, Solomon was officially crowned and recognized by the nation. With officials and statesmen representing the whole nation present, David delivered a charge to the people outlining their responsibilities to Solomon, the king of God's choice. Privately, David reminded his son that he was responsible to obey the Law of Moses.

The Temple constructed by Solomon represented a high point in Israel's religious history. It marked the fulfillment of David's desire to establish a permanent place of worship. Through treaty arrangements with Hiram, the wealthy and powerful ruler of Tyre and Sidon who had extensive commercial contacts throughout the Mediterranean world, vast resources were available to Solomon. Advanced in architecture and workmanship of costly building materials, the Phoenicians not only furnished building supplies, but also thousands of architects, technicians, and foreman who supervised building the temple in Jerusalem Solomon made payment in grain, oil, and wine.

The temple was erected on the top of Mount Moriah, located directly north of Zion where David had built his palace. On that Mount, where Abraham had gone to sacrifice Isaac, Solomon's Temple stood until it was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rebuilt in 520-515 B.C. and demolished in A.D. 70. Since the 7th century A.D. the Mohammedan mosque, the Dome of the Rock, has been located on that site, which is regarded as the most sacred spot in world history. Today the Temple area very likely is larger than it was in Solomon's time, covering some 35-40 acres.

The Temple itself was twice as large as the Mosaic Tabernacle in its basic floor area. As a permanent structure it was much more elaborate and spacious, with appropriate additions and a much larger surrounding court. Descriptions indicate that the Temple and its furnishings were very elaborate with gold being freely used. The splendor and beauty of that Temple apparently were never equaled in the history of Israel.

The dedication of the Temple was the most significant event in the religious history of the nation since Israel left Mount Sinai. Not without importance is the chronological notation (1Kg.6:1), relating the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the building of the Temple. Whereas the pillar of cloud hovered over the Tabernacle, the glory of God was manifested in the dedication of the Temple signifying God's blessings and benediction. The Temple was dedicated as the

Israelites gathered in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles which also reminded them that they once were pilgrims in the wilderness. With Solomon as king, the Kingdom of Israel was divinely confirmed as anticipated by Moses.

Solomon was the key person in the dedication ceremonies. Under the Covenant all Israelites were God's servants and viewed as a kingdom of priests unto God. Solomon, in his unique position as king of God's chosen people, took the position of a servant of God in representing his nation in the dedication ceremonies. That relationship with God was common to prophet, priest, layman, and king in true recognition of the dignity of man. In that capacity Solomon offered prayer, delivered the dedicatory address, and officiated at the offering of sacrifice.

Solomon also built an elaborate palace for himself which took 13 years to complete. It contained government offices, living quarters for the daughter of Pharaoh, and his own private residence. In addition, the maintenance of the powerful army and the administration of the Kingdom required building numerous cities such as Megiddo throughout the land.

Tragic and disappointing is the final chapter of Solomon's reign (1Kg.11). The simple facts are that the king who reached the zenith of success and fame in wisdom, wealth, and international acclaim under the divine blessing, terminated his reign in failure. Like the Israelites in the wilderness after God's revelation to them at Mount Sinai, Solomon departed from whole hearted devotion to God. He broke the very first commandment by his inclusive policy of allowing idol worship at Jerusalem.

Solomon also conformed to contemporary culture by making alliances with foreign rulers and confirming such by marriage (1Kg.11:1-8). By taking wives from Egypt, the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites, Solomon permitted idolatry to prevail in the environs of the Temple he had erected unto God. The multiplicity of wives resulted in his ruination, as his heart was turned away from God (De.17:17). Some of the gods which Solomon recognized by building high places for them were not removed until the times of Josiah, three and a half centuries later (2Kg.23:13).

While Solomon was still living, the stage was set for the disruption of the Kingdom. Because of disobedience, the Kingdom was to be divided according to the words of the prophets Ahijah (1Kg.11:9-43). For David's sake, the judgment was withheld until after the death of Solomon. Enemies and strong leaders such as Hadad the Edomite, Rezon of Damascus, and Jeroboam, to whom the prophet Ahijah gave ten pieces of his mantle to indicate that he would rule over ten tribes, began to threaten the rule of Solomon. Even though the Kingdom was sustained and not divided until after his death, Solomon was subjected to the anguish of rebellion at home, as secession in various parts of his empire, as a result of his personal failure to obey and serve God faithfully.

Though they did not know it, the people were carrying out the divine purpose (1Kg.12:15; 11:29-33). God could not overlook the disobedience of Solomon to His clearest commands. The Kingdom of God's chosen people was divided for about 3,000 years, because of sin. We see this Kingdom go to pieces and finally into captivity (2Kg.17, 25). It is part of the Gospel, the Good News that those two great sections of divided Israel will be united again on this earth at Christ's return in glory (Is.11:10-13; Ezk.37:15-28).

Elijah was a bolt of fire that God let loose upon wicked Ahab and idolatrous Israel. He flashed across the pages of history, as sudden and terrible as a flash of lightning. Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, was introduced by a brief biography. His name means "Jehovah is my God." It fitted him perfectly. He was the most outstanding of the prophets. Following his sudden appearance we see his undaunted courage, his zeal, the heights of his triumph on Mount Carmel, the depths of his despondence, the glorious rapture into heaven in the whirlwind, and his reappearance on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He was a striking character from the highlands of Gilead. Jehovah sent him to do away with the awful worship of Baal, during the reign of Ahab who had married the wicked heathen princess, Jezebel. Suddenly emerging from the desert and standing before the corrupt king in the splendor of his court, the stern prophet boldly proclaimed no rain except at his word. He was given power to shut up the heavens so there would be no rain for three and one half years. He called down fire from heaven before the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. He was the evangelist of his day, thundering out warnings to the idolatrous people.

G. Book of Second Kings

Elisha succeeded Elijah. He was beneficent in contrast to the fiery Elijah. Elijah trained Elisha as his successor. Elisha's ministry lasted 50 years. Most of his miracles were deeds of kindness and mercy. Elisha had a great influence upon the kings of the day and although he did not approve of what they did, he was always coming to their rescue. Elijah and Elisha are in marked contrast to one another: Elijah, the prophet of judgment, law and severity; Elisha, the prophet of grace, love, and tenderness. It was at the end of Elijah's ministry that Baal worship was introduced by the wicked Jezebel, and after 30 years was exterminated by Elijah, Elisha, and Jehu.

Jeroboam, the ruler of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, made Shechem his capital. It seemed the natural place because it was in the center of the land. It was customary, according to the Law, to go up to Jerusalem regularly to worship. Jeroboam was afraid to have his ten tribes to journey to Jerusalem, the capital of Rehoboam's kingdom, to worship God. So, he made two golden calves and placed them in convenient spots, Bethel in the south and Dan in the northern end of the kingdom, so the people would not have to go to Jerusalem. Over twenty times he is described as "*Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*"

Beware of man-made religion! We must worship where and how God tells us (He.10:25). God knows we need fellowship in worship to keep the spiritual coals alive, but we hear people say constantly that they can worship better alone in the woods or by the sea. We must learn to do what God asks us to do! Remember, a request from a king is a command and a request from The King is unchangeable.

After 256 years the people were carried into captivity by the king of Assyria. Many of God's prophets had warned Israel of captivity but they would not turn from their idolatry to Jehovah. The Assyrians were great and cruel warriors. They built their kingdom on their pillage from other countries. Their practices were horrible. They skinned men alive, cut out their tongues, put out their eyes, dismembered their bodies, and then made mounds of the skulls of men to instill fear. For 300 years Assyria was a world empire.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, tried to conquer the Northern Kingdom, Israel. For 80 years there was continuous war between them, but they failed in their effort. Then there was a period of 80 years of peace between the two kingdoms following the marriage of the son of Jehoshaphat (Southern king) to the daughter of Ahab (Northern king). Finally there was a period of 50 years when they intermittently warred with one another until the captivity.

About 136 years after the Northern kingdom had been taken into captivity by Assyria, the Southern kingdom was taken in captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple burned and the princes led away. The people had forgotten God and refused to listen to the warning of the prophets. God wanted His people to learn the lesson of obedience and dependence upon Him.

In First Kings we see the Kingdom of Israel, filled with pride and arrogance, falling apart. In Second Kings, sinning yet more, Israel went into captivity. Surely the way of the transgressor is hard. The history of the Jews is a record of God's dealings with disobedient children. In all His punishment He is kind and merciful for He loves them still. The secret of the downfall of the Jewish people is found in 2 Kings 3:2, "*...and he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord.*"

The moving figures and powerful factors of those days were the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was the strength of Israel. Jezebel and Ahab had frightened the people into submission. But Elijah stood. Elijah was a champion of the Most High. He brought the people to God and was a pastor- evangelist of Israel's day.

There was a great difference between the fall of Israel and Judah. Israel was scattered throughout the nations for an indefinite period, but God specified the length of Judah's captivity as 70 years. Judah was to return to Jerusalem, which She did later. The Messiah was to come out of Judah and God was preparing the way for Him to come to Palestine and not to Babylon or Assyria. God used even the rulers of foreign nations to work out His plan. Cyrus, king of Persia, for

example, issued a decree which would allow the Jews to return to their homeland, Palestine.

Only two tribes remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty ruling in Jerusalem after the death of Solomon. Whereas ruling families and capitals changed frequently in the Northern Kingdom, the descendants of David, with one exception, retained continuous royal leadership in the capital city established by David. Judah, also known as the Southern Kingdom, continued its established rule for nearly three and a half centuries, beginning with Rehoboam the son of Solomon (931-586 B.C.). A total of 20 kings ruled in Judah during that period. Twelve of those were contemporary with the rulers in the Northern Kingdom. This long period of Judah's history can conveniently be considered by focusing attention upon four kings who exerted outstanding leadership.

H. Book of First Chronicles

The Books of Chronicles were originally one Book in the Hebrew text. They became separated into two Books by the translators of the Greek version of the Old Testament and were given a title meaning "Things Left Behind" – that is, details not included in Samuel and the two Books of Kings. The Hebrew title, "Daily Matters," like the English title "Chronicles," indicates that the material in these two Books recounts the most important affairs in the lives of Israel's leaders and especially the kings. The Books of Chronicles trace the history of Israel from the beginning of the human race until the fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent return of the Jews during the reign of the Persian King Cyrus the Great (559-529 B.C.). It is through such Books as the Chronicles that we get the history of the Jewish nation.

I. Book of Second Chronicles

An abrupt change took place in Jerusalem after Solomon died in 931 B.C. Rehoboam faced rebellion and a disruption of the empire that he inherited. Numerous leaders- Jeroboam in the Northern tribes, Rezen in Damascus, and Hadad in Eden- championed the cause of their own people and challenged the ruler who was to be the successor of Solomon.

Two reasons are given in Scripture for the termination of the union of Israel that had been established by David. The Northern tribes rebelled against the excessive taxation and the threat of behavior levies by Rehoboam. Explicitly, the biblical narrative also points to Solomon's apostasy and idolatry as a cause for divine judgment.

