

BIBLE SURVEY II
The Old Testament

by

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and
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FOREWORD

For several years Overseas Ministries has made available to overseas Bible schools a textbook entitled “Bible Survey” written by Darline Kantola. Her outline of the various books of the Bible, with comments offered on various units within the chapters of the Bible, has been highly praised.

Recently, we have felt the need to expand the Bible Survey study series. Therefore, we are bringing to you three courses of study, “Introduction to the Bible,” “Old Testament Survey,” and *New Testament Survey*. My special thanks goes once again to Darline Kantola for her assistance in this, and we have added a new dimension with the capable and qualified contributions by Dorsey Burk and editing and typing by his wife, Beverly.

The commentaries in the Bible Survey series are intended for Bible school teachers, leaders of Bible study groups, Bible school students, and other serious students of the Word of God. I feel that this series will give solid help in understanding selected books of the Old and New Testaments. It is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive commentary. For each book there is helpful introduction discussing various subjects such as the authorship, date, purposes and giving of explanations and views set forth throughout the years. Each unit in the book is carefully examined and unfolded under the headings and subheadings of a unifying outline. Challenges are faced courageously and the meaning of each is explained with the hope that lessons for our day can be extracted and applied. The courses are not meant to deal with a lot of details, but with the main facts of each book and the content thereof.

The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters, 810,697 words, 31,175 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books. It is, therefore, a “divine library,” and demands not only spiritual illumination but also the practical application of reverent and diligent study methods in order to master its diversified subjects, as well as its unified message. I appreciate the authors of this series giving attention to the importance of the many aspects of the truths of God’s Word. I thank the authors for not trying to entertain us, but rather give us a map with which to aid our study of the Word of God. It is my sincere thanks

to the authors and it is my earnest prayer that their efforts will be prayerfully received. We certainly need men and women who live the Bible. May the Lord use these exceedingly useful volumes to help us all learn love and live the Word of God.

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I. GENESIS

A. THEME

As indicated by its name which means “beginning,” Genesis is a history of the origin of all things.. Within its fifty chapters, one can find the beginning of the world (1:1-25), the human race (1:26-2:25), sin in the world (3:1-7), the promise of redemption (3:8-24), family life (4:1-15), a man-made civilization (4:16-9:26), the nations of the world (chapters 10 and 11), and the Hebrew race (chapters 12-50).

The only beginning not recorded in Genesis is God’s. Majestically and reverently, the book begins, “In the beginning God created the, heaven and the earth.” Nowhere does the book even try to prove the existence of God; however, His divine being is seen -through the pages.

B. AUTHOR

The author of Genesis is Moses. This fact was confirmed by Jesus in John 5:46, 47. Other language translations of the Bible, such as the German, even substitute the name First Moses for Genesis.

C. SCOPE

Genesis covers the time from Creation to the death of Joseph. This is approximately 2,315 years, extending from 4004 B. C. to 1689 B. C., according to Archbishop Usher’s chronology.

D. CONTENTS,

The contents of Genesis can be divided into nine major divisions:

1. The Creation (Chapters 1 and 2)

The story of the Creation is recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. It is a record of the factor creation, not an explanation of the how. Moses simply stated, "In the beginning God created. . ." (Hebrews 11:3 states, The worlds were framed by the word of God.")

As recorded by Moses, the order of creation is:

First Day	Light
Second Day	Air, Water
Third Day	Land, Plants
Fourth Day	Lights (heavenly bodies)
Fifth Day	Birds, Fish
Sixth Day	Animals, Man
Seventh Day	God rested

Chapter 2 repeats the story of creation. It is not an account of a second creation as some may suppose, but a retelling of the account as recorded in Chapter 1 with added detail. This retelling of an event is called the "Law of Recurrence" and is found throughout the Bible.

God gave Adam and Eve the responsibility of dressing the garden and the privilege of partaking of its bounty. In the midst of the garden, God placed two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve could freely eat of every tree in Eden except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This restriction led Adam and Eve to the place of having to make a choice. They could choose the good, refuse the evil and eat of the tree of life. Or they could choose to disobey, eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil-and die.

2. The Fall (Chapter 3)

God created man as a free-will agent, possessing the power to determine his own destiny by his choices. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil allowed man to be tested, to see if he would serve God from a willing heart.

Subtly the serpent, which represented Satan, the author of the temptation, made Eve to question God. Because she listened to Satan's lies and doubted God, Eve yielded to temptation, ate of the forbidden fruit, and then gave it to her husband to eat.

Sin always brings judgment. For his part in the temptation, the serpent was cursed above all the animals of the earth and forced to eat the dust of the ground. The woman's judgment took the form of pain in childbirth and subjection to man. The man's judgment resulted in hard labor, the earth being cursed with thistles for his sake. And finally, mankind was totally expelled from the garden.

God did not only bring judgment to Adam and Eve. He also brought hope of redemption. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of the Seed of woman who would bruise the serpent's head. Also see Acts 10:38, I John 3:8, Galatians 4:4, Isaiah 7:14, and Matthew 1:21. The hope of redemption is also seen as God slew the first sacrifice to clothe Adam and Eve.

3. The First Civilization (Chapter 4)

As time progressed, Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. One was a tiller of the ground, the other a keeper of flocks. One's heart was inclined to God, the other's was bent towards the world. One offered a sacrifice that was acceptable unto God, the other did not. Naturally, such differences led to conflicts. The conflicts eventually resulted in Cain murdering his brother. See I John 3:12.

"Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (Genesis 4:16). It was in this land that Cain build a city and began the first man-made civilization characterized by agriculture, manufacturing, and arts. Nevertheless, the society was marked by a spirit of violence.

Chapter 4 ends with the birth of Seth and the promise that redemption would come through him (Genesis 4:25, 26).

4. The Flood (Chapters 5-9)

Chapter 5 contains a genealogy of Adam. What a contrast is presented by his descendants. The Cainites were corrupt and sinful. The Sethites were godly and righteous. But as time continued, the Sethites were influenced by the sins of their cousins. Yet, one man and his family remained true to God. That man was Noah, who was chosen for the line of the Redeemer.

As holy God looked down on the sins of humanity, His justice demanded judgment. Noah was commanded to build an ark for the saving of his family, for the Lord was going to destroy the world with a flood. All living creatures would be destroyed unless they found shelter in the ark. What a lesson our own world should learn from the story of Noah and the flood. Genesis 6 and Matthew 24 indicate that the conditions in the days of Noah were similar to those of today: a high civilization, forsaking God for pleasure.

True to His promise, God did send a flood which destroyed the earth. But following the deluge, He also sent a rainbow. The rainbow was the covenant sign that God would never destroy the world again by water. He then renewed the charge to replenish the earth, prohibited murder, and chose Shem as seed through whom the Redeemer would come (Genesis 9:18-27).

5. The Dispersion of Nations (Chapters 10, 11)

Noah had three sons: Ham (the father of Canaan), Shem, and Japhet. He prophesied that Ham's (Canaan) descendants would be servants, that Shem would dwell in tents, and that Japhet would be enlarged and dwell in the tents of Shem. Ham's descendants became the dark skinned Africans and the Canaanites. Shem's descendants, the Jews and Arabs, have dwelt in tents, while Japheth (Europeans) has been enlarged through world exploration and dwelt in the tents of Shem through the Roman, Greek, and English domination of the Middle East.

Genesis 10 indicates separate locations for the children of Noah; Genesis 11 explains how the separation occurred.

Noah and his children were told to multiply and to replenish

the earth. However, Nimrod led the descendants of Noah in rebellion against God. They grouped together in the Plain of Shinar and built a tower. The tower was designed to be the focal point of their new, false religion. Nevertheless, God spoiled their plan by confusing their speech and scattering them. (Up until then all men spoke the same language.) As the people could not understand each other, they dispersed. The Tower of Babel stands as a warning of God's divine judgment on those who rebel against Him and form their own religious system.

6. Abraham (Chapters 12-25)

Genesis 1-11 covers approximately 2,000 years, or about the same amount of time as covered by the rest of the Bible. Why? Because the Bible is mainly a *history of redemption*, history of the nations is only incidental. As we begin this section on Abraham, we see that more space is devoted to the story of Abraham than to the first 2,000 years of human history. This is understandable in light of important role played by the "Father of the Faithful" in the story of redemption.

Abraham was a rich and powerful man in Ur of the Chaldees. God called him and told him to leave his country, kindred, and father's house and to go to a land that God would show him. In doing so, God promised to make Abraham a great nation, to bless him, to make his name great, and to bless all the families of the earth through him (Genesis 12:1-3). This last promise is Messianic.

Highlights of Abraham's life includes:

- * Call to go to Canaan (12:1-5)
- * Descent into Egypt (12:10-20)
- * Separation from Lot; deliverance of Lot from captivity (13:5-11; 14:14)
- * Reception of God's covenant, justification by faith (15:6, 18)
- * Circumcision—sign of the covenant (17:9-14)
- * Annunciation of Isaac's birth (17:15-19; 18:1-15)
- * Intercession for Sodom (18:23-33)
- * Dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael (21:14)
- * Offering up of Isaac (22:1-14)
- * A bride for Isaac (24:1-67)

- * Children by Keturah (25:1-4)
- * Abraham's death (25:8)

Indicative of his life, Abraham obeyed God and stepped out of faith. His obedience and faith in God stand out as a memorial to all generations. See Hebrews 11:8-19.

7. Isaac (Chapters 17-35)

Two sons were born to Abraham. Ishmael was the son of Sarah's maid, Hagar, while Isaac was Sarah's son of divine promise. Isaac was the one chosen by God to carry on the plan of redemption.

Important points of Isaac's life are:

- * His birth promised (15:4; 17:19)
- * Bound upon an altar of sacrifice (22:9)
- * Bride chosen by Abraham (24:1-67)
- * God renewed covenant made to Abraham (26:2-5)
- * Deception by Jacob (27:18)
- * Death (35:28, 29)

In reviewing the highlights of Isaac's life, one can see many types of Christ. Consider:

- * Miracle birth: Genesis 18:9-18 and Matthew 1:18-21
- * Sacrifice: Genesis 22:1-14 and Matthew 27:22, 23
- * Deliverance from death: Genesis 22:1-14 and Matthew 28:1-6
- * Servant seeking a bride: Genesis 24:1-67 and I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25, 26, 32; and Acts 15:14

8. Jacob (Chapters 25-35)

Jacob was one of Isaac's two sons. (Esau was his elder twin brother.) Although Jacob was the younger son, he was chosen as a channel of blessing.