Rehoboam made plans to suppress the Israelite rebellion. When he called for troops, only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin responded to support him. The prophet Shemaiah advised Rehoboam not to fight against the seceding tribes. In the early years of his reign, Rehoboam was further humbled by an invasion by

Shishak the ruler of Egypt. Shemaiah assured the leaders of Judah that they would not be destroyed, even though the Egyptians raided Jerusalem and appropriated some of the Temple treasures. Although Rehoboam apparently began his reign with sincere religious devotion, he soon succumbed to prevailing idolatrous influences. His 17 year reign and the short three year rule of his son Abijam were characterized by apostasy and idolatry, even though the service of God in the Temple was maintained.

Asa's 41 years (910-869 B.C.) prepared the way for the religious revival that prevailed under Jehoshaphat. Asa began a program of reform, admonishing the people to keep the Mosaic Law. When attacked by the Ethiopians from the South, Asa repulsed them with divine aid. Admonished by the prophet Azariah, King Asa removed idols throughout the land, crushed and burned the image of Asherah, the Canaanite goddess of fertility, in the valley of Kidron and removed Maacah as queen mother.

When the religious celebrations in Jerusalem attracted the people from the Northern Kingdom, Baasha began to fortify Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem. Fearing this as a military threat, Asa sent a bribe to Benhadad, King of Syria. When Syria seized Israelite territory in the north, Baasha withdrew his forces from Ramah. For this alliance with Syria, the king of Judah was severely rebuked by a prophet named Hanani. Asa should have trusted God instead of depending upon the help of a heathen king. Unfortunately, Asa did not respond favorably to God's warning, for he imprisoned the prophet. Two years before his death, Asa was stricken by a fatal disease.

The 25 year reign of Jehoshaphat (872-848 B.C.) was one of the most encouraging and helpful eras in the religious history of Judah. Since Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he began to reign, he very likely had, during the early years of his life, come under the influences of Judah's religious leaders. Under a well-organized program he sent princes, priests, and Levites throughout the land to teach the people the Law. Internationally this was a period of peace. The Philistines and Arabs acknowledged the superiority of Judah by bringing presents and tribute to Jehoshaphat. This enabled the king to build fortresses and store cities throughout the land where he stationed military units. In addition, he had five army commanders in Jerusalem who were directly responsible to him.

When Jehoshaphat was threatened by a terrifying invasion of Moabites and Edomites from the southeast, he proclaimed a fast in all the cities of Judah. In the court of the Temple the king himself led in prayer, expressing his faith in God in the simple words "...neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." Through Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, the assembly received the divine assurance that even without fighting they should see a great victory. When Judah marched toward the enemy, with praising singers out front, the enemy was

thrown into confusion and massacred each other. After this event the fear of God, fell on the nations round about.

When Amaziah broke the peace that had existed between Judah and Israel for almost 100 years, the national hopes of the Southern Kingdom sank to the lowest point since the division of Solomon's kingdom. Apparently Uzziah was made co-regent in 791 B.C. and guided the affairs of the state during the remainder of Amaziah's reign, assuming full control in 767 B.C. when his father was assassinated. Gradually, but constructively, Uzziah initiated policies that brought about the restoration of Judah. Apparently, a policy of friendliness and cooperation prevailed between Jeroboam II and Uzziah. Uzziah's prosperity was directly related to his dependence upon God. Zechariah, a prophet otherwise unknown, effectively instructed the king who until 750 B.C. had a wholesome and humble attitude toward God. At the height of his success, however, Uzziah assumed that he could enter the Temple and burn incense. With the support of 80 priests, the high priest whose name was Azariah confronted Uzziah with the fact that this was the prerogative of those consecrated for the purpose (Ex.30:7; Nu.18: 1-7). In anger the king defied the priest. As a result of divine judgment, Uzziah was struck with leprosy. For the rest of his reign he was ostracized from the palace and denied ordinary social privileges as well as not being allowed to enter the Temple. Jotham was made co-ruler in 750 B.C. and assumed the royal responsibilities for the remainder of his father's life.

When Hezekiah began to reign in 716 B.C. in Jerusalem, the Northern kingdom had already capitulated to the Assyrian advance with the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Throughout his 29 year reign. Hezekiah projected a reversal of the political and religious policies his wicked father had initiated. Hezekiah placed his confidence in God as he began an effective reform. Levites were called in to repair and cleanse the Temple for worship, idols were removed, vessels were sanctified, and sacrifices were initiated and were accompanied by liturgical singing. In an attempt to heal the religious breach that had prevailed between the two Kingdoms since Solomon's death, Hezekiah sent invitations to the people of the Northern Tribes to participate in the observance of the Passover in Jerusalem. At no time since the dedication of the Temple had Jerusalem experienced such a joyful celebration. Even the bronze serpent erected by Moses, used by the people as an object of worship, was destroyed,

Politically, Hezekiah acknowledged the over-lordship of Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), since Judah had already been committed to Assyrian vassalage under Ahaz. This policy averted interference in Judah when Sargon dispatched his troops to Ashdod, west of Jerusalem in 711 B.C. In the meantime, Hezekiah concentrated on a constructive defense program. He organized and equipped his army, and assured Jerusalem of an adequate water supply in case of a prolonged siege. Hezekiah constructed a tunnel connecting the Siloam pool with the spring of Gihon. Through 1,777 feet of solid rock, the Judean engineers channeled fresh water into the pool of Siloam which was also constructed at that time, only

discovered in 1880 by archeologists. The wall of Jerusalem was also extended to enclose the Siloam pool. Although Hezekiah did all in his power to prepare for an Assyrian invasion, he did not depend only upon human resources, but publicly expressed his dependence upon God before his people assembled in the city square (2Ch.32:8).

National and international changes of great significance occurred, blurring the 31 year reign of Josiah. Politically, the Assyrian Empire gave way with the death of Ashurbanipal in 633 and the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C., to the rising kingdoms of Media and Babylon. Religiously, Josiah brought about the last great reformation before the destruction of Judah. As an eight year old boy Josiah was suddenly elevated to the Davidic throne in Jerusalem after the death of his father. In all likelihood, Josiah had been instructed by godly teachers and priests. When he was 16, he began to seek God earnestly and in four more years (628 B.C.), his devotion to God had crystallized to the point that he began a religious reformation. In 621 B.C. while the Temple was being repaired, the Book of the Law was recovered and the Passover was observed in a manner unprecedented in the history of Judah. Politically, it was also safe to remove any religious practices associated with Assyria at that time, since Assyrian influence was waning. Very likely Josiah continued to give religious leadership in leading his people back to God until the end of his reign.

J. Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra and Nehemiah was one Book in the Hebrew Bible, as were the two Books of Samuel and Kings. These Books tell the story of the return of God's chosen people after the exile. They give the record of one of the most important events in Jewish history- the return from exile in Babylon. The time covered by these two Books is about 100 years. Both Books begin at Babylon and end at Jerusalem and both Books center around the man of God who wrote it. Both stories begin with a Persian King's decree. Both tell of building as their chief theme. Both Books contain a long prayer of humiliation and confession, and end with the purification of the people.

Ezra was the Thomas Jefferson of his time, laying the constitutional foundations for the future. To him we are indebted for codifying Israel's laws and the formation of her Canon of Scripture. When Ezra returned to Jerusalem, he found things even worse than he expected. Although the people had not returned to idolatry, they had intermarried with the people of the land and had done everything that the heathen had taught them (Ezra 9:1-4). The princes and rulers were the worst offenders. Ezra rent his garments and literally pulled out his hair in grief (Ezra 9:5-15). As Ezra was praying and weeping before God, a great congregation assembled. The people who gathered about him through the long hours of the day came to a consciousness of the greatness of their sin as they saw how it affected Ezra. Finally, one in their midst spoke and acknowledged the sin. At once Ezra led them into a sacred covenant with God (Ezra 10:1-44).

Nehemiah was the cupbearer at the court of king Artaxerxes. That was a position of high honor. But in that position of familiarity with the king, he had not forgotten his people. The news that was brought to him about Jerusalem made him very sad, which was not wholly hidden and the king detected it. The Jews had been home for 100 years, but had made no attempt to build Jerusalem beyond the restoration of the Temple because their enemies made it almost impossible.

Artaxerxes' step-mother was Esther, the Jewess, who no doubt was still alive. It may have been that Nehemiah received his appointment through her influence. He was loyal enough to his people to leave the luxury of a king's court and go back to rebuild Jerusalem, the capital of his homeland. The king gave consent and when Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 B.C., Ezra had been there for 13 years. Ezra was a priest and had been teaching the people the Word of God. But Nehemiah was a civil governor. He had come with the authority of the king of Persia to build the walls of Jerusalem. After he had been there only three days, he went up and viewed the walls at night. When he saw their dilapidated condition, he encouraged the people to begin building immediately. The work was accomplished in 52 days by assigning a portion of the wall to each family. The people had a mind to work (Ne.4:6).

Finding this work offensive, the Samaritans, the enemies of the Jews, worked to divide the people. They hindered their work so that the Jews had to keep watch night and day. Their derision turned to anger and Nehemiah divided the men into two groups, one keeping watch while the other worked. Then opposition rose within the ranks. Some of the Jews became tired and complained that there was so much rubbish that the walls could not be built. All that rubble had to be removed in a thick canvas pad on the carrier's back; there were of course no motorized machines to convey the material. Then the complaint arose that the rich were demanding usury which the poor were unable to pay.

After that, the enemies tried by craft to bring Nehemiah away from his building, but Nehemiah only prayed and again he foiled his enemy. All the people gathered together in the street before the Watergate in the city of Jerusalem and requested Ezra, the scribe, to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses. He stood upon a pulpit of wood and read and explained the Law to the people (Ne.8:1-13). That public reading brought true repentance to the people and a great revival broke out. When Josiah found the book of the Law a great reformation started. When Martin Luther read the Bible, the Protestant Reformation began. We need to have the Word read today!

Their captivity in Babylon cured the Jews of idolatry. Up to that time, in spite of all the warnings of the prophets, the people would worship the idols of the peoples around them. But, from the days of the captivity to the present, about 2600 years, the Jews have not been guilty of that sin. The Jews had intermarried with the

idolatrous neighbors and that was the reason for their sin. Intermarriage of Christians with those who do not believe is a dangerous thing today (2Co.6:14).

Nehemiah left a life of ease and luxury and security for a life of toil and danger and heartbreaks. He was a reformer, but most do not appreciate the man who tries to reform him. Nehemiah was also a man of prayer. We do not find a blot on his character. He was fearless and courageous.

K. Book of Esther

The Book of Esther relates the experiences of some of the Jews who remained in the land of their exile instead of returning to Jerusalem. Historically, Esther is identified with the reign of Xerxes or Ahasuerus, king of Persia (485-465 B.C.). Although the name of God is not mentioned in this Book, God's providence and care for His people are apparent throughout.

When Xerxes suddenly ostracized Queen Vashti by his royal decree, a young Jewish orphan named Esther was crowned Queen of Persia. Mordecai, a cousin who formerly adopted Esther, was subsequently instrumental in uncovering a plot in which two guards conspired to take the King's life. Through Esther those plans were reported and the culprits were hanged. In the official Chronicle, Mordecai was credited with saving the Persian ruler's life.