The outstanding events in his life include:

- * His purchase of his brother's birthright (25:33)
- * His deception of his father (27:18-27)

- * His flight to Padan-aram (27:43-28:5)
- * His vision and vow (28:10)
- * His dealings with Laban (chapter 31)
- * His wrestling with an angel (32:24)
- * His reconciliation with Esau (chapter 33)
- * His descent into Egypt and his meeting with Joseph (chapter 46)

Several lessons can be learned from Jacob's life. The first is the power of the grace of God. Through the dross of Jacob's sinfulness, God saw the glint of "fine gold"—faith. At the brook of Jabok, Jacob was transformed into Israel, an overcomer with God and man. The second lesson is God's high estimate of faith. Jacob's scheming to obtain his brother's birthright is inexcusable, yet his earnest desire for it shows an appreciation of spiritual things. And finally, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Jacob's uncle Laban was used as an instrument of retribution for the disciplining of Jacob. Jacob had cheated others; he in turn was cheated by Laban.

9. Joseph (Chapters 30-50)

Joseph was Jacob's favorite of his twelve sons. Joseph was also favored by the Lord, who revealed to him through dreams that he would be ruler over the other members of his family. He so enraged his brothers by telling them of his dreams that they finally sold him into Egyptian slavery. But God continued to be with Joseph in Egypt. After much adversity and temptation and years of waiting for the fulfillment of the promise of God, he was exalted as the second ruler of the land of Egypt. When his brothers came down to Egypt for grain and bowed before him, his dreams were fulfilled.

Joseph's experiences were a part of the plan of redemption. God permitted him to be sold into Egypt and to suffer in order he might be exalted and thus bring his family into Egypt where they could be nourished during the famine and settle where they could grow into a great nation. There they were permitted to undergo certain experiences until Jehovah God was ready to lead them to the conquest of the Promised Land. See Genesis 45:7, 8; 50:20.

The main points of Joseph's life are:

- * Loved by his father (37:3)
- * Envied by his brethren (37:4)
- * Sold to the Ishmaelites (37:18-36)
- * Favored by his master (39:1-6)
- * Tempted by his master's wife (39:7-19)
- * Imprisoned by Potiphar (39:20-41:13)
- * Exalted by Pharaoh (41:1-44)
- * Unrecognized by his brethren at their first meeting (42:7-44:34)
- * Revealed to his brethren at second meeting (45:1-15)
- * Reunited with his father, Jacob (46:28-34)
- * His death (50:22-26)

As with his forefather's, Joseph's life typifies Christ. Consider these types:

- * His father's love for him: Genesis 37:3 and John 5:20
- * The hatred of his brethren: Genesis 37 and Matthew 27:1, 22, 23
- * His temptation: Genesis 39:7-12 and Matthew 4:1
- * His patience in suffering: Genesis 39:20-41:1 and James 5:11
- * His promotion by Pharaoh: Genesis 41:39-44 and Mark 16:19
- * His marriage to a Gentile bride during his rejection by his brethren: Genesis 41:45 and Acts 15:14
- * His revelation of himself to his brethren the second time: Genesis 45:1-3 and Zechariah 12:10

10. Patriarchal Blessings (Chapters 48-50)

Genesis closes with Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, then bestowing his patriarchal blessing upon his twelve sons.

II. EXODUS

A. TITLE

The title given to the second book of Moses comes from the Greek word *exodos* which means “going out” or “departure.” This is a fitting title as the book records the departure of Israel from Egypt.

B. THEME

The theme of the book is the progress of redemption. In Genesis, the redemption is being worked out in individuals. In Exodus, it is worked out through the nation of Israel with the central thought being redemption by blood.

As the central thought is developed, the children of Israel were first saved by the blood applied to the door posts and lintels of their homes during the first Passover. Because of the applied blood, the death angel passed over the homes of the Israelites.

After their deliverance from Egypt, God gave the Israelites the Law as a revelation to guide them in conduct and worship in their new life. This revelation showed them the holiness of God and brought condemnation for their sins. Nevertheless, the blood sacrifices provided under the Law atoned for the sins and gave the people access to God.

C. SCOPE

Written by Moses as a sequel to Genesis, Exodus begins with the conjunction now. The book covers a period of 216 years, from about 1706 B. C. to 1490 B. C. It begins with an enslaved people living in the presence of Egyptian idolatry and ends with a redeemed people dwelling in the presence of God.

D. CONTENTS

Based on content, the book can be divided into two main sections. Chapters 1 through 19 are historical; chapters 20 through 40 are legislative.

1. Israel In Bondage (Chapters 1 and 2)

Although Exodus is a continuation of the narrative began in Genesis, almost four hundred years transpired between Genesis 50:26 and Exodus 1:1. The children of Israel entered Egypt as royal guests and were accorded the favor of the court. There arose, however, a pharaoh who “knew not Joseph” and who considered the growing multitude of Hebrews as a threat to this throne. He handled this problem by enslaving the Israelites and forcing them to build the treasure cities of Pithorn and Raamses. Pharaoh then declared that all male babies born to the Hebrews were to be destroyed.

It was into this situation that Moses was born. He was the one chosen of God to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. From his birth on, one can see God preparing Moses for his future task. Dr. Henrietta Mears summed up Moses life by saying that he spent forty years thinking he was somebody, forty years learning that he was a nobody, and forty years learning what God can do with a nobody.

Without a doubt, Moses was one of the most important characters of the Bible. His importance is shown in that his name occurs about 720 times in the Bible and that Jesus, Peter, Paul, John and Jude all referred to him. He was powerful and displayed great leadership abilities, yet Numbers 12:3 states, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”

2. Israel Redeemed (Chapters 3-15)

God called Moses to deliver His people while Moses was on the back side of the desert tending his father-in-law’s sheep. (Have you noticed that God calls those who are busy, not the idle ones?) After arguing with God, Moses finally accepted the commission and voiced the divine message to Pharaoh.

One of Pharaoh's greatest mistakes was to harden his heart against the order of Jehovah. The king's stubbornness, pride, and rebellion caused his nation untold suffering and hardship as they endured the, ten plagues and then lost their army in the Red Sea. Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh, the attending plagues, and the dramatic deliverance at the Red Sea provide some of the most exciting reading in the Bible.

Special attention should be given to the study of the Passover (chapter 12) as it contains many wonderful types of our redemption such as:

- * Egypt (Galatians 1:4; Romans 6:18)
- * The Lamb (John 1:29)
- * The blood sprinkled on the doorposts (Romans 3:25; 1 Peter 1:18-20)
- * The unleaven bread (I Corinthians 5:8)
- * The eating of the lamb (I Corinthians 11:24)
- * The crossing of the Red Sea (I Corinthians 10:1, 2)

3. Israel Journeying to Sinai (Chapters 15-19)

The journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai began Israel's divine maturing process. The experiences they faced were not always pleasant. Nevertheless, they were a part of God's plan in preparing Israel for conquest of Caanan. For so many years, Israel had relied upon the riches of Egypt. The bread from heaven that was first provided at Elim, the water from the smitten rock at Horeb and the miraculous victory over the Amalekites showed Israel that they could depend on Jehovah for their needs.

4. Israel Given the Law (Chapters 19-23)

The Law was given to Israel at Sinai. The Law revealed to them the holiness of God and told them how they could approach Him in worship. Receiving the Law was an important time for Israel, for Israel became the priest-nation. They were separated from all nations, in order that they might be trained in divine truth and ultimately bring light to all nations.

In receiving the Law, Israel became a theocracy, a nation governed by God. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) were the basis for God's rule. The civil law (Exodus 21-23) was added to apply the basic principles of the ten commandments to everyday living. Read Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 3:19, 20, 5:5, 20, 13:8-10; Galatians 5:18, 6:2; and John 15:12.

5. Israel In Worship (Chapters 24-40)

The remaining seventeen chapters of Exodus are devoted to the Tabernacle and the allotted space emphasizes its importance in the spiritual life of Israel. The Tabernacle was the focal point. It was where the priests ministered before God and where God communed with His people. God said to Moses in Exodus 25:8, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

III. LEVITICUS

A. NAME

The third book of Moses, Leviticus, receives its name from the Levites, the priestly tribe of Israel. The book is basically a record of laws pertaining to the Levites and their service.

B. THEME

The central thought of Leviticus is worship. Leviticus tells how a redeemed people can approach a holy God in worship and how the fellowship thus established can be maintained. The message of the book is loud and clear: Access to God is only through blood and the access thus obtained calls for holiness of the worshiper.

There is also a practical purpose of the book. The divinely appointed code of laws was designed to make Israel different from the other nations. This difference effected Israel spiritually, morally, mentally, and physically. Israel was to be a holy or separate nation, consecrated to the service of the one true God.

C. SCOPE

Leviticus covers approximately one month. It does little to advance the narrative of Israel's sojourn to Canaan. In some respects, the book may be considered a parenthetical insert in the drama of Moses leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land. However, this in no way lessens the importance of the book.

D. CONTENTS

1. Laws Concerning the Offerings (Chapters 1-7)

The levitical offerings are types of the one offering of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice was so perfect that no one sacrifice of any ceremonial order could begin to portray its sufficiency. Therefore, God ordained five offerings to be observed. Three were voluntary, two compulsory.

The Burnt Offering was a voluntary “sweet savour” offering which signified entire consecration to Jehovah. The offering could either be of the herd, flock, or birds, depending upon one’s possessions.

The Peace Offering signified fellowship with God or reconciliation. In this sacrifice, both the offerer and the priest ate of the voluntary offering.

The Meal Offering was the third voluntary or “sweet savour” offering. It consisted of food—flour, cakes, or grain—and was a gift to the Lord to acknowledge His goodness.

The Sin Offering was compulsory. It expressed sorrow for sin and a desire for pardon and cleansing.

The Trespass Offering was also compulsory. This offering was for offenses that required restitution.

Although the offerer had to bring the sacrifice or offering, the priest had specific duties in relationship to the five offerings. He was to sprinkle the blood of the Burnt, Sin, and Trespass Offerings on the altar. He also burnt a handful of the Meal Offering on the altar and waved the breast and shoulder of the Peace Offering before the Lord.

For his work, the priest always received a portion of the offering. He kept the skin of the Burnt Offering, the remainder of which was burnt. He received a part of both the Sin and Trespass Offerings. He kept the remainder of the Meal Offering and had the shoulder (strength) and breast (love) of the Peace Offering. However, the priest never took his part before giving God His. God’s part was always first and always burned so that it could not be taken back. The offerer only shared in the Peace Offering in which God, the priest, and the people rejoiced together.

2. Laws Concerning the Priesthood (Chapters 8-10)

God chose Israel to be a holy nation, separated unto Him. As the priests were the Israelites' spiritual leaders, God gave them special laws pertaining to them and their roles. Chapter 10 tells of the failure of Nadab and Abihu who violated these priestly laws and the divine judgment that fell on them.

3. Laws Concerning Purity (Chapters 11-22)

Israel's holiness was to be an integral part of their daily living. The laws God gave pertained to food, their bodies, homes, habits, worship, morals, customs, and costumes.

4. Laws Concerning Feasts (Chapters 23, 24)

Typifying aspects of our Christian walk, the feasts were times of fellowship, rejoicing, and introspection for the Israelites. The section of the law concerning the feasts begins with an admonition to keep the Sabbath day.

The Passover celebrated the passing of the death angel over the houses of the Israelites and their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Because Christ is our Passover, we are freed from the bondage of sin and the penalty of death.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed Passover. During the seven days of the feast, no leaven could be found in the house. It was removed on the Day of Preparation, the day before the eating of the Passover. This feast typifies separation.

The Feast of Firstfruit followed the other feasts. During this feast, a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was waved before the Lord. No harvest could be reaped until this sheaf was presented to Him. This typifies consecration. I Corinthians 15:20 states that Christ became the firstfruits of them that slept because of His resurrection.

The Feast of Pentecost was held fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits. Pentecost means fifty. In this feast, two wave loaves with leaven were offered unto the Lord. Christ, our firstfruits,

was seen for forty days. For the next ten days, the disciples met in the upper room for prayer. On the fiftieth day, Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was outpoured.

The first four feasts have all been fulfilled historically through Jesus Christ. The three yet to come are all prophetic, having still to be fulfilled.

The Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25) is prophetic of the regathering of all God's people. Also see Isaiah 27:13, I Corinthians 15:22; Matthew 24:31; Revelation 11:15.

Atonement (23:27-32) was a fast rather than a feast. On this day, the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, with blood, to make expiation for the sins of the people. In doing so, he shed his priestly robes and wore only a simple white garment. This was done only once a year and typified Christ's entering Heaven with His own blood to make eternal atonement for our sins.

Two goats were used on the Day of Atonement. One was killed. Confessing the sins of the nation, the high priest laid hands on the other and then sent it, the scapegoat, out into the wilderness. The first goat typified Christ as paying the penalty for our sins, the second the putting away of our sins, never to be remembered again.

The Feast of Tabernacles (23:33-44) commemorated the days when the Israelites lived in tents following their departure from Egypt. During the eight days of celebrating, the longest duration of any of the feasts, the people left their permanent homes and dwelt in booths.

Before moving on in our Bible survey, we should note the sequence of the feast and their significance to us. As the Atonement was a fast, it is omitted from this list:

- * Passover—the crucifixion
- * Unleavened Bread—separation
- * Firstfruits—the resurrection
- * Pentecost—outpouring of the Holy Ghost
- * Trumpets—the rapture of the living saints, and resurrection of the dead saints

- * Tabernacles—our dwelling in the presence of the Lord after the gathering.

5. Laws Corwering the Land (Chapters 25-27)

Chapter 25 deals with the Year of Jubilee which was a time of liberation and emancipation for all people. It was held every fiftieth year, beginning with the Day of Atonement. The purpose was to prevent the perpetual enslavement of the poor and accumulation of wealth by the rich and to preserve the distinction of the tribes and their tribal possessions. In this year, the land was given a rest from cultivation, all debts were canceled, all Hebrew slaves were released, and all estates reverted to the original owners. (See 25:30 for exception concerning the houses in walled towns.)

Chapter 26 is a reminder that Israel's blessing—and ours—is contingent upon obedience (verse 3). Punishment and dispersion were to be the rewards for disobedience. Nevertheless, God promised (verses 44, 45) that Israel would never be utterly forsaken. God will remember His covenant (verse 42).

Chapter 27 concerns vows.

IV. NUMBERS

A. TITLE

The fourth book written by Moses is called Numbers. It receives its name from the two numberings of the children of Israel recorded in the book.

B. THEME

The theme of Numbers is Israel serving. We are shown how all things are done in order. The people were numbered according to tribes and families. Every tribe was assigned a position in the camp. The marching and encampment of the people were regulated with military precision. Every Levite had his appointed task in the transportation of the Tabernacle.

Numbers is also a recording of Israel's failure to believe God's promises and enter Canaan. and of their wanderings in the wilderness as punishment. The end, however, leaves us at the borders of the Promised Land, where the new generation of Israelites awaits to enter.

One can say that the central lesson of Numbers is that unbelief bars the entrance to abundant life. (See Hebrews 8:7-19.) Other lessons concern service, order, failure, and wandering.

C. SCOPE

Numbers covers about thirty-nine years of Israel wanderings in the wilderness, from approximately 1490 to 1451 B. C.

D. CONTENTS

1. Israel at Sinai (Chapters 1-9)

Numbers open with the children of Israel still encamped at Mount Sinai, following the construction of the Tabernacle. It was at this time that God first instructed Moses to number the people. The main reason was for military needs as the people were to possess the Promised Land. The census totaled 603,550 men from twenty years and upward.

The priests and Levites were also counted at this time, but apart from the other people. The Levites totaled 22,000 males from one month old and upward. These were separated unto the Lord, taking the place of the firstborn of each tribe.

As you will recall, Aaron was a Levite and all priests were to descend from him. Their priestly functions included offering the sacrifices, ministering in the Holy Place, etc. The other Levites were given to Aaron as helpers to care for the Tabernacle, the furnishings, and the utensils. All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Whether they were priests or helpers, they only engaged in the service of the Lord from the age thirty to fifty.

The numbering of the people and of the Levites showed that there were more firstborns in the tribes than Levites. Consequently, those above the number of the Levites were to be redeemed from service by the payment of a certain sum (3:46-51).

Following the numbering, God gave Israel additional laws (chapters 5, 6), the Levites were consecrated (chapter 8), the Passover was kept, and the pillar of cloud and of fire hovered over the Tabernacle (chapter 9). The pillar of cloud and of fire became their emblem of guidance. If it moved, they were to move. If it stayed, they were to stay, no matter how long.

2. Sinai to Kadesh (Chapters 10-19)

It has been suggested that an alternate name for Numbers could be The Book of Murmuring. As one reads chapters 10-19, one can easily understand why. Israel complained about the way, the divinely supplied food, and Moses' leadership.

The first rebellion against Moses was headed by Aaron and Miriam. They began by questioning Moses' leadership. But as they began to chide Moses, God stepped in and corrected them. Miriam was stricken with leprosy as a result of her rebellion. Aaron begged Moses to intercede with God for their sister. Nevertheless, God refused to instantly heal her. She was put out of the camp for seven days, as according to the law of leprosy, so that she might be shamed. During this time, the entire camp waited. What a lesson can be learned from the fact that her individual sin halted the progress of a whole nation.

It was God's plan for the children of Israel simply to possess the Promised Land. But since they requested it, He had Moses to send out twelve men to spy out the land. (See Deuteronomy 1:9-22.) Ten of the spies returned with a bad report, but no physical evidence. Even though Joshua and Caleb came back, loaded with the beautiful fruit of Canaan, the people chose to believe the majority's report and even desired to stone the two who had faith in God.

Their unbelief caused Israel to cry out, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God that we had died in the wilderness" (14:2). Because of their unbelief, God granted their request and commanded that they return to the wilderness. For the next thirty-eight to thirty-nine years, Israel wandered in the wilderness. And all those who were twenty years and older at the time of the exodus died in the wilderness—as they desired. The only exceptions were Joshua and Caleb. Had it not been for the intercession of Moses, the entire congregation of Israel would have been destroyed.

Chapter 16 records another rebellion. This rebellion was led by Korah, a cousin of Moses and Aaron. Aaron was God's choice for high priest. Korah and his followers claimed that he was not, and that they had the same privilege. As a result of the rebellion, God sent an earthquake which destroyed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with their families and possessions. Two hundred fifty others who were standing in the door of the Tabernacle, offering up incense, were also destroyed.

The people murmured about this, saying that Moses had

killed the others. Moses ordered Aaron to make an atonement for the people, but 14,700 died before this could be accomplished. After he offered the incense, the plague was stayed.

Instead of recognizing God's sovereignty, the people still questioned. God commanded that twelve rods be brought by the princes of the tribes and placed in the Tabernacle. The one that budded, brought forth blossoms, and yielded almonds, would be God's choice. Aaron's rod budded. After this the Aaronic priesthood was never questioned again. The rod was placed in the Ark of the Covenant.

3. Kadesh to Moab (Chapters 20-36)

Chapter 20 records the sin of Moses. The people were once again without water and were complaining. God told Moses to speak to the rock and it would issue water. Instead, Moses angrily struck the rock twice. Water gushed forth, but God chided Moses for his unbelief in changing His command. Moses, as punishment, was never to enter the Promised Land, although God did allow him to view it from Mount Pisgah before he died.

The people began to complain again and were plagued with snakes. Many died from snakebites. God told Moses to make a serpent of brass. Those who were bitten and looked on the brass serpent would not die. This was a type of Christ (John 3:14).

The kings and people of the nations heard about the many miracles that God had performed for Israel and became scared. What could they do against such a force? Balak, the king of Moab, decided to hire Balaam to curse Israel. Instead of cursing Israel, God would only allow Balaam to bless His people. Nevertheless, Israel was enticed to turn to whoredom and idolatry. Phinehas dealt with certain offenders and thereby averted the wrath of God. Balaam's donkey teaches us that God can use anything He chooses for His mouthpiece.

Chapter 26 records the second numbering of Israel. A generation had passed since the first census at Mount Sinai. Only Joshua and Caleb survived the first generation to leave Egypt. The first generation could not enter Canaan because of their sin of unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea. The numbering revealed 601,730 men.

Joshua was chosen as the new leader of Israel in chapter 27. In chapters 28 and 29, God reminded Israel of their obligation toward Him in the matter of the ceremonial law. The war with the Midianites is found in chapter 31. Chapter 32 concerns the inheritance for the two and one-half tribes on the east of the Jordan river. Chapters 33 and 34 deal with the division of the land and cities to be given to the Levites and those to be set aside as Cities of Refuge.

V. DEUTERONOMY

A. TITLE

Deuteronomy is the name given to the fifth book of the Pentateuch by the English translators. The name comes from the Greek: *Deuteros*, meaning “second” and *Nomos*, meaning “law.” However, the book does not record a second law, but the repeating of the original law for the second generation.

B. THEME

The key words of Deuteronomy are *remember*, *obey*, and *take heed*. In the book, Moses reviewed Israel’s history before the new generation. He exhorted them to remember Jehovah’s love toward them in the wilderness that they may be assured of His continuing care in Canaan. He admonished them to observe the law in order that they might prosper. He reminded them of their past backslidings and rebellions and warned them of the consequence of future disobedience.

Although much of Israel’s history is repeated in Deuteronomy, the viewpoint is different. Deuteronomy reveals the spiritual significance of the aforementioned history of Exodus and Numbers. Compare Deuteronomy 9 with Exodus 32 and Numbers 14. Over and over again, Moses emphasized the two motives of *love* and *fear* as he pleaded for obedience to God.

C. AUTHOR

The author of Deuteronomy is generally accepted to be Moses. However, as the ending is an account of his death, it may be an appendix, written possibly by Joshua. One should never forget, however, that God could have revealed the events of his death to Moses and inspired him to record them prior to his death.

D. SCOPE

Deuteronomy covers the two months that Israel was camped on the plain of Moab prior to the crossing of the Jordan. The year is assumed to be 1451 B.C.