When Haman, a Persian official, was advanced in rank by the king, he was duly honored by everyone except Mordecai, who as a Jew refused to do obeisance. In revenge Haman planned the execution of the Jews with the endorsement of the king. Mordecai in the meantime alerted his people who responded with fasting and mourning. Warning Esther that she possibly had "*...come to the kingdom for such a time as this*" (Es.4:14), Mordecai prevailed upon Esther to intercede before the king in behalf of the Jewish people. Consequently, she invited the king and Haman for dinner on two successive days, making her request known on the second engagement.

The night after the first dinner the king could not sleep. To pass the time he requested to have the royal Chronicles read to him through which he learned that Mordecai had never been honored for saving the king's life. Upon inquiry by the king, Haman outlined the procedure for honoring a man whom the king wanted to honor, anticipating that he would be the recipient. Haman was shocked when he was ordered to honor Mordecai, for whom he had in the meantime erected gallows of execution to be used on the day set for the fate of the Jews.

At the second banquet Esther forthrightly identified Haman as the culprit. In consequence, Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The Jews were authorized to resist their enemies. In the fighting that broke out, thousands of non-Jews were slain. Peace was restored and the Jews celebrated

their deliverance. In commemoration of this deliverance, the Feast of Purim was observed annually.

VI. BOOKS OF POETRY

A. Book of Job

The name of the author is not indicated in the Book. That Job himself could not have written all of it is shown by the inclusion of the record of his death. Some have suggested that Moses wrote the account. This hypothesis would explain its inclusion in the canon, though that is speculation.

As far as the date is concerned, a distinction must be drawn between the date of the events and the composition. Most conservative scholars are agreed that the patriarchal age is indicated as the likeliest setting for the events, because Job, the father, acted as priest for the family, and because there is no mention of the Tabernacle, Temple, Law, or national institutions. On the other hand, such primitive conditions could have easily persisted into later times outside of Israel. The homeland of Job is said to be Uz, apparently located near Edom. Also, a foreign locale is indicated in that the Book shows a distinct preference for the generic word for God, *Elohim*, as opposed to the personal name of God, *Yahweh*. In spite of the uncertainty of the time or place of the events, the theology of the Book is clearly pure monotheism.

Many suggestions have been made as to the purpose of the book. Certainly the purpose must contain thoughts about how that a righteous man will be tested, as that is the conversation God had with Satan about how Job has chosen Him over the enemy of his soul as one to follow. The ensuing tests are severe, but Job never sinned.

The Book's intention seems to be to demonstrate to man the inadequacy of human reason to account for the suffering of the innocent. There is a mystery of divine freedom which does not contradict God's goodness or sovereignty but remains elusive to man. Therefore man is resigned to an attitude of trust and dependence on a good God, whose workings man cannot fathom.

The Book is filled with Job's "friends" who accuse him of sin, their idea of the reason for his suffering. Through many chapters they accuse him and he straightly maintains his innocence. But, he also had some complaint, which came to the surface. In the end, God spoke to Job, revealing that He is in charge and that He has a right to allow the testing Job had endured. In the end, Job prayed for his friends and they were delivered, while Job's previous wealth was restored as well as his family.

B. Book of Psalms

The predominant themes are prayer and praise, but the Psalms cover a great variety of religious experiences. They are quoted more frequently in the New Testament than any other Book, except Isaiah. It contains 150 spiritual songs and poems used by the Church of all ages in worship and devotional exercises. It was used as the hymn book of the Second Temple. The authorship of many of the psalms are uncertain; it is probable that in some cases the name affixed to certain psalms may refer to the collector rather than the author. They are called the “Psalms of David” because he was the author of a large number of them. The following is a conjectural list of authors taken from the various versions of the Scriptures. Attributed to David are 73 Psalms; to the sons of Korah, 11; to Asaph, 12; to Heman, 1; to Ethan, 1; to Solomon, 2; to Moses, 1; to Haggai, 1; to Zechariah, 1; to Ezra, 1. The remaining Psalms are anonymous.

The purpose of the Psalms was well expressed by David when he instituted hymns in Israel. He appointed the Levites “...to record [better ‘make petition’] and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel” (1Ch.16:4). The Book of Psalms is a record of petitions (or laments), thanksgiving, and praise to God by His people. As such it has brought comfort, encouragement, and blessing to God’s people throughout the ages. Every human emotion is covered in these hymns of aspiration to God.

C. Book of Proverbs

It is a collection of moral and religious maxims containing instruction concerning right living, as well as a brief discourse on wisdom, justice, temperance, industry, purity, and other subjects pertinent to holiness. In these pithy sayings a sharp contrast is drawn between wisdom and folly, as well as between righteousness and sin. Solomon is generally credited with the authorship of a large portion of the Proverbs. It is quite probable that all were not original with him. In chapters 30-31 are found the words of Agur and Lemuel, with the chief purpose to give moral instruction, especially to young people. The key thought is “...the fear of the Lord,” which occurs 14 times. Solomon was a guide post, rather than an example. He pointed the way to wisdom, but in the latter part of his life he did not walk in it; hence his son Rehoboam followed his example, rather than his counsels, and became a foolish and evil ruler.

The purpose of the Book is clearly to show the reader how to live wisely or skillfully. As a matter of fact, the entire structure of the Book is arranged to carry out that purpose.

D. Book of Ecclesiastes

The name is borrowed from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew Bible it was called *Kohleth*. The meaning of this word is somewhat disputed, but it is rendered in

the English version as “Preacher,” or one who addresses an assembly. This Book is commonly ascribed to Solomon.

Many of the experiences related seem to correspond to those likely to have happened in his life, judging from the bare outline of his history found in the Bible. The key words in this Book are “...*vanity*...”, and “...*under the sun*...”, with each expression occurring more than 25 times. This Book contains the reflections and experiences of a philosopher whose mind was in conflict over the problems of life.

After speaking of the disillusionment that had come to him, he presented the view of the Epicurean materialist, that there is nothing better than the carnal enjoyment of the pleasures of life. As that idea reappears all through the Book, it is quite evident that the writer was struggling with it, while at the same time he was uttering profound truths concerning man’s duty and obligations to God. At last he seemed to emerge from his speculations and doubts, and reached the noble conclusion in chapter 12:13, “*Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*”

E. Book of Song of Solomon

According to tradition, Solomon is the author of this Book, which has been severely criticized because of its amorous language. Its right to a place in the Bible has been defended by many saintly souls in all ages. They have regarded it as spiritual allegory, representing the holy affections existing between God and His Chosen People, or Christ and His Church.

The purpose of the Book is to show the joy of married love as a gift of a good and loving God. A question could rightly be raised how Solomon, who had 700 wives and 300 concubines, was an appropriate representative of godly love. One can only conclude that this romance must have taken place early in his reign, and may very well have been the only true love for a woman he ever experienced. The story serves as a beautiful picture of Christ’s love for His outcast Gentile Bride, the Church, for whom He promises one day to return.

VII. MAJOR PROPHETS

A. Book of Isaiah

The prophet, the son of Ahaz, prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was/is generally regarded as the greatest of the Old Testament prophets because he is preeminently the prophet of redemption. Many of the passages in his Book are among the finest of literature. Some modern scholars have studied this poetical prophecy as a botanist studies flowers, dissecting and analyzing. By the use of that scientific method the beauty

and unity of the Book, like that of the rose, is almost forgotten as the different parts are pulled to pieces for examination.

The second part of the Book contains predications, warnings, and promises which refer to events beyond the Captivity, and reach on down the centuries through the Christian dispensation. That portion of the prophecy is especially rich in Messianic references.

The key word in Isaiah is “salvation” (*salvation of Jehovah*). Isaiah stands at the peak of the Old Testament as the literary genius of the prophets of Israel. His Book has more chapters than any other prophetic book and looks farther into the future than any other Old Testament book. This amazing Book includes Isaiah’s unique prophecies regarding Emmanuel and the Suffering Servant.

B. Book of Jeremiah

This Book contains the biography and message of the “weeping prophet.” The period was the dark days, the captivity of the Kingdom of Judah, from the 13th year of Josiah, the last good king, until some years beyond the captivity.

Jeremiah was a deeply spiritual man. He was wholly dedicated to God so that despite a shy and retiring nature, his fervent love for God and His people never waned. Jeremiah became an object lesson of a man whose commitment to God enabled him, by God’s grace, to overcome his natural timidity and live courageously in the face of severe opposition and tragic circumstances. His personal sorrow over the messages that he had to deliver often caused him to weep for his people in a manner unparalleled until the Man of sorrows would come.

Although Jeremiah’s message was one of inevitable judgment upon Judah, he also delivered news of great consolation. God would yet deal anew with a repentant people in the New Covenant, through which the promised blessings of old would be realized. Jeremiah’s prophecies thus span the era that was passing away and that which was to come. The returning exiles would constitute a pledge of that great final gathering of God’s people to Himself for the Messiah’s everlasting reign.

C. Book of Lamentations

A sequel to the Book of Jeremiah, its theme is a series of dirges in the form of an acrostic, written as if for a National funeral, portraying the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. In the Septuagint Version the following introductory words are found, “*And it came to pass after Israel was led into captivity that Jerusalem sat weeping and lamenting and lamented this lamentation over Jerusalem.*” Lamentations was composed after the author personally witnessed Judah’s downfall and the capture of Jerusalem, with the resultant suffering of his

people. In its final form, the Book cannot be dated much later than Jerusalem's fall, 586 B.C. The author thus pens his sorrow over the tragedy that befell his country and city, and over the people's sin that invoked God's severe judgment. In response to all that had happened, he urged repentance and left his hearers with a note of hope by personally relying on the sure mercies of God.

Lamentations consists of five poems. Each of the first four is composed as an acrostic of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This familiar poetic device indicates that the author was covering his material thoroughly, from "A to Z", in a way easy for his audience to understand and remember. The Jewish people read Lamentations every year on the date commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

D. Book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens." This prophecy, like Daniel and Revelation, might be termed a mystery Book. It contains much imagery which is difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, many of its teachings are clear and of the highest value.

The background of the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel are quite similar. Daniel was taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. during the reign of Jehoiakim. At first, Jehoiakim supported Nebuchadnezzar, but in 601 B.C., he changed his allegiance to Egypt. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and captured it in March 597 B.C. Jehoiakim had already died in disgrace and been succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. The latter, feeling that matters were quite hopeless, surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken captive to Babylon along with Ezekiel and some 10,000 leaders and skilled craftsmen. Thus Ezekiel's ministry, except for visionary glimpses of life in Jerusalem, took place in Babylon. Since Ezekiel prophesied both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, during Nebuchadnezzar's third campaign (586 B.C.), his early prophecies emphasized the impending disaster while his later prophecies stressed Israel's future restoration, and especially their new Temple.

The purpose of the Book is essentially threefold: 1) to explain that Judah must be judged for disobedience; 2) to encourage the remnant of Judah through prophecies of her glorious future restoration; 3) to emphasize the preeminence of God's glory and character. The glory of God may well be viewed as the theme of the Book, because Ezekiel's ministry begins with a vision of God's glory and is emphasized throughout the Book. Upwards of 75 times God expresses His own concerns in the Book as "...for My Name's sake" or that "...ye shall know that I am the LORD." All of God's actions, either in judgment or blessing, emanate equally from His holiness and for His glory.

E. Book of Daniel

Little is known of Daniel's background, but he was clearly of royal birth (1:3, 6) and was above average physically and mentally (1:4). Probably taken captive as a teenager (605 B.C.), he lived until at least the third year of Cyrus (536 B.C., 10:1), or well into his 80s.