E. CONTENTS

1. Remember—Review of Israel’s Wanderings (Chapters 1 -4)

In chapters 1-4, Moses detailed to the new generation the happenings of the past in order that they might realize the great significance of these events. He reviewed the journey for Kadesh to Mount Pisgah, reminding them of their disobedience and God’s faithfulness. He also reminded them of their moral *obligations*. These never change as sin is always sin.

Then Israel was reminded that no other nation on earth had been as privileged as they. They had heard the voice of God and lived. They had seen great signs and wonders. In return, God only asked two things: Loyalty—no graven images and to worship Him alone—and testimony—teach their sons and their sons’ sons (each succeeding generation) about Him. If they failed in these things their privileges would be taken away and they would be scattered among the nations (4:26, 27).

2. Obey—Review of the Law (Chapters 5-27)

Moses reviewed the Law in chapters 5-27 and revealed the spiritual significance behind it. He began with the Ten Commandments in chapters 5 and 6 which contains the one great command of the Law:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD ‘Our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (6:4, 5).

And again (6:12), Moses warned the new generation of the danger of forgetting God’s goodness.

Chapters 7-12 contain additional warnings and exhortations. The children of Israel were cautioned not to have any relationship with the nations around about them; they were to remain a holy and separated people unto Jehovah (7:6). They were reminded of the importance of obedience (chapter 8) and their past rebellions (chapter 9). Moses then related what God required of them (10:12, 13) and the importance of blood.

The matter of false prophets is covered in chapter 13, while the ceremonial law is reviewed in chapters 14-16. Moses foresaw the desire for a king and gave rules concerning him, even though having a king was not the perfect will of God for Israel (I Samuel 8:1-18). Moses also foretold of a future Prophet, the Messiah (18:15-19 and Acts 3:22). Chapters 19-26 are a review of the civil law and end with a warning to keep all the words of the Law.

3. Take Heed—Prophecies of Israel's Future (Chapters 28-34)

Deuteronomy opens with Israel's past, proceeds to the review their status quo under the Law, and ends with prophecies concerning Israel's future.

Deuteronomy, 28 and Leviticus 26 are the two great prophetic chapters of the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 28:1-4 would have been fulfilled had Israel been obedient. Verses 14-36 were realized in Israel's apostasy under the kings and culminated in the Babylonian captivity (II Chronicles 36:15-20). Verses 37-68 were literally fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) and the period that followed (Luke 21:20-24).

The Palestinian Covenant (chapters 29, 30) was an agreement between the Lord and Israel as to the conditions for their possessing Palestine. It was actually two covenants. The first, the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:7, 8), was unconditional; Israel's conduct would not effect its fulfillment (Jeremiah 31:35-37, Romans 11:26-29). The second was conditional upon Israel's obedience. This enabled the Lord to punish them with temporary banishment from the land without casting them off forever (30:1-9).

Moses' last counsel to the priests, Levites, and Joshua is

contained in chapter 31. He delivered the Law to the priests to read to the people. Even so, the Lord warned Moses that the people would rebel again. God ordered Moses to write a song and teach it to the Israelites as a witness for God unto them. The song (chapter 32) summarizes the book of Deuteronomy.

At the end of the song, God commanded Moses to climb Mount Nebo, where he was to die. Because of his disobedience in striking the rock twice, Moses was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. He was able, however, to view it from the mountain's height.

Before he climbed the mountain, Moses bade farewell to the people he had led for forty years. In chapter 33 he pronounced his blessings on the tribes. These blessings can be compared to those of Jacob in Genesis 49. Then at the age of 120, Moses died before the Lord in Mount Nebo and God buried him in an unknown tomb. The Israelites mourned Moses for thirty days as Joshua, the man chosen of God, assumed the leadership of God's people.

VI. JOSHUA

Joshua is the first of the twelve **Books of History**. These books record the rise and fall of Israel over a 1,000 year period: the settling of Canaan, the unstable times of the Judges, the rise of the kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon, the divided monarchy under the kings of Israel and Judah, and finally the fall to Assyria and Babylon. The last three books deal with the captivity and restoration.

A. THEME

The theme of Joshua is victory and possession. The once rebellious Israel was transformed into a disciplined army of warriors, subduing nations superior to them in numbers and power. The secret of their success is found in Joshua 10:42, "The LORD God of Israel fought for Israel." Because of God's faithfulness, Israel was able to conquer and divide the land. "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (21:45).

B. AUTHOR

The Talmud states that Joshua wrote all of the book that bears his name, with the exception of the last four verses. According to 6:25, the entire book was written during Rahab's lifetime.

C. SCOPE

Joshua covers the twenty-eight years between the death of Moses and the death of Joshua or from 1451 to 1427 B. C.

D. CONTENTS

1. The Land Entered (Chapters 1-5)

Following the death of Moses, God commissioned Joshua to be the new leader of His people. He told Joshua in 1:2-9:

Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for until this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thou mouth; but thou shalt mediate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

One of Joshua's first official acts was to send spies into Jericho. The spies were hidden by the harlot Rahab. Because of her kindness, a covenant was made between Rahab and the Israelites and she became a part of God's people (Joshua 6:23-25; Hebrews 11:31).

The first obstacle Israel faced in conquering Canaan was not the fierce tribes of Canaanites, but crossing the Jordan in flood stage. As with the Red Sea, God performed a miracle for His people. The Ark of the

Covenant, supported by the priests, led the way. As soon as the feet of the priests entered the water as an act of faith, the Jordan divided. The priests which bore the ark stood on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan while the people passed over.

Two memorials were established to commemorate the crossing. Twelve stones were taken out of the Jordan and set up in Gilgal where the people lodged the first night. Twelve other stones were set up by Joshua in the midst of the river where the priests which bore the ark stood.

Once they were safely across the Jordan, the Israelites renewed the rite of circumcision and celebrated the Passover. The daily ration of manna ceased after they had crossed into the Promised Land.

2. The Land Subdued (Chapters 6-12)

Jericho was the first city that the Israelites encountered. It was a strong city, surrounded by two high and massive walls. God gave Joshua unique instructions for capturing it. The armed men and priests simply marched around the city once each day for six days. They were not allowed to make any noise with their voices as they marched. On the seventh day they marched around seven times. At the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets and the people shouted. In response, the walls of Jericho fell flat and the city was easily entered. The entire city was burned-symbolic of the Firstfruits—and only Rahab and her family were saved.

Despite being told not to, Achan kept some of the things he found in Jericho. This brought punishment upon all Israel (7:1) through the defeat at the battle for Ai. When it was shown that Achan was guilty, he and all his family and possessions were destroyed and burnt. Israel learned that the wages of sin was still death even in the Promised Land. After Israel removed the sin from their camp, they easily defeated Ai.

The Gibeonites were one of the Canaanite tribes which God instructed Israel not to have any dealings with. However, the

Gibeonites heard of the destruction of Jericho and Ai and the many other miracles that God had performed for Israel and, in fear, deceived Israel. Without consulting with God, Joshua made a league with them (9:15). When their true identity was discovered, they could not be slain. Instead the Gibeonites were condemned to perpetual bondage to the sons of Israel.

Hearing of the pact with Israel, five of the Canaanitish kings declared war on Gibeon. The Gibeonites turned to Joshua for help. The sun stood still almost a whole day while Israel fought and God kept His promise to deliver them (10:8).

3. Final Conquest and Division of the Land (Chapters 11-12)

Chapters 11 and 12 record the final conquest of Canaan. Chapters 13-22 list the division of the land among the twelve tribes, the Cities of Refuge, and the Cities of the Levites.

4. Joshua's Farewell (Chapters 23 and 24)

Joshua's farewell is recorded in chapters 23 and 24. First, Joshua exhorted Israel to remember their former benefits and promises from God. He also reminded them of the dire warnings for forgetting God. In chapter 24, the tribes of Israel were gathered together at Shechem. At this time Joshua again related the benefits in serving the Lord and renewed the covenant between God and Israel. Joshua then died, being 110 years old.

VII. JUDGES

A. TITLE

The title Judges is derived from the men God elected to govern His people after the death of Joshua. These men were called judges.

B. THEME

Whereas Joshua is a book of victory, Judges is a book of failure. Chapter 2:7-19 sums up the story of the book. After the death of Joshua, the new generation of Israelites made alliances with those nations the old generation had left in the land. The result was a lapse into idolatry and immorality. The judgment of God brought them into servitude to those nations. When they cried out to God, a deliverer would be sent, and they would remain faithful during his lifetime. The words sin, servitude, sorrow, and salvation aptly describe the book.

C. AUTHOR

The authorship of Judges is uncertain. Jewish tradition credits the writing to Samuel.

D. SCOPE

The book cover the period between the death of Joshua and the judgeship of Samuel, approximately 350 years.

E. CONTENTS

1. The Period After Joshua (Chapters 1-3:4)

God commanded that the Canaanites were to be utterly destroyed. Israel only partially obeyed this command. Their incomplete victory over the tribes caused the beginning of Israel's fall. The angel of the Lord appeared unto Israel and rebuked them for their failure (2:1-5). Yet the descendants of Jacob did not really repent.

Chapter 2:7 is a revealing verse, "And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel." God was to be Israel's king and His laws, their governing factor. However, they fell short in their relationship with Him and every man did what was right in his own eyes. As punishment God was going to allow the other nations to remain in order to test Israel. The influence of the surrounding heathen tribes only led Israel to idolatry. God raised up judges to help them, but they would not listen.

2. Israel's Apostasies, Captivites, and Deliverance (Chapters 3:5-16:31)

Judges lists seven major oppressions of the Israelites:

*** First Oppression (3:7-11)**

The sin of idolatry caused Israel's first oppression under the hand of Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia. They served Mesopotamia for eight years and then God raised up Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, to be the judge and deliverer.

*** Second Oppression (3:12-31)**

The second servitude was caused as Israel slipped back into idolatry and immorality. This time they were subjected to Eglon of Moab for eighteen years. Ehud and Shamgar were the deliverers. Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an oxgoad.

*** Third Oppression (chapters 4 and 5)**

The third oppression, twenty years of subjections to the Canaanites, resulted because Israel departed from God. This time God chose a woman, Deborah, to be the judge and deliverer.

* Fourth Oppression (6:1-8:32)

Departing from God brought the fourth servitude to Israel. The servitude lasted for seven years until God raised up Gideon and his famous 300 men who were used by God in a miraculous deliverance against the Midianites.

* Fifth Oppression (8:33-10:5)

After Gideon's death, the Israelites again turned away from God. Their sin led to civil war until Tola and Jair became the judges and deliverers.

* Sixth Oppression (10:6-12:15)

An increase of idolatry prompted the next oppression. For eighteen years, Israel was subjected to the Philistines and Ammonites. Jephathah then arose to be the deliverer.

* Seventh Oppression (chapters 13-16)

The seventh period of servitude lasted for forty years under the rule of the Philistine. The sin was departing from God. The judge and deliverer was Samson, the weak-strong man.

3. Israel's Anarchy (Chapters 17-21)

The closing chapters give a close up view of Israel's decline. Chapters 17 and 18 show the anarchy in religious life. Chapter 19 reveals the anarchy in moral life. Chapters 20 and 21 depict the anarchy in national life. The book closes with the statement, "in those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:25). What a tragic condition for a nation so blessed by God! Is it any wonder that Israel fell?