The interpretation of the Book can be determined only by understanding its historical background. In 626 B.C. Nabopolassar of Babylon freed his city from Assyrian control and thus began the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In 612 B.C. Babylonia and Media together defeated the Assyrians and destroyed Nineveh, their capital. Nabopolassar was succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., shortly after the latter had defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish. The Babylonians were then the undisputed masters of the ancient Near East. In the first of three campaigns against Judah, Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and his three friends, among others, captive to Babylon (605 B.C.).

Later campaigns resulted in the taking of 10,000 captives, including Ezekiel (597 B.C.), and, finally, the destruction of the Temple and city itself (586 B.C.). Four successive Babylonian kings are not mentioned in Daniel: Amel-marduk, (the Evil-merodach of the Bible, 562-560 B.C.); Nergalsharuar (the Nergal-sharezer) of Jer. 39:3, known to the Greeks as Neriglissar, 560-556 B.C.); Labashi-marduk (556 B.C.); and Nabonidus, (555-539 B.C.). However, the final king of the Empire, Belshazzar (553-539 B.C.), is an important figure in Daniel's account. Belshazzar, although a co-regent with his father Nabonidus, was in fact the reigning monarch for much of his father's term.

During Belshazzar's rule Daniel had the vision of the four beasts and the vision of the ram and the male goat. The famous "...*handwriting on the wall*" was a prediction of Belshazzar's fall, since the city was taken that night by Cyrus the Persian. Cyrus is the only Persian King mentioned in the Book. Daruis is clearly identified as a Mede and should not be confused with a later Persian King by the same name.

The purposes in writing the Book are several: 1) it presents a divine philosophy of history and God is represented as the Sovereign over all of history, moving men and nations according to His will; 2) it provides a prophetic framework for the future, that period called by Jesus "...*the times of the Gentiles*" (Lk.21:24); 3) It explains other portions of Scripture. The Book of Revelation could not be understood apart from the Book of Daniel (Revelation 4-19 is a commentary on the events of Daniel's "*seventy weeks*"); 4) it served as a Book of encouragement to the Babylonian exiles, whose hearts were no doubt lightened by Daniel's predictions of the ultimate triumph of Israel over their enemies.

VIII. MINOR PROPHETS

A. Book of Hosea

Hosea's prophecy gave Israel a tangible example of its spiritual idolatry, yet portrayed God's love for Israel in spite of her spiritual infidelity. It constituted a national call to repentance. Hosea dates his prophecy "*in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, King of Israel.*" Hosea's active ministry ceased a few years before Assyria carried the Northern Kingdom into captivity in 722 B.C. Hosea was a citizen of the Northern Kingdom, and his personal experience was designed by God to be an example to his nation.

Hosea was to the Northern Kingdom what Jeremiah was to the Southern Kingdom, a weeping prophet. Hosea's prophecy is closely related to that of Amos. Amos was very severe in his prophecy, and his ministry was somewhat like James or John the Baptist of the New Testament. Hosea was the younger contemporary of Amos, and because their ministries overlapped, there is much similarity in the sins they condemn. In Amos, the prophetic discourses are very pronounced, while in Hosea, because of the intense personal involvement of the prophet, they are not very distinctly defined from one another, a fact that makes the Book difficult to outline.

The prophecy is characterized by intense emotion as the prophet's personal tragedy (chps. 1-3) is transferred and applied to the nation (chps. 4-14). Hosea has been known as the brokenhearted prophet. His sorrow provides a good illustration of the brokenhearted Lord in His relationship with sinful mankind.

B. Book of Joel

Joel is a highly emotional prophecy, rich in imagery and vivid descriptions. In it two unique events, not to be forgotten, are compared. Those two events are to be communicated to the descendants of the people. Joel was one of the earliest prophets of Judah. The specific place from which Joel wrote is not known. Since he was a resident of Judah and Jerusalem, he likely wrote his prophecy from there. He frequently calls for one to blow a trumpet in Zion, to consecrate a fast, to proclaim a solemn assembly, and to gather the people together to come before the Lord. This lends credence to the view that the prophecy was issued from the Temple court.

Two events are compared in the course of Joel's prophecy: 1) the locust plague upon Judah in the days of the prophet; 2) the far greater coming Day of the Lord. The latter is set forth in the figure of the former. Joel is the special prophet of the Day of the Lord, mentioning it five times. Joel has also been called the "Prophet of Pentecost" because of his most famous and well-known passage (2:28-32), quoted by Peter in Acts 2. More than half of the Book is built around a description

of the locust plague. Joel's prophecy is the grandest description in all literature of scale (1:14; 2:13, 15).

Joel was a contemporary of both Hosea and Amos, though he ministered to the Southern Kingdom. Joel's frequent references throughout the prophecy to Judah and Jerusalem indicate that he was not a priest, though he was an inhabitant of Jerusalem.

C. Book of Amos

The prophecy of Amos is characterized by great boldness coupled with great tact. The prophet gained the attention of his audience by pronouncing judgment on Israel's enemies before delivering the main burden of judgment against Israel herself. In the delivery of his prophecy he is very courageous while being unusually stern and severe.

Amos provides the historical key for his ministry when he wrote, "*The days of Jeroboam the son Joash King of Israel, two years before the earthquake.*" Uzziah's independent reign took place in 767-740 B.C., and the sole reign of Jeroboam II in about 782-753 B.C. Amos was a contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah, and Jonah.

Amos and Hosea were co-workers with Hosea, continuing his work after Amos passed from the scene. Isaiah and Micah followed Amos's ministry and may have heard him preach when they were lads. We see from 7:10 that Amos's prophecy was issued primarily at Bethel, the seat of idolatry in the Northern Kingdom. He attacked Satan's stronghold, Bethel, and when he was opposed by the idolatrous priest, Amaziah, he became even bolder in his preaching. Throughout, the prophecy is filled with references to rural life, indicating Amos's background as a shepherd. The prophet never put on pretenses. He was what he was, God's messenger for his hour, to call the nation Israel and awaken her to responsibility and accountability for the national sins she had committed against God. In the process he shows himself to be an oratorical giant, in spite of the fact that he had no formal training.

The purpose of Amos's prophecy was to awaken Israel and its surrounding nations to the fact that the nation is both responsible and accountable for its sins.

D. Book of Obadiah

Nothing is known about Obadiah except his name, which means "Servant of Yahweh" or "Worshiper of Yahweh." He evidently preferred to be remembered in his prophetic role rather than as an individual, because he chose to relate no details of his personal life or history.

Obadiah's prophecy is written in Hebrew poetry, and the reader needs to be mindful of parallelism in interpreting it. The structure of the Hebrew parallelism portrays the intense emotion with which the prophecy was delivered.

If the authorship of the prophecy were certain, the historical setting would be certain. Conservatives tend to date the prophecy early, and liberal critics tend to date it late during the Chaldean period after the fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans in 586 B.C. Such critics also attempt to deny the prophecy's integrity and unity. The general nature of the prophecy makes the setting of this Book compatible with a wide range of dates from the 9th to the early 6th centuries B.C. While scholars of all persuasions disagree over the date of Obadiah's prophecy, no definitive reason exists to deny the integrity and essential unity of the Book. As well, the prophecy is elastic enough in its fulfillment to embrace all of the times of Edom's destruction by the Chaldeans, who laid Edom waste, and the Maccabees, as well as Rome (A.D.70). Ultimately it will be fulfilled when Christ executes the judgment of God on Edom and her allies.

The purpose of Obadiah's prophecy is to pronounce God's judgment on Edom (Esau) because of his actions toward his brother Judah (Jacob). The theme of the prophecy, then, is the doom of Edom.

E. Book of Jonah

Jonah prophesied at an early date, with 2 Kings 14:25 indicating that Jonah gave a prophecy that was fulfilled during the reign of Jeroboam II, who reigned from 793 to 752 B.C. The prophecy was given when Assyria was becoming a great world power and imminent threat to Israel. The prophecy can be assigned to the first half of the 8th century B.C. There is no indication given as to where the prophecy originated. It gives the record of an earlier oral ministry to Assyria. Possibly Jonah wrote the words of this prophecy at his home village of Gath-hepher, after returning from the ministry to Assyria as he reflected on the ministry's success and his own personal failure.

What the Book of Acts is to the New Testament, the prophecy of Jonah is to the Old Testament. It shows that God has always had concern for the heathen, who are without hope apart from Him. It also shows God's concern for His people Israel. As a result of Jonah's ministry to Assyria, the Assyrian captivity of Israel was postponed some 130 years. While the prophecy makes no specific mention of Israel, it abounds in its clear testimony to the supernatural working of God in behalf of the heathen Assyrians, whom He brought to national repentance, and in behalf of the nation Israel, whose security He guaranteed and whose captivity He delayed for an additional 130 years.

The purpose of Jonah's prophecy is to show the sovereignty of God at work in the life of an individual (the prophet Jonah), and His concern for a heathen nation (Assyria). The prophecy also shows in an oblique way His concern for His own

people and that the way to avert national catastrophe is a concentrated missionary effort toward all people.

F. Book of Micah

Much of Micah's prophecy is very severe in tone, though it does contain much poetic beauty similar to that of Isaiah. In many ways the Book of Micah is a "sister-book" to Isaiah. It has been called "Isaiah in shorthand."

Micah dated his prophecy according to the Southern kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Those kings of Judah reigned from about 752 to 697 B.C. The reign of King Ahaz, one of the most-wicked kings of all Judah's history, is in the background of much of Micah's prophecy. The dark picture presented by Micah's prophecy may reflect the reign of King Ahaz, while the brighter aspects of Micah's prophecy reflect the godly rule under King Hezekiah.

The theme of the prophecy is sin, judgment, and restoration. This can be seen by the fact that the Book consists of three discourses, each of which sets forth: 1) the people's sin; 2) God's judgment; 3) God's ultimate restoration of His sinning people.

The author of this prophecy is identified as "Micah the Morasthite." He was a native of Moresheth-gath in Judah, where he prophesied against his own city, which probably did not help his popularity with the local population. Micah's name means "Who is like Yahweh?" In 7:18 he apparently played upon the meaning of his name as he asked the question, "*Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression?*"

The purpose of Micah's prophecy was to face the people with their sins and to speak the Word of God's judgment that must fall because of their persistent sinning. The author completed the purpose of his Book by ending each discourse with a word about restoration. The author pictured the restoration in two phases: 1) immediately, after the Babylonian captivity; 2) ultimately, at the Millennium.

G. Book of Nahum

The prophecy of Nahum is dominated by a single idea, the doom of Nineveh. In describing that doom, Nahum writes lyric poetry of the highest quality. It has been called the most poetical of all the prophetic writings, and certainly is the most severe in tone of any of the Minor Prophets.

Being occupied with the doom of Nineveh, Nahum did not date his prophecy according to any of the kings of Israel or Judah. He probably ministered during the reign of Hezekiah. This would certainly fit if 1:9-13 is understood as a vivid description of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem.