VIII. RUTH

A. THEME

Ruth is a bright spot in the reign of the judges. It is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible and shows the faithfulness and beauty of character of certain individuals. The book is considered to be a literary gem.

The story of Ruth is doubly interesting because the heroine is a Gentile. The last word in the book, *David*, reveals its chief value: To trace the descent of David, the progenitor of the Messiah. The genealogy in the last chapter is the climax of the book.

Ruth is also distinguished in that it is one of two books of the Bible that bear the name of a woman as its title. Ruth, a *Gentile*, married into a *Jewish* family and thereby came into the line of David. Through it all Gentiles have been blessed. The other book is Esther. Through her marriage to a *Gentile* monarch, Esther, a *Jewess*, brought deliverance to her nation and became their deliverer.

B. AUTHOR

Jewish tradition assigns the authorship of Ruth to the Prophet Samuel.

C. SCOPE

Ruth covers a period of approximately ten years. It probably occurred during the time of Gideon.

D. CONTENTS

1. The Sojourn to Moab (1: 1 -5)

Because of the famine in Israel, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his two sons moved to Moab, a land of idolatry. In the course of time, the sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. Unfortunately, Elimelech and his sons died in Moab, leaving three widows.

2. The Sad Return Home (1:6-22)

When Naomi heard that there was bread again in Israel, she decided to return home. Her daughters-in-law began the long journey with her. However, Naomi advised them to return to their own country. Orpah did, but Ruth chose to follow her mother-in-law. Her statement of love and devotion has been an inspiration for many:

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

3. Ruth Gleans In the Fields of Boaz (Chapter 2)

The pair returned to Israel destitute. In order to live, Ruth gleaned in the fields as a pauper or stranger. In Leviticus 19:9-10, God had commanded Israel to leave the gleanings for the poor. Ruth just happened to pick the field of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi. Boaz had heard of the kindness of Ruth to Naomi and ordered that she be given special treatment. God was rewarding Ruth for her sacrifice and love.

4. Her Marriage to Boaz (3:1-4:12)

The law provided that the kinsman could redeem the property of the poor. Ruth acknowledged Boaz's responsibility and right as a kinsman. However, there was a kinsman who was nearer to Naomi and Ruth than Boaz. He refused the right of redemption, thus allowing Boaz to marry Ruth. The Kinsman-Redeemer is a type of Jesus Christ.

5. The Birth of Her Son (4:13-16)

Ruth and Boaz named their baby son Obed. He became the father of Jesse. Jesse was David's father.

6. The Genealogy of David (4:18-22)

The book ends with a genealogy of David. The genealogy is important in tracing the descent of David and the Messiah.

IX. I SAMUEL

A. THEME

“The great transition” describes the theme of I Samuel. The transition concerns the passing of the government of Israel by the judges to the government of the kings, and the rule of God, the invisible King, to the rule of a visible king which made them like the other nations.

The theme centers around three persons: Samuel, a patriot and judge with a consecrated heart, obediently serving God; Saul, a selfish, wayward, jealous king, faulty and unfaithful in his allegiance to God; and *David*, “a man after God’s own heart,” the sweet singer of Israel, a man of prayer and praises, tested, disciplined, persecuted, and finally crowned king of all Israel.

B. AUTHOR

The author of I Samuel is supposedly Samuel, at least as far as chapter 24. Nathan and Gad possibly wrote the remaining chapters.

C. SCOPE

I Samuel covers approximately 115 years, from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul or from 1171 B. C. to 1056 B. C.

D. CONTENTS

The contents of I Samuel can be most easily analyzed by grouping it according to the central characters.

1. Samuel

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, was barren. She was greatly loved by her husband and was grief stricken because she had given him no children. As she prayed in the temple (1 Samuel 1:9), promising to dedicate her child to God if she conceived, Eli, the priest, thought she was drunk and upbraided her for her drunkenness. When she explained the travail of her soul, he promised that she would bear a child and blessed her. She did bear a son and called his name Samuel. She cared for him until he was weaned and then took him to the temple where he served the Lord.

The sons of Eli were living in gross immorality (2:12-3:21). God called Samuel during the night and revealed the pending destruction of Eli's house.

Israel went to war against the Philistines, but this was not at God's instructions. They even took the ark into battle. Nevertheless, Israel was overpowered and the ark was captured by the Philistines. In reverence of the ark, the Philistine placed it in the temple of their god Dagon. The idol fell down, as if bowing, with its head and hands severed from the fish-like body. The Philistines were smitten with a plague of emeralds. Seeking relief from the plague, they moved the ark to various locations, but the results were the same.

The Philistines counseled together how to send back the ark (chapters 6 and 7). They brought it on a new cart with an offering to Bethshemesh. The people rejoiced as they saw the ark approaching. Some of the men looked into the ark and more than 50,000 men were slain in God's wrath. In divine fear the ark was taken to the next town and placed in the house of Abinadab. The ark remained there for twenty years.

Because of the failure of the priesthood, Samuel was allowed to sacrifice unto the Lord (7:9).

2. Saul

As Samuel grew older, more responsibility was assumed by his sons. His sons did not serve God and governed poorly. This led the people to ask for a king to judge them; in doing so, they were not rejecting Samuel, but God (8:7). By the word of the Lord, Samuel described how the king would rule over them. Despite the negative description, they insisted upon having a king. God granted their request.

God revealed to Samuel that Saul, the regal son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin, should be anointed king (9:17). The aged prophet poured the oil on Saul's head and gave him three signs which would confirm his selection by God. Saul had a change of heart at this time and prophesied. He was chosen king by lot at Mizpeh.

Saul's first victory as king occurred against Nahash. Nahash plotted against Israel and was quickly and courageously handled by Saul. This decisive act established his popularity.

Samuel's proclamation of the kingdom is recorded in chapter 12. This was a sad time for the prophet who realized that Israel was rejecting God and would suffer the consequences. He first reproved the people for their ingratitude. And then he relinquished his office as judge in favor of the king. Nevertheless, his office as prophet continued. As proof of the continuance of his prophetic office, he asked God to send rain and thunder at 'the time of the harvest, an event unheard of in Palestine.

Saul stood head and shoulders above the crowd when he was anointed king by Samuel. Yet his heart was humble. Unfortunately, this humility did not last long. Chapter 13 records Saul's great sin of intruding into the priest's office and performing the rites assigned to the priest. This was a flagrant violation of Numbers 3:10, 38. This sin caused Saul to lose the right to the perpetual kingdom (13:13). Because of his sin, God said He would choose another king. Saul's fate was later sealed when he deliberately disobeyed God (15:1-9).

3. David

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to secretly anoint the future king. Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel, but neither was the one chosen by God. Finally, David, the youngest and the keeper of the sheep, was called. In accordance with the will of God, "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (16:13).

As so often before, Israel and the Philistines went to war. The champion of the Philistines was Goliath, a giant who towered over nine feet and struck fear into the hearts of all Israel. Jesse sent David to the camp of the Israelites with provisions for his brothers. Though just a lad, David accepted Goliath's challenge and met him on the battlefield. Goliath, clad in his armor and armed with his sword and spear, appeared to be a sure winner over the lad who only had a sling. But David went in the name of the LORD and killed the giant.

David became the national hero. He and Jonathan, Saul's son, quickly became close friends. However, as the people began to praise David more than Saul, the king became jealous (18:6-9). When David slew 200 Philistines to win the hand of Michal, the king's daughter, in marriage, Saul realized that the Lord was with David and his fear and jealousy increased. Finally Saul plotted to kill David and David was forced to flee, living in exile. At various times, David could have killed Saul. However, David would not touch the Lord's anointed (chapter 24).

In the final chapter of I Samuel, Saul was defeated at Gilboa and committed suicide.

X. II SAMUEL

A. THEME

The reign of David is almost the exclusive topic of II Samuel. We are given a close-up picture of this man “after God’s own heart.” We see him upon the throne and in the home. We watch him in his deepest sorrows and in his greatest triumphs. We hear his prayers and praises; his righteous indignation; and his words of kindness, tenderness, and generosity. We witness his sins and his repentance. We see a man, despite some dark shadows in his life, who really put God first, and to whom above all else He was a glorious reality. David was a man deeply conscious of his own weaknesses, failures and sins, but who knew God and trusted Him with his whole heart.

B. AUTHOR

The author of II Samuel is assumed to be either Nathan or Gad (I Chronicles 29:29). In the original Hebrew, I and II Samuel form one book. They were divided by the Greek translators of the Septuagint about 285 B. C.

C. SCOPE

II Samuel spans the thirty-seven years from the death of Saul to the purchase of the Temple site.

D. CONTENTS

1. David’s Rise (Chapters 1-10)

Although Saul was David’s enemy and had sought to slay him, David lamented the death of his father-in-law. The events of chapter 1 show David’s character and potential for leadership. He did not gloat over the fallen king, but showed a tender spirit.

Following the death of Saul, God directed David to go up to Hebron. There David was made king over Judah. In defiance to David, Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, king over the Israel. The conflict between two reigning kings led to civil war. During the power struggle, Ishbosheth was slain—although not at David’s request. David was then crowned the king of all of Israel. One of David’s first acts as king was to capture the city of Jebus and rename it Jerusalem.

Having established his capital, David turned his attention to worship. He decided that Jerusalem should be his place of worship and planned to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the city of David. After resting in the house of Abinadab for twenty years, the ark was placed upon the new cart that the king ordered built and began its journey to Jerusalem. As the oxen pulled the wagon, the ark started to slide off. Uzzah reached to steady the ark and was slain (Numbers 4:15). David’s motive was right, but his method was wrong. God had ordained that the Levites were to carry the ark on poles. Uzzah suffered the consequences of his sin, but the fault was really with David.

In fear, David put the ark in the house of Obed-Edom. It rested there for three months, during which time God richly blessed Obed-Edom. When David returned for the ark, he took the Levites with him and did it the right way. Bringing the ark to Jerusalem was a joyous time for David and he expressed his great delight as he danced before the Lord with all his might (6:14). However, his demonstration embarrassed his wife Michal; she despised David and was barren.

David was the man “after God’s own heart.” He confided in the prophet Nathan his desire to build God a house for His name. Although the desire was honorable, God did not approve of the plan as David was a man of war and had shed blood. Instead, God would allow David’s son to build a house unto Him. David humbly accepted the will of God and set about to prepare the materials for use in constructing the Temple.

It was at this time that God made a promise, known as the *Davidic Covenant*, to David (7:12-16). God promised that there

would be no end to David's kingdom. This was a foreshadow of the kingdom of Christ, "the seed of David" according to the flesh. If David or his descendant sinned, they would be chastised, but the covenant would not be broken. Chastisement did fall: first in the division of the kingdom and finally in the captivity (II Kings 25:1-7). The only Davidic king crowned since then was Jesus Christ and He wore a crown of thorns.

David was a valiant king and subdued his foes. Many of his victories are recorded in chapters 8-10.

2. David's Fall (Chapters 11-20)

"At the time when kings go forth to battle" (11:1), David remained in the luxury of his palace. As he strolled on the roof of his house, David saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and lusted after her, even though he already had several other wives. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and she conceived. David then added to his sin by having Uriah sent to the front lines of the battle where he was slain. Although David married Bathsheba after Uriah's death, his guilt remained. Nathan the prophet confronted David with a parable which caused David to recognize his sin. David bitterly repented (Psalm 51) and God did forgive him. However, God's judgment fell and the baby died.

The Law of the Harvest states that one reaps what he sows. David sowed the seed of sin that germinated and bore fruit in his own family: gross immorality (13:1-18), murder (13:21-29), alienation (13:37-39); and rebellion (chapters 15-18).

3. David's Later Years (Chapters 21-24)

Famine struck David's kingdom. When he asked God the cause, he was told it was because Saul had slain the Gibeonites. Since they were wronged (Joshua 9:15), the Gibeonites were asked what retribution was required. They demanded the death of seven of Saul's sons to atone for his sin.

Chapter 22 records David's period of blessing and his grateful acknowledgement of Jehovah's grace and faithfulness.

David's second great sin, numbering the people, is found in

chapter 24. This numbering was contrary to the will of God and instigated by Satan (I Chronicles 21:1-6). David was advised against it; however, he would not listen. As the total was brought to him, his heart smote him with guilt and he confessed his foolishness. God offered him a choice of punishments, but David left the decision up to God. Even though pestilence was sent, God still showed mercy. David, ridden with guilt that the innocent perished because of his sin, purchased the threshing floor of Araunah and, in repentance, built an altar to God.

XI. I KINGS

A. THEME

I Kings continues the history of the Kingdom of Israel that was begun in I and II Samuel. It is the history of the rise, the glories, and the decline of the Hebrew kingdom according to the people's acceptance or rejection of their God. The book graphically shows that the people's relationship with God often depended on the attitude of the reigning monarch—an important lesson for each nation to learn.

B. AUTHOR

It is believed that Jeremiah compiled the records made by Nathan, Gad, and others (I Chronicles 29:29). I and II Kings was one book in the original Hebrew manuscripts.

C. SCOPE

I Kings records 118 years of Israel's history, from the death of David (1015 B.C.) to the reign of Jehoram over Israel (897 B.C.).

D. CONTENTS

1. The Establishment of Solomon's Kingdom (Chapters 1-2)

David, the giant-killer, was old and weak. His reign was coming to an end. His eldest son Adonijah, whom David had not displeased at any time (1:6), realized that Solomon had been promised the throne. Adonijah believed, however, that the right of succession was his as the first-born, gathered his followers together at Enrogel and proclaimed himself king.

When David heard of the usurpation through Nathan and Bethsheba, he immediately arranged to have Solomon crowned king. When the report of the coronation of his brother reached Adonijah, he rushed to the Tabernacle and grabbed the horns of the altar. He was dismissed with a warning by Solomon.

David's death and Solomon's accession are recorded in chapter 2.

2. Solomon's Reign (Chapters 3-11)

God offered Solomon anything that he would ask; whatever he wanted could be his. Solomon chose wisdom in order that he might lead God's people. God was pleased with his choice and promised him wisdom, honor, and riches. His wisdom was displayed as he dealt with the two harlots (3:16-28).

Solomon's first major task as king was building the temple that David had wanted to construct. The plans, basically an enlargement and elaboration of the Tabernacle, were drawn and a league was formed between Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre for wood from the cedars of Lebanon. Solomon then set about to gather the gold and brass and to cut the stone. The entire construction took seven years.

God's glory cloud so filled the Temple at the dedication (chapter 8) that the priests could not minister there. Solomon's sermon and prayer of dedication were followed by a great sacrificial offering and seven days of feasting and rejoicing.

God kept His promises and honored Solomon with wisdom, wealth, and fame. Many traveled from afar to see for themselves whether or not the reports they heard were true. One of these travelers was the Queen of Sheba. Upon seeing Solomon's riches and hearing his wisdom, she exclaimed that the half had not been told to her.

Solomon had a great beginning. He was wise and rich, but became foolish. He took many *strange wives*—not just many, but *foreign* women which God has expressly forbidden. These wives and concubines led Solomon into idolatry. He suffered the punishment of God (11:9-13).

3. The Disruption and Decline of the Kingdom (Chapters 11-22)

Solomon was succeeded on the throne by his son Rehoboam. Rehoboam, weak and foolish, refused to listen to his father's aged counsellors. Because of Rehoboam's folly (11:43-12:19), the ten tribes revolted and enthroned Jeroboam as king of Israel.

Both kingdoms suffered following the division, but Israel more so. All of Israel's kings were evil. And although most of Judah's kings were bad, there were a few good ones. Below is a partial list of the kings of the two kingdoms.

Kings of Judah

Rehoboam (mostly bad)

Abijam (mostly bad)

Asa (good)

Jehosaphat (good)

Jehorarn (bad)

Kings of Israel

Jeroboam (bad)

Nada (bad)

Baasha (bad)

Elah (bad)

Zimiri (bad)

Omri (extremely bad)

Ahab (the worst)

Ahaziah (bad)

4. Elijah, the Prophet

The bright spot through these chaotic times was the voice of the prophets. The kings had failed as an example; now the king and prophet would rule together. The king ruled the people, but God would rule the king through the prophet. Both wielded an influence over the nation, one for evil, one for good.

The major prophet mentioned in I Kings is Elijah. The main events in his ministry are:

- * His message to Ahab (17:1)
- * His flight to the brook Cherith (17:2-7)
- * His feeding by the widow of Zarephath and the raising of her son from the dead (17:8-24)

- * His contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (chapter 18)
- * His flight to Mount Sinai before Jezebel (19:1-18)
- * The call of Elisha (19:19-21)
- * His denunciation of Ahab for the murder of Naboth (21:17-29)
- * His message to Ahaziah (II Kings 1:3-16)
- * His translation (II Kings 2:1-11)

Elijah and John the Baptist are mentioned together in the New Testament, the latter as fulfilling the ministry of the former in relationship to the Messiah's first advent (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:10-13).

XII. II KINGS

A. THEME

II Kings continues the narrative of the downfall of Judah and Israel, culminating in the captivity of both. All of the kings of Judah and Israel are recorded in I and II Kings with the exception of Saul and David.

B. AUTHOR

The human author of II Kings is unknown. It is believed that Jeremiah compiled the records made by Nathan, Gad, and others.

C. SCOPE

II Kings spans the 308 years from the reigns of Jehoram over Judah and Ahaziah over Israel to the captivity, or from 896 to 588 B. C. This time was also the great prophetic period of Israel, but the message of the prophets was unheeded. A few reformations occurred, but they were superficial.

D. CONTENTS

1. A Listing of the Kings and Prophets

Kings of Judah	Prophet	Kings of Israel	Prophet
Ahaziah		Jehoram	Elisha
Athaliah		Jehu	
Joash			Jonah
Amaziah		Jehoahaz	
Azariah (Uzziah)	Isaiah	Joash	

	Amos	Jeroboam	Joel
	Hosea	Zechariah	
		Shallum	
Jotham		Menahem	
Ahaz	Micah	Pekahiah	
Hezekiah	Nahum	Pekah	
Manasseh		Hoshea	
Amon			
Josiah	Zephaniah		
	Jeremiah		
Jehoahaz			
Jehoiakim	Habakkuk		
Jehoiachin			
Zedekiah			

2. The Close of Elijah's Ministry (1:1-2:13)

Knowing he was about to die, Ahaziah sent for Elijah. He did not send for the prophet in humility, but perhaps he hoped to bribe Elijah to pray for his recovery. The behavior and attitude of the first two captains and their groups of fifty men were insulting to the prophet and to the Lord. Consequently, the royal messengers and their hosts were consumed by fire as they approached Elijah. A third group came in humility and was spared. Nevertheless, the king died as according to the word of the Lord.

Elisha was the steady companion of Elijah and asked for a double portion of his spirit or the privilege of being his successor in spiritual things. This was granted as Elisha watched while Elijah was taken up into Heaven by the whirlwind and his mantle fell to Elisha's feet.

3. Elisha's Ministry

The highlights of Elisha's life are:

- * His parting of the Jordan's water (2:14)
- * His healing of the bitter waters (2:19-22)
- * His cursing of the irreverent children (2:23-25)
- * His rebuke of the alliance of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram (3:10-27)

- * His increasing of the widow's oil (4:1-7)
- * His raising of the Shunammite woman's son (4:8-37)
- * His healing of the deadly pottage (4:38-41)
- * His feeding of the 100 men (4:42-44)
- * His healing of Naaman (5:1-27)
- * His recovery of the lost axe (6:1-7)
- * His dealings with the Syrian host (6:8-23)
- * His promise of food (7:1-20)
- * His prediction of seven years of famine (8:1, 2)
- * His visit to Ben-hadad (8:7-15)
- * His sending of the prophet to anoint Jehu asking (9:1 -10)
- * His illness and death (13:14-21)

4. The Decline and Fall of Israel

Every one of Israel's nineteen kings followed the worship of the golden calf. Some also served Baal. Not one ever attempted to bring the people back to God. Because of their constant idolatry, Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, was finally destroyed by Assyria in 721 B. C. The different tribes were scattered, never again to be united as before. By their violent separation from the rest of the nation, the ten tribes had already broken the unity of the chosen people and revolted from the national covenant with Jehovah. This was a period of national dissolution. And it was also a lesson to Judah concerning the punishment for apostasy (I Kings 11:11, 31; 12:15).

Assyria resettled large portions of the ten tribes around her empire. The void was filled by Assyrian colonists who intermarried with the remnant of the ten tribes who remained in the land. They later abandoned their idolatry and became zealous adherents to the law of Moses. After captivity, they attempted to join with the two tribes, but were repelled by Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 4:1-3). This rebuff sparked the rivalry and hatred between the Jews and Samaritans who built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20).

5. The Decline and Fall of Judah

The kingdom of Judah lasted about 150 years longer than Israel. Throughout Judah's lifetime as a nation, David's royal line was kept intact. Even though many of the kings worshiped idols, the religion of the nation was God-worship. Unlike Israel, Judah did experience times of great reformation. On the whole, however, despite the warnings, Judah sank lower into the horrible practices of Baal and other religions-till there was no remedy (II Chronicles 36:16). Finally, in 606 B. C.,

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and carried away the first captives. This captivity had been foretold for more than a century (Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10), and according to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11, 12) would last seventy years.

XIII. I CHRONICLES

A. THEME

I Chronicles' theme is the sovereignty of God. Although the books of Kings and Chronicles show great similarity in content, they are written from different perspectives. Kings reflect the human viewpoint, while Chronicles are written from the divine. Chronicles deal primarily with the history of Judah.