Nahum was probably born in Galilee, but during Israel's defection moved to Judah and in Jerusalem and took up his ministry in behalf of Judah against Nineveh. The purpose of Nahum's prophecy is twofold: 1) to deliver a message of judgment and destruction against Nineveh; 2) to give comfort to Judah, so recently ravaged by Assyria. Since Assyria was doomed, it will constitute a threat no longer.

H Book of Habakkuk

Some have inferred from his Psalm, chapter 3 and the direction to the chief musician, that he was a chorister in the temple; but this is purely conjectural. The prophet evidently lived in the Chaldean period. Many scholars fix the time of the prophecy during the reign of Jehoiakim. The fall of Nineveh occurred about 612 B.C. in fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy. It may have been after this fulfillment that Habakkuk received his vision setting forth the overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom.

If so, the Southern Kingdom was wallowing in its sin and tottering politically in view of the impending threat from Babylon, the current world power. Nebuchadnezzar may have already carried Daniel and many of Jerusalem's nobles into captivity, with the second deportation to soon follow. The final destruction of the city was yet to occur.

The purpose of Habakkuk's prophecy is twofold: 1) to warn Judah of its coming judgment at the hands of Chaldea; 2) to comfort Judah concerning Chaldea's ultimate destruction. The theme is judgment on Judah and Chaldea (Babylon).

I. Book of Zephaniah

Zephaniah is a book of contrasts; for no other prophet paints a darker picture of God's Judgment, and no prophet paints a brighter picture of Israel's future glory. Historically, the Book of Zephaniah was used in the providence of God to prepare Judah for the reforms and revival under King Josiah. Through the prophecy the nation was faced with its sin, reminded of coming judgment, and instructed concerning the ultimate glory that would come to Israel.

Zephaniah does not make great use of historical events in the course of his prophecy. Against the dark backdrop describing the judgment of God upon Judah and the nation, Zephaniah goes farther than any of the Minor Prophets emphasizing the future conversion of the Gentiles to the worship of the true God. Zephaniah dated his writing in the days of Josiah. Josiah was the God-fearing son of Amon, who with his father, Manasseh, were two of the most wicked Kings of Israel's history.

During Josiah's reign a spiritual reformation, which touched only the small remnant in Judah, took place in 621 B.C. Zephaniah mentioned nothing of that

reformation; thus, it is logical to conclude that his ministry preceded it, and his preaching probably prepared the way for, greatly advanced, and furthered the power of the spiritual reformation under King Josiah. If those observations are true, the prophecy must have been given before the reforms under Josiah, about 630 to 625 B.C.

The purpose of Zephaniah's prophecy is to set forth what the Day of the Lord will mean to ungodly Judah, to the world powers, and to the godly remnant. His theme is the Day of the Lord, which destroys the false remnant of Baal, destroys the God-rejecting nations, and purifies the true remnant.

J. Book of Haggai

Haggai was the first of the prophets to minister to Israel following the return from the Babylonian captivity. The period of Israel's history into which he fits is recorded in the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. His personal background is recorded in Ezra 5 and 6.

Nothing is known of his personal history, though he is mentioned in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. God's message was all-important to him. Some have inferred from 2:3 that Haggai was born in Judah before 586 B.C. and was one of a small company who had seen the former Temple in its glory. If that is true, he must have been an old man when he prophesied. That supposition agrees with the brevity of his public ministry. He was a man whom God raised up at a specific time for a specific mission.

The immediate purpose of the Book is to encourage the people to resume the building of the Temple, which had been started but not completed for about 10 years. It was imperative that the people build the Temple, for blessings from God depend on obedience. The theme of the prophecy is rebuilding the Temple.

K. Book of Zechariah

Zechariah has more messianic prophecies than any minor prophet and makes frequent mention of both the first and second advents of Messiah. The Angel of the Lord is more prominent in Zechariah than any other of the prophetic writings. Zechariah is also one of the most devotional of the prophetic books, dwelling more completely on the person and the work of Christ than any other of the prophetic writings.

Zechariah was probably born in Babylon during the 70 year- Babylonian captivity. His arrival at Jerusalem is recorded in Nehemiah 11:4; 12:16 and his ministry is mentioned in Ezra 5:1; 6:14. Those historical citations confirm that Zechariah was a priest as well as a prophet. The Talmud indicates that he was a member of the Great Synagogue along with Nehemiah and Ezra. Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai and continued the ministry that Haggai began.

Both Zechariah and Haggai ministered to the same people, but from different perspectives. Haggai reproved the people for their failure to rebuild the Temple, while Zechariah encouraged the people by presenting to them the coming glory of the Lord. The theme of Zechariah is the glory of the Lord (Yahweh). The theme is set forth as being the motivation for completing the task of rebuilding the Temple, and for showing that the people of the prophet's day are an important part of God's ultimate program of displaying His glory through the nation in the future.

L. Book of Malachi

Malachi has been called the Socrates of the prophets because he uses the style that specialists in rhetoric called dialectic, which is "investigation through discussion and reasoning." The prophecy is a testimony to the graciousness of God in condescending to answer man's foolish and childish statements.

Malachi is later than Haggai and Zechariah. In those Books the rebuilding of the Temple was the central concern. We know from 1:7 and 3:10 that not only had the Temple been finished in Malachi's day, but it had been in use for some time, and sin was corrupting the worship that took place in it. Most likely, Malachi was written just before Nehemiah's second return to Jerusalem or during his presence there. Malachi ministered in support of Nehemiah's ministry, just as Haggai and Zechariah had ministered in support of Ezra and Zerubbabel nearly a hundred years earlier. The prophecy was probably written sometime between 433 and 425 B.C.

Nothing is known of the prophet's life except what is found in his Book. He was probably a contemporary of Nehemiah; the conditions described in the prophecy best answer to that time. The theme shows a graphic picture of the closing period of the Old Testament history, showing that great reforms were needed to prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

The purpose of Malachi was to deliver stern rebukes to the people and the priests, to call them to repentance, and to promise future blessing. His theme is God's love for Israel in spite of the sins of the priests and the people. From this point, there were 450 years of silence before the original advent of our Lord.

IX. GOSPELS

A. Book of Matthew

Matthew, one of the original disciples of Christ, wrote the first Book in the New Testament canon. He was first named Levi and worked as a publican collecting taxes in Palestine, until he was called to follow Jesus (9:9-10; Mk.2:14-15). Matthew addressed his Gospel primarily to Jewish readers and presented Jesus

as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. This is seen in such passages as his genealogy (1:1-17).

This Book also serves as a bridge between the Old and the New Testaments. It links together the prophecies of the coming Messiah with the fulfillment of prophecy in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The prominence of the discourses of Christ is easily observed in this Gospel. Matthew's pattern, as may be seen clearly in the outline of the Book, is to include narrative about Christ. There are five important discourses in the Book, one in each of the five major divisions: 1) The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29); 2) The commission to the twelve (10:1-42); 3) The Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53); 4) The meaning of Greatness and forgiveness (18:1-35); 5) The Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46). In one way or another, each of these discourses relates to the claims which the King makes upon those who would share in His Kingdom.

B. Book of Mark

In contrast to Matthew, Mark was not one of the original disciples of Christ. He was, however, a native of Jerusalem (Ac.12:12), a companion of Simon Peter (1Pe.5:13) and a cousin of Barnabas (Co.4:10), who, in turn, was a close associate of Paul and the Jerusalem apostles. His relationship to the apostles was therefore close enough to render him familiar with the life of Christ and the activities of the early Christian group.

In A.D. 112, Papias cited Mark as "the interpreter of Peter". A comparison of Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34-43 with Mark's Gospel show the former to be an outline of the life of Jesus which Mark has given in much greater detail. Mark addressed his Gospel primarily to Roman readers and presented Jesus as the worker, the servant of Jehovah. According to tradition, Mark wrote his record of the life of Christ in Rome. The chief characteristic of Christ in this Book is His activity, the mark of a good servant. The Greek word *eutheos*, translated variously as "straightway" immediately, "anon", or "forthwith", appears 42 times in the Book. This message made a natural appeal to the busy, practical Roman reader.

In keeping with the theme of the activity of Christ, the outline treats His life as a series of tours as He carried on His ministry. By so doing, one is impressed with the continual "busyness" of the servant of Jehovah.

C. Book of Luke

According to the New Testament, Luke was a physician (Co.4:14), a companion of Paul, and a writer of a two-volume history of the life of Christ and the Early Church. His Gospel has long been the favorite of Christian and non-Christian readers alike because of its sublime presentation of a spotless life. Luke, as

Mark, was not among the original disciples of Christ, and is the only Gentile writer of the New Testament.

Luke addressed his Gospel primarily to the Greeks (non-Jewish) readers and presented Jesus as the Son of man, the ideal human being. As the Greeks had long sought after the “perfect man,” Luke’s work was designed to fulfill that quest. Some of the most important passages are the account of the birth of Christ.

The outline is based upon the concept of Christ as “...*the son of man.*” Luke portrays Him as carrying on a full ministry. A further illustration of the outreach of this Book is the repetition of phrases having relation to humanity. From first to last, Luke shows that the Gospel, God’s Good News, is meant for all men.

D. Book of John

According to the persistent tradition of the Church since the early 2nd century, the 4th Gospel was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of James. As one of the Twelve, he was close to Jesus. He is usually identified with the “...*beloved disciple*” who appears anonymously a number of times within the pages of this Book (13:23; 18:15-16; 19:26-27).

John clearly states his purpose for writing his Gospel (20:30-31), placing emphasis upon three important words: 1) signs; 2) believe; 3) life. A good understanding of these terms, together with their use in the Gospel, allows the reader to gain a working knowledge of its content. If one truly believes, he will follow Jesus and thus give expression of his faith in service (21:19). Peter learned that believing in Jesus did not only eventuate in the spoken word of confession, but in the life of dedicated service.

X. NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

The Book of Acts is the second volume of Luke’s writings. Without the Book of Acts, many details of the life of the Early Church would be missing. Of the first 30 years we would know only what could be pieced together from the New Testament Epistles. From the Book itself we discover that Luke, the author, was a companion of Paul and an eye witness to many of the events about which he writes. That evidence appears in the so-called “we-sections” of the text; that is, places where Luke includes himself in the story by the use of the first person plural pronoun (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28).

Besides Luke’s firsthand experiences, he also had occasions for personal interviews. Paul was able to tell him of the Gentile ministry. From leaders at Jerusalem he could gather valuable sources concerning the Jerusalem Church. His contact with Philip in Caesarea gave access to data of Philip’s Samaritan ministry.

The key verse of Acts (1:8) provides a basis for the outline of the Book. As the Lord Jesus spoke of the future ministry to be accomplished by His followers, consequent

upon the coming and infilling of the Holy Spirit, He stressed two things: 1) persons; 2) places. “*Ye shall be my witnesses*”- that is personnel of the mission. “*In Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the utter most part of the earth*”- that is the geography of the mission. The main divisions of the outline reveal the primary location; the sub points indicate the chief persons in each place.

The final section of Acts is the second of Paul’s experiences while a prisoner. He makes his defense before a Jewish mob, and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (chps. 22-23), before Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II in Caesarea (chps. 24-26), and finally is taken to Rome, amid many harrowing experiences, including shipwreck (chps. 27-28). There, in his own rented house, though constantly chained to a guard, he was free to carry on his preaching and teaching. No wonder “...*they of Caesar’s household...*” heard and received the Good News of salvation.