B. AUTHOR

The authorship of I Chronicles is uncertain. It is thought, however, to have been edited by Ezra, perhaps in part with the purpose of encouraging the people to build the House of God upon their return from the captivity.

C. SCOPE

I and II Chronicles span the 520 years, 1056 to 536 B.C., from the death of Saul to the decree of Cyrus. The book was probably written during or shortly after the captivity.

D. CONTENT

1. The Genealogies (Chapters 1-9)

I Chronicles opens with genealogies, beginning with Adam. These records help to establish that the Bible is history, not legend. Not all the descendants of Adam are named, but the principle characters that make for the continuance of history are listed. Possibly, the immediate object of these records was the resettling of the land according to the public records. The land had originally been apportioned according to tribes and

family. Also, the priesthood was hereditary in families. The central interest of the genealogies, of course, is in tracing the descent of David's line for the Messiah.

2. David Made King (Chapters 10-12)

As mentioned earlier, there are similarities between the events recorded in Kings and Chronicles. One example is the reign of David. Chronicles narrates:

- * His ascension to the throne (chapter 11)
- * His capture of Jerusalem (chapter 12)
- * His mistake in transporting the ark in a new cart (chapter 13)
- * His victory over the Philistines (chapter 14)
- * His bringing the ark to Jerusalem (chapter 15)
- * His great festival of rejoicing (chapter 16)
- * His desire to build a Temple and its denial (chapter 17)
- * His great military victories (chapters 18-20)
- * His sinful census (chapter 21)
- * His preparation of materials for the Temple (chapter 22)

3. Duties and Organization (Chapters 23-27)

With the upcoming building of a permanent Temple, the duties of the Levites were respecified and the priesthood and Levites were organized.

4. David's Final Word and Prayer (Chapters 28, 29)

Realizing that his days were coming to an end, David made his last charge to the people and then to Solomon. Solomon was then crowned king. The book closes with the death of David.

XIV. II CHRONICLES

A. THEME

As with I Chronicles, II Chronicles repeats many of the events dealt with in II Samuel, and I and II Kings. There are some forty parallel passages in II Chronicles, a book dealing with the reign of Solomon and the succeeding kings of Judah.

B. AUTHOR

The authorship of II Chronicles is uncertain. It is thought that Ezra edited the book.

C. SCOPE

Continuing the history of Judah began in I Chronicles, II Chronicles commences with Solomon and ends with the proclamation by Cyrus which permitted the people to return from their captivity and authorized them to rebuild the Temple.

D. CONTENTS

1. The Reign of Solomon (Chapters 1-9)

Chapters 1-9 record the primary events of Solomon's reign. These events include:

- * Solomon's sacrifice at Gibeon and his wise choice (chapter 1)
- * Solomon's building of the Temple (chapters 2-4)
- * God's glory filling the Temple (chapter 5)
- * Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (chapter 6)

- * Jehovah's appearance to Solomon again at night (chapter 7)
- * Solomon's prosperity and fame (chapter 8)
- * The Queen of Sheba's visit and Solomon's death (chapter 9)

2. The Reign of Rehoboam (Chapters 10-12)

Solomon was followed on the throne by Rehoboam, his foolish and head-strong son. Rehoboam's refusal to listen to the wise counsel of the old men of Israel resulted in the revolt of the ten tribes. This action was in fulfillment of God's promise to Solomon in I Kings 9:6-9.

3. The History of the Various Reigns (Chapters 13-36)

Chapters 13-36 provide the history of the kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah and ruled from 597-586 B.C. He was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Zedekiah later rebelled against Babylon. In retaliation, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and carried him in chains to Babylon, where he died in prison. This was the end of David's earthly kingdom.

4. The Proclamation of Cyrus (36:22, 23)

The proclamation of Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah and authorized them to rebuild the temple. This decree was a manifestation of God's grace in spite of His judgment.

XV. EZRA

A. INTRODUCTION

The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ester are closely connected and deal with the same period. The principal events covered in these three books of post-exilic history are:

- * The exiles return under Zerubbabel—536 B.C.
- * The rebuilding of the Temple—535 B.C.
- * The ministry of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah—520 B.C.
- * The dedication of the temple—515 B.C.
- * The events related in the book of Esther—478-473 B.C.
- * Ezra's visit to Jerusalem—458 B.C.
- * Nehemiah sent to Jerusalem as governor; his rebuilding of the wall—446 B.C.
- * Malachi's prophecies

B. THEME

The theme of Ezra is the restoration. The book deals with the rebuilding of the Temple and restoration of the law in the hearts of the people. It records the separation of Israel from heathen influence and customs. God was true to His promise and restored His people to their lands, using heathen kings—Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes—as His instruments.

C. AUTHOR

The writer of this book was probably the scribe Ezra. It was written in the first person by Ezra in chapters 7 and 9. The work of settling the Old Testament canon has also been attributed to him.

D. SCOPE

The events in Ezra cover the seventy-nine years from approximately 536 B.C. to 457 B.C., spanning the time from the return from Babylon to the establishment in Palestine.

1. The Return Under Zerubbabel (Chapters 1-6)

Cyrus was the Persian king who overthrew the Babylonian empire in fulfillment of divine prophecy. Isaiah called Cyrus by name 200 years before the king's birth (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4). Jeremiah foretold of the captivity and advised the people to yield to their enemy for their ultimate good (Jeremiah 27:7). Also see Daniel 5:28.

Zerubbabel led the first group of exiles back to Judah in 536 B.C. This band consisted of 42,360 Jews, 7,337 servants, and 200 singers. The exiles took with them gold, silver, and 100 priests' garments for the work of the Lord. They also took 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

In the seventh month of their return, the people built an altar and sacrificed unto the Lord. Following the restoration of the ancient worship, the people, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, laid the foundation of the Temple in the second year of their return, 535 B.C. The young rejoiced at the sight, but the very old wept as they remembered the size of the original Temple.

The Assyrians that intermarried with the remnant of the tribes became known as the Samaritans. They were greatly angered when their offers to help were rejected and began to hinder the building. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the people to continue the construction (520 B.C.) Finally, an appeal was made to Darius. After searching the archives of the kingdom, Darius also encouraged the people to finish the Temple. It was completed and dedicated in 516 B.C.

2. The Return Under Ezra (Chapters 7-10)

The second group of captives to return to Palestine was led by Ezra. He was commissioned in 457 B.C. by King Artaxerxes. His purpose was to seek the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it (7:10). Accompanying Ezra on his journey were 1,754 males, 100 talents of gold, and 750 talents of silver. From the outset of the trip, a fast was proclaimed as Ezra wanted to trust in the Lord for their safe conduct, not the soldiers.

One of the major problems that Ezra faced was the people's sin. Although forbidden by God (Exodus 34:15, 16; Deuteronomy 7:3), the people had intermarried with foreigners. As a result of Ezra's fervent prayer, the people were convicted of their sin and put away their foreign wives. These foreign women had led their husbands into idolatry—the very reason they had been banished to captivity for seventy years. From that time on the people served the true God.

XVI. NEHEMIAH

A. THEME

The book of Nehemiah is the autobiography of a man who sacrificed the ease and luxury of life in the courts of Persia in order to help his needy brethren in Jerusalem. It describes a man who combined spirituality with practicality, a man who knew how both to pray and to work. Absolutely fearless, Nehemiah refused to compromise with enemies on the outside or with sin in the inside. Yet, for all that was done, he humbly gave God the glory.

B. AUTHOR

The author of this autobiography is Nehemiah.

C. SCOPE

Covering approximately twelve years, 446-434 B.C., Nehemiah recorded the events pertaining to his journey to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the city wall, and the restoration of the Temple worship.

D. COMMENT

Although the traditional order of the post-exilic history books are Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, the chronological order places Esther before Nehemiah. Esther may have used her influence as the queen to get Nehemiah, also a Jew, into such an honored position in the royal palace. The reigning king during the time recorded in Nehemiah would have been her stepson.

As a review:

- * Israel was taken captive by Assyria in 721 B.C.
- * Judah fell to Babylonia in 606 B.C.
- * Persia permitted the Jews to return to their homeland in 536 B.C.

E. CONTENTS

1. The Building of the Wall of Jerusalem (Chapters 1-6)

Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the Persian king. This was a position of great honor, entitling him to the luxury of the empire. However, Nehemiah did not forget his people, the Jews, amid the Persian splendor. He was so greatly distressed when he learned of the suffering of the Jews in Jerusalem and of the condition of the city's wall that he wept and mourned for certain days, fasting and praying. The king, Artaxerxes, was aware of Nehemiah's trouble countenance and asked the problem. Nehemiah explained the reason and then asked permission to rebuild the city. Artaxerxes granted the request and even supplied the needed finance and materials.

Ezra had already been in Jerusalem for thirteen years when Nehemiah arrived as governor with the authority of the king. Ezra was a priest and had taught the people the law, doing much to improve the spiritual and moral condition of the people. However, the city's dilapidated condition became Nehemiah's major concern. He organized the people and assigned families to build designated sections of the wall.

The Samaritans began to scoff and hinder as building began. The opposition became so severe that each worker kept a sword at his side and a twenty-four hour watch was established. The enemy mocked and ridiculed, but Nehemiah prayed and encouraged the people. The wall was completed in fifty-two days, because "the people had a mind to work" (6:4). The opposition recognized that the work was done by God. How much more could be accomplished for God's kingdom if each of us had a mind to work for Him.

2. Revival of Religion and Reestablishment of Worship (Chapters 7-13:3)

With the wall repaired, Nehemiah turned his attention to repairing the morals of the people. He first chose officers who would take his place when he returned to Persia. Then a register was taken for the purpose of distributing the land according to the ancestral abode of each family. The register also determined to whom the duty of ministering before the altar and conducting Temple worship belonged.

Once it was established who could serve in the Temple worship, Ezra and Nehemiah read the law to the people. For two days the people stood and listened as the law was read and interpreted. The reading of the Word revealed sin and brought conviction to the people. Genuine revival broke forth as the people humbled themselves in repentance and consecration.

3. Correction of Abuses (13:4-31)

After his first reforms, Nehemiah returned to Persia for a short while. Upon returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah found that the people had lapsed back into their old sin. He strongly rebuked them for their error. This shows the need for good, strong spiritual leadership. Left to his own devices, man tends to follow his carnal nature. How thankful we must be for the men of God who will lead and guide us in the way of eternal life.

XVII. ESTHER

A. THEME

The book of Esther is an oddity in the Bible. The name of God is not once mentioned, neither is there any reference to Jewish law or religion. Yet, there is abundant evidence of God working and caring for His people. The book records the deliverance of the Jews from the threat of destruction.

The events of Esther antedate Nehemiah by about thirty years. It is conceivable that Esther made the work of Nehemiah possible. Her marriage to the king must have given the Jews great prestige. Except for her, Jerusalem may never have been rebuilt. The book of Esther is about a very important historical event, not just a story to point a moral: *The Hebrew nation's deliverance from annihilation* in the days of the captivity in Babylon. If the Hebrew nation had been entirely wiped out of existence, there would have been no Messiah.