XI. PAULINE EPISTLES

A. Book of Romans

At the center of “...*the good tidings of great joy...*” which were spoken to the shepherds of Bethlehem was a Savior, One who should redeem His people. The subject of redemption is defined and developed by Paul in his Letter to the Romans, the most orderly and detailed treatment of salvation in the New Testament.

For many years the apostle had wanted to visit the Christians in Rome, desiring to establish them in the faith. While he had been hindered, he stood ready “...*to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome*” (1:13-15). On his Third Missionary Journey, shortly before leaving Corinth, he wrote this Letter in lieu of a visit, and sent it apparently by the hand of Phoebe of Cenchrae. Soon afterward he was arrested in Jerusalem Thus as it turned out he did arrive in Rome, but not as a free man (Ac.28:16).

Paul’s introductory words combine many remarks of a personal and a theological nature. He tells a good deal about himself. He was a bondservant of Christ, yet an apostle. His commission was to the nations. He was a man of prayer, an earnest worker, and unashamed of the message which he proclaimed (1:16). Along with that he described the Gospel being prophesied in the Old Testament, centered in the Son of God, God’s “dynamite” which brings Salvation to those who believe it, and that it contained revelation of God’s righteousness to the faithful ones.

B. Book of First Corinthians

According to the previous classification of Paul’s epistles, the letters are to be considered primarily stereological, since they deal largely with the subject of salvation and Christian living. Together with Galatians and Romans they form the

heart of the Pauline writings. Even the radical critics, who have often rejected many of Paul's writings as authentic works, usually have accepted these Letters as genuine. The care of Paul's preaching faith in Christ and dedication to Him is written large in all of them. His favorite expression, "...in Christ," describes the new relationship of the regenerated individual to his Savior and Lord, occurring again and again in First Corinthians, which was written from Ephesus (1Co.16:7-9).

Paul first visited Corinth on his Second Missionary Journey (Ac.18-17). While waiting for Silas and Timothy to come from Macedonia and rejoin him in Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla and, finding them to be tentmakers as he was, lived and worked with them while carrying on his preaching.

Upon the arrival of his companions, carrying with them news of conditions to the north (in Thessalonica and Berea), Paul reemphasized his proclamation that Jesus was the Christ (i.e., Messiah). That brought about the usual reaction from the Jews and Paul then concentrated on the Gentile Ministry in Corinth (Ac.18:6). Before long a number of people became Christians, even including Crispus the ruler of the synagogue. For a period of at least 18 months, Paul continued a systematic teaching program among them. While on his Third Journey (Ac.19:1-41), tidings were brought to Paul by some of the household of Chloe that things were not well in Corinth. In addition, a letter had been sent by the Corinthian Church containing a number of problems to which they wished answers from the apostle. To reply to those and related matters, the first Epistle was written.

The central concept of the Letter is that redemption must be applied to everyday situations. The believer is to remember that new life in Christ calls for a new way of living, the appeal being made to the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believer. In closing the lengthy Epistle, Paul reminded them, as he had done in the Galatians churches, of the collection he was receiving for the needy saints in Jerusalem. He urged them to give regularly, voluntarily, and proportionately (16:1-2).

C. Book of Second Corinthians

One of the most personal of Paul's letters, Second Corinthians is, for the most part, a defense of Paul's ministry (chps. 1-7), and his apostleship (chps. 10-13). Chapters 8 and 9 consist of an added plea to fulfill their ministry of giving and a pointed reminder that they have been somewhat negligent in the fulfillment of their stewardship.

After having sent the First Epistle in the Corinthian church, Paul waited at Ephesus for their response. He had then gone north to Troas to meet Titus, but when he did not appear he continued into Macedonia. When they did meet, Paul wrote that he was comforted by the report of "...your longing, you mourning, your zeal for me". The news, however, was not all favorable. A vocal element in the

church was weighing in against the authority of the apostle. Apparently a group of Jewish opponents, they discounted the reality of Paul's faith in Christ and the genuineness of his ministry and despised his person. While there had been repentance on the part of some in the church, the unrepentant group continued to press hard against Paul. Thus he bared his in-most feelings in a way not seen in any other existing letter which he wrote.

Amid the multitude of personal references, Paul has given the church in this letter many important enduring doctrinal affirmations. Notice especially the leading references to the character and workings of God, the contrast between the Old and New Covenants, the future state, the ministry of reconciliation, and Christian stewardship of money. God had promised to reward the generous giver. The Lord knows that if He truly gets us, He will get our gifts and our service.

D. Book of Galatians

This Epistle shows that the believer is no longer under the Law, but is saved by faith alone. The Law is that portion of God's Word found in the first five Books of Moses, by which every phase of Israel's life was to be guided, up to the fulfillment of the Law, which came through Jesus Christ.

During Paul's Second Missionary Journey, he was delayed in Galatia by sickness. Though ill, this tireless servant of the Lord could not remain silent, but kept preaching the Gospel. The theme of his sermon was Christ crucified (Ga.3:11). It was at that time that he succeeded in founding the Christian churches in Galatia (Ga.1:6). They were scattered over the rural district and the people were country folk. Teachers of the Law had followed Paul, teaching salvation by works, claiming that even if Christianity were true, Christians should be circumcised, and do all the works of the Law. Those teachers explained that the reason Paul had not taught the Galatians this was because he was not a true apostle and had learned his doctrines from others. That had upset the New converts.

False teachers had begun to "bewitch" the people by telling them they must keep all kinds of ceremonies. Paul wanted them to know that nothing, no fetishes, works, or ceremonies, could bring them to Christ. Salvation comes by believing on Christ, and nothing else.

Being very fickle and loving something new and a change, the Galatians were on the verge of accepting the views of those false teachers; indeed some had. When Paul heard it, so urgent did the matter seem that, since no one was with him to write it, he wrote the letter himself (Ga.6:11). This Epistle is the Christians Declaration of Independence. The response of faith on the part of the sinner not only brings him into right standing with God, but brings into life the dynamite of the Spirit to work the works of God.

E. Book of Ephesians

Ephesus, in the first century A.D., was called the first city of Asia. Although the ancient city of Pergamum, just to the north, was still the capital of the province, Ephesus had risen rapidly in stature. An important center commercially, intellectually, and religiously, she boasted one of the seven wonders of the ancient world- the ornate, glistening temple of Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians (Ac.19:23).

The history of the Ephesian church may be traced in some detail through the New Testament. Paul founded and established the work (Ac.19:20). Having received the apostle's teaching for over two years, she was well grounded in the faith. The Ephesian Epistle reflects the spiritual capacity of that church. Paul was able to "...*feed them with strong meat*". Further the Letter warned against the conflict with evil spirits, so prevalent a menace in that city (Ac.19:11-17). Also, the letters to Timothy, who was left there by Paul to carry on the work (1Ti.1:3), pointed to the next stage in history. False teachers had begun to trouble the believers and Paul sent instructions regarding sound teaching and the proper organization the church. We see also, in Revelation 2:1-7, the last chapter is written concerning that church in the New Testament. It is a sad word, for she had left her first "love" of Christ (2:4). When she did not repent of her condition, as church history shows, she was removed, her lamp stand no longer shone as a witness in Ephesus.

The central theme of the Epistle is the Church as the Body of Christ. Paul had given a sublime presentation of that truth from the very inception of the Church to its witness within the world and its conflict against the forces of evil. In closing the Epistle, the apostle dealt with the Christian's warfare- literally wrestling, hand-to-hand combat- against the spiritual forces of darkness (6:10-20). The provision of the believer, against that foe, is the whole armor of God. If he/we use it, it will enable us to stand against the wiles of the devil. Paul described the pieces of the armor and the function of each. Thus, the Christian is to avail himself of all God's provision and give careful heed to all His demands for his life and warfare upon the earth.

F. Book of Philippians

The city of Philippi was the starting point for the preaching of the Gospel in Europe. Paul had sailed from Troas following the Macedonian Vision (Ac.16:9), "...*concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.*" He had arrived in a city which had an illustrious history. It was on that site that, in 42 B.C., the famous battle was fought between Octavian and Antony over against Brutus and Cassius. Following the battle, the status of a Roman colony was conferred upon the city by the victorious Octavian. Thus it came to be modeled after the imperial city of Rome. The people were proud of their rights of

citizenship (Ac.16:20-21). Through the city ran the famous Via Egnatia, the trade route between East and West.

When Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke arrived here, they preached first to a group of women gathered for prayer near the river (Ac.16:13). Those, among them Lydia and her family, later constituted the nucleus of the church in the city. Soon, however, trouble arose when Paul and Silas expelled a demon from a slave girl. Her masters, seeing their gain from her services was gone, had the two imprisoned on a false charge. But an earthquake during the night liberated them from prison and the jailer and his family became believers.

Philippians is an Epistle which radiates joy and speaks often of good tidings, the Gospel of Christ. It is a thank-you note to the believers at Philippi for their helping in his hour of need, and he used the occasion to send along some instructions on Christianity unity. His central thought is simple: only in Christ is real unity and joy possible. With Christ as our model of humility and service, we can enjoy oneness of purpose, attitude, goal, and labor- a truth which Paul illustrated from his own life, and one the Philippians desperately needed to hear. Within their own ranks, fellow workers in the Philippians church were at odds, hindering the work in proclaiming this new life in Christ. Because of that, Paul exhorted the church to *“...stand fast... be of the same mind... rejoice in the Lord always... but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks giving let your request be made known... and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

G. Book of Colossians

If Ephesians can be labeled the Epistle portraying the “Church of Christ,” then Colossians must surely be the “Christ of the Church.” Ephesians focuses on the Body; Colossians focuses on the Head. Like Ephesians, the little Book of Colossians divides neatly in half with the first portion doctrinal (chps. 1-2), and the second half, practical. Paul’s purpose was to show that Christ is preeminent- first and foremost in everything- and the Christian’s life should reflect that priority because believers are rooted in Him, alive in Him, and hidden in Him. Clothed in His love, with His peace ruling in their hearts, they are equipped to make Christ first in every area of life.

Colossians is one of two Epistles written by Paul to churches which he did not personally found. It seems likely that during his lengthy stay at Ephesus (Ac.19), the message of Christ had been taken to Colossae by one of his fellow-workers. He described Epaphras, a Colossian Christian serving with Paul (4:12), as having *“...declared unto us your love in the spirit.”*

Colossae did not rank with Ephesus in either size or importance. It was an inland city, lying beside the Lycus River, near Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). Located on the main commercial thoroughfare between East and West, the city was

influenced by contrasting ideologies. Those influences seem to be reflected in the Epistle as Paul wrote descriptively of the person of Christ (1:14-20), and to correct the current errors relating to redemption and the pattern of Christian living (2:8-3:4). Thus, Christ is not only to be preeminent in one's doctrine, but in his duties as well.

H. Book of First Thessalonians

On his Second Missionary Journey, Paul arrived in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia. Things went well for the missionaries, as Silas and Timothy were Paul's companions at that point, until jealous Jews raised a cry against them, charging them with acts "*...contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.*" Thus they were driven from the city. When Paul arrived later in Corinth, he wrote letters to the troubled Thessalonian Christians, who had become the objects of persecution since Paul's departure. In lieu of a personal visit, the apostle expressed his thanks to God for the news of the firm stand of the believers, such news having been brought by Timothy (1Th.3:6-10).

The Thessalonian Epistles are the only letters of Paul that do not contain an official title of the writer, simply his name, along with Silvanus and Timothy, at the beginning. He wrote, it would seem, as a personal friend and spiritual adviser to his spiritual children who found themselves beset by affections and tribulations. They were perplexed as to why such things should happen to them. Did God care? To encourage them Paul reminded them how he himself was shamefully treated when he came into their city (2:1-2), and that he had told them beforehand that "*...we are to suffer affliction*" (3:4). All such things are part of the purpose of God.

Since the apostle had departed, some of their number had died. What was to be their attitude toward death? Pagan religion, from which they had turned (1:9), held little hope for the afterlife. Rather, pagans saw it as a place of darkness and fear. Would they see their loved ones again? On the authority of the "*...word of the Lord...*," Paul assured them that the dead and living saints should be one day reunited and together "*...caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...*" (4:17). That was a comfort, indeed. But, on the other hand, the Second Advent called for vigilance as well (5:6). Here is the application of the Doctrine to the everyday life of the Christian.

I. Book of Second Thessalonians

Between the times of the writing of the two Letters a new problem had risen. Apparently someone had caused concern on the part of the believers with regard to their relation to "*...the day of the Lord*". Paul wrote that they "*...be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand*" (2:2). Why was it that the idea of the day of the Lord should disrupt their peace of mind? Probably

because in the possibility of that event, their most prominent thinking was related to tribulation, judgment, and destruction. Such a portrayal occurred in many of the related Old Testament passages from which the concept comes (Joel 1:15-2:11; Ob.15-16; Zep.1:14-18; Zec.14:1-8). It was perceived to be a time that would strike terror into the hearts of men. The Thessalonians had begun to wonder whether they also might fall victim to the Day of Judgment.

Again, as in the first Letter, the apostle closed with a number of practical exhortations. These especially dealt with the end for honest toil among the Christians. Some of them, thinking that the Lord was to come at once, had ceased working and were becoming a drag upon the rest of the community. An almost certain solution to that problem was given by Paul in 3:10, as he said, “...if any will not work, neither let him eat.” That was at once a good combination of Christian teaching and common sense. All are to work together while they wait together for the Great Day of His appearing.

J. Book of First Timothy

Timothy enters the pages of the New Testament in Acts 16:1. As Paul made a return journey into the same territory he found Timothy, likely in Lystra. He was called by the apostle “...my true child” (2Ti.1:12). Having been reared by his mother, a Jewess, although his father was a Greek (Ac.16:1-3), he knew the Old Testament Scriptures from his childhood (2Ti.3:14-15). Now, being converted to Christianity, he was “...well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (Ac.16:20).

He accompanied Paul from that time onward, being left later in Ephesus to straighten out the affairs of the church there, particularly some doctrinal difficulties, and to oversee its organization and deportment (1Ti.1:3; 3:1-14; 5:6-16). When Paul wrote to him from Rome, he asked Timothy to come soon to visit him, as well as to bring John Mark with him and also some personal belongings (2Ti.4:9, 11-13). We do not know whether or not Timothy arrived before Paul's death.

The last group of Epistles in the Pauline collection has been named the Pastoral Epistles because of their emphases on the personal responsibilities and the public functions of the pastor, literally, “shepherd” of the local church. Written to two of Paul's closet companions, Timothy and Titus, they are the latest of Paul's letters, usually dated near the end of his life, about A.D. 67-73. Especially in Second Timothy he seems to anticipate the end.

K. Book of Second Timothy

At the time of the writing of this Letter, Paul was awaiting execution. According to tradition, he was imprisoned in the Mamertine dungeon in Rome, under circumstances much less favorable than those of Acts 28:30. He seemed to

expect death rather than release (4:6; contrast Php.1:9; Philemon 22). Thus these are the final recorded words of Paul in the New Testament. With special interest we look into these pages for thoughts of the great apostle as he faces the end of his life and ministry. As he faced death alone, except for the companionship of Luke the physician (4:11), his chief concern was for the welfare of Timothy and the success of his work in Ephesus. The leading exhortations, which appear throughout the Letter are worthy of careful attention: 1) “...*stir up the gift of God which is in thee*”; 2) “*Be not ashamed... but suffer hardship*”; 3) “*Hold the pattern of sound word*,” 4) “*Guard that good thing committed unto thee*”; 5) “*Commit the things which you have heard to others*,” 6) “...*of these things put them in remembrance*”; 7) “*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God*”; 8) “...*flee youth lusts*”; 9) “*Abide... in the things which thou hast learned*”; 10) “*Be... sober... fulfill thy ministry.*” These constitute the major thrust of the Epistle. It is a letter of personal counsel. Brief consideration should be given to two or three of the outstanding passages in the Epistle (4:7-8). The letter ends with a series of personal remarks, including the request that Timothy visit him soon (4:9), before the winter season if possible. While in his prison cell he wanted his cloak for warmth and his books for study. To the very end of his life Paul remained active and alert.

L. Book of Titus

Like Timothy, Titus too appears to have been led to Christ by Paul. The Apostle called him “...*my true child after a common faith*” (Ti.1:4). He was a Greek, possibly from Syrian Antioch. When Paul and Barnabas went from Antioch to Jerusalem to discuss their ministry with the leaders of the church there, Titus accompanied them (Ga.2:1-3). There he was presented as an example of a Gentile who became a Christian without the necessity of Jewish circumcision. He thus illustrated the principle of which Paul spoke of (Ga.2:16).

We see in the Epistle to Titus that Paul had left his companion on the island of Crete to “...*set in order things that were wanting and appoint elders in every city.*” As in the case of Timothy at Ephesus, Titus was given the responsibility of organizing and administering the affairs of those churches, together with carrying on a sound program of teaching. His last appearance in the New Testament is in 2 Timothy 4:10 where he had left Rome and gone to Dalmatia, apparently to represent Paul once again.

As compared with First Timothy, the instructions regarding church officers are briefer in Titus. Here only the elders, or bishop is described; the deacons are not mentioned. Once again the need for men of high spiritual and moral qualities is stressed. They must be both exemplary in character and capable in their functions. “*In all things shewing thyself a pattern of Good works... that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things*” (2:7a-10b).

M. Book of Philemon

Along with constituting a part of the New Testament canon, this brief Epistle is a prime example of Paul's personal correspondence. It is a letter written by one Christian to another, asking that a favor be granted because of their mutual relationship to Christ and to each other. It is a masterful example of the tactful approach to a delicate and difficult situation. The letter was sent along with Colossians to Philemon, in whose house the Colossian church met.

Within the framework of Christology, Paul here illustrated the principle of forgiveness and restoration on the basis of substitution. He asked that one Onesimus, the slave who was worthy of punishment, be forgiven by his master and received back, "...no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved." Paul offered to pay any debt which stood due to Philemon. Thus the doctrine of imputation is illustrated. The merit of one person is reckoned to the account of another. Christ came to change men; He frees us from sin's slavery and sends us forth to abolish slavery of every kind.

N. Book of Hebrews

The central plea of this Epistle is for the believer to press on unto perfection, not to digress or turn back to his former ways. On the one hand, solemn warnings are interspersed throughout the letter showing the danger of neglect, unbelief, immaturity, and apostasy. One is not to turn away from the truth and the privileges of the Gospel. On the other hand, the superiority of Christ is emphasized to a degree not found in any other Book in the New Testament. He stands above men, angels, and ceremonies; He is final revelation of God and the Mediator of a New and Better Covenant.

One of the outstanding questions attached to Hebrews is the matter of authorship. The name of the author is absent from the letter, and all attempts to give a final answer have fallen short. Since about the 4th century, the name of Paul has often been associated with it. We can point to the similarities with Paul's known epistles, such as the reference to Timothy (13:23); the request for prayer (13:18-19); Php.2:23-24); the use of the phrase "...the just shall live by faith" (10:38; Ro.1:17; Ga.3:11), together with great emphasis on the subject of faith.

Despite the uncertainty as to the human author, the grandeur of the Epistle remains unmarred. It is a matchless presentation of the glories of Christ, the Redeemer, High Priest, the Changeless One. The superiority of Christ and of the life of faith constitutes the dual theme of the Book. Generally speaking, the warnings grow more severe and more climatic as the letter proceeds. The first warns of neglect while the last cautions against absolute refusal.

XII. GENERAL EPISTLES

A. Book of James

Unquestionably James is one of the most “down to earth” books in the New Testament. The writer deals with everyday affairs, covering such matters as one’s speech, business ventures, the respect of persons, disagreements between Christian brethren, relations between employers and employees, and a number of other subjects. Here are answers to problems that touch our lives continually. The teaching of James, then, is designed to show the ways in which one’s faith in God is not only tested to determine its genuineness, but applied to every area of human life.

The writer of the Book identifies himself as “*James a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (1:1). This could not be James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, from among the original disciples of the Lord Jesus, for he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I (Ac.12:1-2), before the year A.D. 44. Thus he could not play a part in the history of the Jerusalem church in the time under consideration. James the son of Alphaeus was also one of Jesus’ disciples (Mt.10:3), but is not otherwise referred to in the narrative.

The only prominent figure by this name who continued through this period is the man called by Paul, “*James, the Lord’s brother*” (Ga.1:19), who during His ministry was an unbeliever. He is mentioned in a Jerusalem prayer meeting (Ac.1:14; 1Co.15:7), and upon Peter’s departure from Jerusalem, he assumed the leadership of the church there (Ac.12:17). James was a very devout man, deeply concerned about the careful regulation of the life of one who professed to believe in God. Known as a man of prayer, he urged the same exercise upon his readers (5:16-18).

James goes on from this point to show the relevance of all this life of one who professes to have faith in Christ. His injunctions, such as on the use of the tongue (chp.3), on business plans (chp.4), and on prayer (chp.5), are of a most practical nature.

James does use some descriptive, harsh language (5:11-6:20; 10:26-31). James gives the antidote to the perils he mentions in the exhortations of the Book. There are 13 expressions in all, urging the believer to grow in faith and to press forward instead of going backward in their spiritual experience. James is the “proverbs” of the New Testament.

B Book of First Peter

Written to “*...the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion*” (1:1), the First Epistle of Peter gives a ray of hope in the darkness to those suffering affliction and persecution. The word “*suffering*” is used 10 times with reference to the lot of

the Christian. In addition, the word “*trial*,” or “*temptation*,” occurs in two crucial passages (1:16; 4:12). What is the Christian to do and to think in the face of such conditions? Peter’s answer is given by his use of the word “*hope*,” and by the assurance that God has a very definite purpose in permitting these difficulties in our lives.

The Christian life is never described as a bed of roses. In fact, Peter states, amid the sufferings that were then present, “...*for here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps*” (2:21). For what reasons are such things permitted by the Lord? They are meant to prove our faith that we may “...*be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1:7). It is actually a privilege to “...*suffer for righteousness sake*” (3:14); our Lord suffered on that account. Partaking of Christ’s suffering which is according to the will of God, which meant to bring a committal of our souls “...*in well-doing unto a faithful creator*” (4:19). That is to say, God knows what He is doing. We are to continue to do well despite the circumstances and we have been called as God’s children to share His glory. He Himself shall “...*perfect, establish, strengthen you*” (5:10).

Peter’s use of the imperative mood of the verb in his Epistle is noteworthy, together with participles used in the sense of commands. By such devices he impresses upon his readers that living for God makes real demands upon us. These positive injunctions are to guide us and form us unto the day of His appearing. It is an application of Christ’s Word in the second Gospel, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength... and thou shalt Love thy neighbor as thyself.*” We show our love by obeying His commands (1Pe.1:22).

C. Book of Second Peter

The Early Church was slow in acknowledging Second Peter to be on the same level with the other books which came to compose the New Testament canon. A number of contrasts with First Peter are readily noticed, such as the lack of a specific address (compare 1Pe.1:1), the rough grammatical character and style of writing and in addition, the striking similarities of language between chapter 2 and the Epistle of Jude. Yet it should be remembered that the Book was recognized as canonical by the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 363 and the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397. Much more definite is the internal evidence for Peter’s authorship. The writer calls himself “*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*” (1:1). The name Simon is reminiscent of his original name (Jn.1:42). There are many auto biographical references in the Letter: 1) the transfiguration experience (1:16-18); 2) a fisherman’s words (2:14-18); 3) the reference to the “second epistle”; 4) that he was one with his reader in having obtained “...*like precious faith.*”

This final message leaves a challenge with the readers of the Letter. *“Wherefore beloved seeing that ye look for those things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight... But grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” To him be the glory both now and forever*” (3:14-18).

D. Book of First John

John wrote against the Gnostics who denied the reality of our Lord’s humanity as well as His deity. His Epistles, especially the First, are powerful weapons against such heresies, whether in old or modern dress. This letter is closely related to his Gospel. Both concern the Lord Jesus and the eternal life which comes to those who trust in Him. The former gave the declaration of salvation; the latter the assurance of it. Both speak of *“...the Word...,”* the term used for Christ as the revealer of God. The vocabulary of the Books is similar, both employing such important words as: 1) *“beginning”*; (1:1) *“in each”*; 2) *“witness”* (33 times in John, 6 times in 1 John); 3) *“believe”* (98 times and 9 times); 4) *“eternal life”* (Jn.3:15; 1Jn.1:2); 5) *“love”* (Jn.3:16; 1Jn.4:9); 6) *“abide”* (Jn.15:4; 1Jn.2:28); and many others.

All of John’s writings are usually dated near the end of the first century, somewhere in between A.D. 85-95 and thus, as an old man, he looked back to his experiences with his Lord, upon which he had long mediated and also at the current problems of the Church.

John wrote to define the nature of the person of Christ in the face of heretical teachings which were afflicting the church near the end of the 1st century. The general name given to that teaching was Gnosticism, a religious philosophic school which was basically characterized by the idea that only spirit was good and matter was evil. The Gnostics believed that one must free himself from the material world and be occupied alone with spirit, with the way of escape being superior knowledge. By learning the mysterious secrets of the universe, the initiate of the cult could supposedly attain freedom.

The primary purpose of this Epistle is, *“...these things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the son of God”* (5:13). His remarks are addressed to *“...the children of God”, those who have been begotten of God*”. Thus it is a family letter and the word *“fellowship”* is used by John to describe the ideal relationship between God and His children.

E. Book of Second John

This, together with Third John, seems to be a sampling of John’s personal correspondence. Both letters are addressed to individuals and have to do with a number of personal matters. The key word of the Letter is *“truth.”* John stresses

the need for “...*walking in the truth*” because “...*many deceivers are gone forth into the world.*” He also said that those who deny the doctrine of Christ are not to be given Christian greetings, lest we find ourselves “...*partaking in his evil works*”.

No doubt certain persons had “joined the church”. They were not outside but inside the church. They had crept in unawares. What church is without them today? They are with us but not of us. Christ will judge these evil men as He did the fallen angels.

F. Book of Third John

The recipient of this final Epistle of John is called only “...*Gaius the beloved*”. He was no further identified so must have been well known to the members of the Asian churches where John served during the last years of his life. The name itself was a familiar one, as these three different men mentioned in the writings of Paul (Ro.16:23; Ac.19:29; Ac.20:4).

Its key word is “*hospitality.*” The letter recognizes the kindnesses of Gaius in showing “...*an open door*” to Christian workers and strangers alike and encouraged him to continue that ministry.

The trouble was Diotrefes, who brazenly excommunicated those in the church who did not recognize his preeminence. John promised to discipline when he came. By way of contrast, the man Demetrius is commended by all in the church. His commendation, “...*good report of all men, and of the truth itself,*” challenges the Christian to walk in truth.

Gaius was noted for loving hospitality. John urged him to continue entertaining the traveling preachers in spite of bitter opposition of an autocratic and blustering church official named Diotrefes, hindering the cause. What a splendid thing to be rich and powerful, and choose to lay all your gifts and talents at Jesus feet, like Gaius and Demetrius!

G. Book of Jude

The letter that was to have been written concerning “*our common faith*” turned out, by constraint upon the writer, to be an exhortation to “...*contend earnestly for the faith.*” One of the chief differences between Jude and Second Peter seems to be that while Peter warned that “...*there shall be false teachers,*” Jude states that “...*there are certain men crept in unawares*”. One anticipates the problem, while the other realizes it as present. Apparently, then, this Epistle is somewhat later than Second Peter, likely around A.D. 75-85.

Jude was a “...*brother of James...*”, and seems to fit into the patterns sketched earlier. One of the brothers of Christ and James was named Jude (Mt.13:55).

They appear as believers (Ac.1:14), and he wrote as “...a servant of Jesus Christ” (1:1).

As he began to write he used an interesting expression, “...faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (v.3). Here the faith has reference to the body of doctrine, held in common by the Church at that time. There is a note of finality about it. God has committed the Gospel to the Church to be kept inviolate, as a trust. Doctrine, however, is not held in detachment from life. Correctness of teaching must result in holiness of living or the practical purpose is lost. The error which Jude combats is a kind of antinomianism, or “lawless libertinism” (v.4), which results in a denial of the rightful place of Christ in the life of the individual. Jude, along with Second Peter 2, and turns to the Old Testament for illustrations of godlessness and makes clear God’s judgment upon all such persons.

Jude informs his readers of the serious consequences of unbelief. Israel illustrated unbelief; the fallen angel illustrated disobedience; Sodom and Gomorrah illustrated moral defilement. Also, Jude depicted the character of the false teachers of whom he warned his readers. Cain is a picture of willfulness, Baalim of greed, and Korah of presumption.

By way of anticipation, Jude said what would be the end of the false teachers, using a quotation from the Jewish work, the Book of Enoch of the Apocrypha, illustrating what God will do those “*ungodly sinners.*”

In the face of all such dangers, the personal responsibility of the believer is to: 1) remember the apostles teaching; 2) keep self in the love of God. The later injection is linked with a number of participial clauses; a) “...building yourselves up on your most holy faith”; b) “...praying in the Holy Spirit”; c) “...looking for mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Along with those, his responsibility to others was to have mercy on some and to save some out of the fire.

Jude wrote to Christians whose ranks have been infiltrated by false teachers. Many were being misled by shadowy figures peddling a message that promoted moral laxity, theological error, destructive pride, and divisiveness. In the face of pressure to dilute pure Christian doctrine, Jude’s readers were to stand firm and “...earnestly contend for the faith.”

XIII. REVELATION

Revelation is the only Book of Prophecy in the New Testament. It is the only Book in the Bible that especially promises a blessing to those who read and hear. “*Blessed*” is a strong word. Blessed is he that reads is what the Book of Revelation says of itself, but after reading the first chapters about the churches, and the last chapters describing heaven, not many of us read much in the Book.

Revelation presents a glorious, reigning Christ. The Gospel presented Him as the Savior, One who came to take the curse of sin. But in this last Book we see no humiliation. In one way Revelation is a most remarkable Book, for it tells us about the reign of Christ on this earth which Satan wants to control. It tells about the consummation of Christ's complete and eternal victory over Satan. It describes Satan's defeat and punishment, first for a thousand years, then eternally. It tells more about Satan's final doom than any Book, so it is no wonder Satan does not want men to read it.

Revelation does not mean a riddle, but the revealing of something not yet revealed. It is an unveiling of end-time events. It was written in symbols and was sent and signified by the angel to John. There are "signs" in Revelation, some 300 symbols and each has a definite meaning. The content of the Book indicates that many of its events are yet to be fulfilled. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not the revelation of John, and was given by Christ Himself to John. The Book deals with the return of the Lord to this earth. It describes the readiness or failure to be ready on the part of the church, as well as much of humanity for this great event. There are descriptions of the tremendous events on earth and in heaven just before, during and after His coming.

Almost 2,000 years have passed since these words were spoken, but the idea is what is "next on God's program". No matter how much time may intervene, the next thing after the day of grace is the Kingdom Age to be ushered in by our Lord's coming. There are few people with any imagination who have not sat down and thought, "I wonder how it would feel to be a king." But Christ says when He comes we will reign as kings with Him.

Those that pierced Him shall see Him. That includes especially the Jews who at Christ's coming will turn to Him as a united people and be saved, at the same time it means many others who have "pierced" Christ by refusing Him or by denying Him after knowing Him. Christ is the theme of this wonderful Book. It gives an authentic portrait of the Lord Jesus as the Triumphant One. No less than 26 times do we find in it Christ's sacrificial title "*Lamb*." In addition we see a vision of the future of the Church and the world in relation to Him.

Revelation is the finishing of the story begun in Genesis. All that was begun in the Book of Beginnings, Genesis, is consummated in Revelation. In Genesis we see that Heaven and Earth were created. In Revelation we see a New Heaven and a New Earth. In Genesis the sun and moon appear; in Revelation we read that there is no need of the sun or moon, for Christ is the Light. In Genesis there is the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation the marriage supper of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. In Genesis there is a Garden; in Revelation there is a Holy City. In Genesis we see the beginning of sin; in Revelation sin is done away with permanently. So we can follow the appearance of the great Adversary, Satan, and sorrow and pain and tears in Genesis, and see their doom and destruction in Revelation.

God had determined from the beginning that His Son would be Ruler of this universe (Is.9:6-7). The Book gives a decisive answer and proof of it. The dragon will be cast into the pit, and later the Lake of Fire, along with his cohorts. Thus, God will be seen as totally Supreme and the Church established forever, as “...*a bride adorned for her husband.*” Even as the Lord Jesus had said, so it will be: “...*the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*” While it speaks of wars and rumors of wars, plagues, destructions, and men seeking to die and cannot, God will sum up all in His final events as noted in this Book.

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THANK YOU

Information for International College of Bible Theology (ICBT) courses has been researched and compiled by many members in the Body of Christ. We have been blessed by gifted brothers and sisters from many areas of ministry.

We thank those who have helped to write and compile courses for our curriculum. We gratefully thank all those in the five-fold ministry, helps and lay ministry that have labored with us. A special thank you is extended to authors of various books and leadership of other Bible Colleges that have been so very giving and gracious to us. It is not possible to name everyone by name. Laborers with ICBT have compiled over one-hundred (100) courses. Let us all say "to God be the glory."

CHRISTIANS ARE CO-LABORERS

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 3:5-11