B. AUTHOR

The author of Esther is unknown. It may have been Mordecai; others believe that Ezra wrote it.

C. SCOPE

The events in Esther seem to fit between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, before Ezra and the first band of the remnant left for Jerusalem. It should be realized that many Jews were born in Babylon during the seventy years of captivity and were content to remain there.

D. CONTENTS

1. The Feast of Ahasuerus (Chapters 1-2)

Ahasuerus, the emperor Xerxes of the Persian empire—the same one who was defeated by the Greeks in 480 B.C. at the battle of Salamis—gave a feast befitting one who ruled from India to Ethiopia. “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine” (1:10), he commanded that Vashti, the queen, be brought before him so his guests could see her beauty. Vashti refused. As it was considered wrong for a woman—especially the queen—to appear before men in public, she was within her rights. However, her disobedience enraged the king who rashly deposed his wife.

The king was later sorry for his action. Nevertheless, he could not change the decree, for according to the Persian custom a law was irrevocable. His advisers suggested that they search among the virgins of the land and find a new queen. Esther was among those brought to the court. Without realizing she was Jewish, the king selected her to wear the royal crown.

Another link in God’s chain of deliverance is found in chapter 2. Mordecai, Esther’s cousin (2:7), discovered a plot to kill the king. He reported the scheme to the queen who in turn notified the authorities. This incident later played an important part in the story of Esther.

2. The Feast of Esther (Chapters 3-8)

Haman was promoted above all the princes of Persia and loved the honor he was accorded. The Jew Mordecai, however, refused to bow to any man, reserving such honor solely for his God. This infuriated Haman, who then convinced the king that all Jews were a menace to the empire and should be killed. The king was duped and had an irrevocable edict written, stating that the Jews were to be massacred. Mordecai learned of the decree and begged Esther to intercede for her people.

Risking her own life by approaching the king unbidden, the queen invited the king to a banquet. Unable to sleep following the banquet, the king had the court chronicles read and discovered that Mordecai had not been rewarded for saving his life. This news upset the king, who asked, “What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?” Haman, thinking that the king was, speaking of him, unwittingly advised the king to highly honor Mordecai. The king and Haman then returned to the queen house for another banquet. It was then that Esther pleaded for her own life and the lives of her people. The king, realizing the grave

wrong that Haman had caused, ordered his death.

3. The Feast of Purim (Chapter 8)

Since the original decree was irrevocable, the king authorized the Jews by letter to resist and to slay all who would attack them. As a result hundreds of the Jews' enemies were destroyed. The Feast of Purim was instituted to commemorate their deliverance.

The king then appointed Mordecai as the prime minister. Together Mordecai and Esther paved the way for the work of Ezra and Nehemiah.

XVIII. JOB

A. INTRODUCTION

Job is the first of the five **Poetical Books**. The others are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

B. THEME

Job is an outstanding book in the realm of philosophy with suffering as its theme. Its reasoning of life and man should be given due consideration, for it inquires into many subjects that have perplexed man's mind throughout the centuries. It not only inquires, but also answers many of the problems—especially the question, Why do the righteous suffer?

At the conclusion of the book, Elihu explained that God had a purpose in sending suffering to men, that He chasten man for the purpose of bringing him nearer to Himself. God used affliction as a trial of Job's character and as a means of revealing to him the sin of self-righteousness, which he had hitherto been unconscious.

C. AUTHOR

The author of Job is unknown.

D. DATE

The date of Job is a much-discussed topic. Because of its lack of reference to the Mosiac law, it is regarded by many scholars to be the oldest book of the Bible. Others place the book as late as the exile.

E. CONTENTS

1. Satan's Attack on Job (1:1-2:10)

Job was a very devout man who sacrificed and prayed daily for his family. He was upright and highly respected by his peers. He was also one of the richest men of the East. Satan appeared before God, falsely accused Job, and obtained leave to tempt him. Although Satan had to admit that Job was a God-fearing man, he insinuated that Job served God only because it brought him prosperity. Satan further implied that God was unable to win the *unselfish love* of man. Consequently, God allowed Job to be tried in order to vindicate His own character and that of his servant. In sudden succession, Job suffered the loss of his children, servants, animals, and property, but still blessed the Lord and worshiped. Satan then reappeared before God and obtained permission to further try Job by smiting him with boils.

2. Job and His Friends (2:1-31:40)

In the midst of Job's despair, he was visited by three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They were so shocked at his condition, they sat and stared in amazement, without saying a word, for seven days. When they did speak, they contended that Job's suffering was the result of sin. They argued that since Job was more afflicted than all the men of the earth, he must be the greatest sinner. They told Job that if he would just repent of his sins, God would restore his happiness. They warned that trying to justify himself would only delay his restoration. They admitted that sometimes the wicked do prosper, but their prosperity would pass away and retribution would overtake them.

One must remember that even though the utterances of Job's friends were recorded by inspiration, the utterances themselves were not inspired. God charged the three friends with error in 42:8.

Job maintained that it was possible for the righteous to be afflicted. He considered his friends cruel to accuse him of sin because of his afflictions. Not understanding God's purpose in afflicting him Job contended that God acted according to His sovereign pleasure in distributing good and evil, not regarding merit nor guilt. He believed that there were times when a sufferer had a right to justify himself and to repine at God's decree. Job later retracted some of his assertions and admitted that God generally afflicted the wicked and blessed the righteous. However, there were exceptions to his generality and Job maintained that it was unjust to

conclude a man a sinner simply because of his afflictions. Job believed it was man's duty to adore God, even though suffering calamities not deserved. Nevertheless, one should abstain from harshly judging those who, when distressed, sent forth complaints against God.

3. Elihu's Message (Chapters 32-37)

Elihu was a fourth and younger visitor. Because of his age, he sat back and listened quietly to the rationale of the three friends. Finally, he told Job that Job was wrong in boasting of his integrity as God is no man's debtor. Elihu then reproved the three for their harsh accusations against Job. Suffering, he stated, could be for discipline or for the development of character.

4. Jehovah's Answer to Job (38:1-42:16)

At length, God answered Job's complaint. Speaking from a whirlwind, He dwelt on the ignorance, impotence, helplessness, and infinitesimal smallness of man compared to God. Job was driven to complete repentance. His knowledge of God had only been hearsay, but now it was experimental. He was seeing God as He really was (and is) and in doing so, he was seeing himself as he really was.

5. Conclusion (42:7-17)

After Job prayed for his friends, God restored Job's health and prosperity with great reward.

From the book we may learn that good men are subject to testing. Such testing may temporarily bring man low and is not necessary the punishment for sin. Job shows that the true Christian character may be maintained in spite of difficult circumstances. The end of all affliction is for the ultimate good, the development of human character, and for the glory of God (Romans 8:28, 29).

Job stated, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). Job knew that his testing was only a temporary situation. He looked forward to the time that he would be vindicated. But through it all, "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (1:22).

XIX. PSALMS

A. THEME

Psalms is a collection of inspired Hebrew poetry, setting forth the worship and describing the spiritual experiences of the Jewish people. In the historical books we see God speaking *about man*. In the prophetic books we see God speaking to man. In the Psalms we see *man speaking to God*.

As the Old Testament saint thus spoke to his God, whatever his experience was, one note predominated all through his worship—praise. He was able to praise God in all circumstances, for His faithfulness in the past was and is a guarantee of His faithfulness in the future. There is also the prophetic element in the Psalms. Several times the writers broke forth into inspired utterances concerning the coming of God's glorious kingdom and of His glorious King—the Messiah. The New Testament possibly quotes the Psalms more than any other Old Testament book.

B. AUTHOR

Many of the Psalms are anonymous and the authorship of some are doubtful. The following are generally recognized authors:

- 73 are ascribed to David
- 12 are ascribed to Asaph
- 11 are ascribed to the Sons of Korah
- 2 are ascribed to the Solomon
- 1 is ascribed to Moses
- 1 is ascribed to Ethan

Other scholars also list the following:

- 1 is ascribed to Zechariah
- 1 is ascribed to Heman
- 1 is ascribed to Ezra

A doubtful number are ascribed to Hezekiah and Jeduthun.

C. CONTENTS

As stated above, Psalms is a book of Hebrew poetry. Typical English poetry is characterized by rhythm, rhyme, and meter. Hebrew poetry, however, depends on parallelism of thought where the idea is stated in one way and then repeated in another as opposed to the mechanics of the Western world. Examples of parallelism of thought are easily seen in Psalm 2:4 and Psalm 140:1.

Psalms, often described as the Hymnbook of Israel, can be divided into five books which correspond to the five parts of the Pentateuch. The first book, Psalms 1-41, concerns man, his fall, and restoration. Psalm 1 begins, "Blessed is the man. . . ." This section corresponds to Genesis. Psalms 42-72 comprise the second section whose key thought is Israel (Exodus). The sanctuary (Leviticus) is the theme for the third division, Psalms 73-89. The fourth book, Psalms 90-106, begins with, "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (90:1, 2). The theme of this book is the earth (Numbers). The final section consists of Psalms 107-150. Its central idea is the Word of God (Deuteronomy). One psalm of this division, 119, has a reference to God's Word in every verse.

Psalms is a great source for devotional reading. Countless souls have been lifted by reading such passages as Psalms 23, 51, 91, and 121. Psalm 146:2, states "While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." May our purpose and intent be to magnify and to glorify our God, regardless of what the circumstances may be.

XX. PROVERBS

A. THEME

Proverbs is the book of wisdom; it is also the practical book of the Old Testament. It applies the principles of righteousness, purity, and godliness to everyday living. It teaches wisdom based on the fear of the Lord.

B. AUTHOR

Solomon is generally credited with the authorship of the majority of Proverbs. However, he was not the only one. The wisdom of “the wise” (22:17), the men of Hezekiah (25:1), Agur (30:1) and King Lemuel and his mother (31:1) is also included in the book.

C. CONTENTS

Proverbs can be loosely divided into three divisions. Chapters 1-10 give counsel to the young men. Proverbs 3:5, 6 state, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” The second section, chapters 11-20, instructs all men. One example of the wisdom recorded by Solomon is Proverbs 15:1, 2, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.” The remainder of the book, chapters 21-31, pertains primarily to kings and rulers. Proverbs 22:1 counsels, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.”

The book closes with one of the most beautiful chapters in

the Bible which describes the ideal women. This chapter has been an inspiration to women of all ages.

XXI. ECCLESIASTES

A. TITLE

The title Ecclesiastes means “the preacher.”

B. THEME

After his departure from God (I Kings 11:1-8), Solomon still retained riches and wisdom. Possessed of these, he began his quest for truth and happiness apart from God. The result of this quest is expressed in the ever-recurring phrase “all is vanity.” (Vanity here means “emptiness, worthlessness.”) Solomon learned the following truth which sums up the theme of the book: Without God’s blessing, wisdom, position and riches do not satisfy, but rather bring weariness and disappointment. This fact shows the value of Ecclesiastes, a book whose general tone is pessimistic.

C. CONTENTS

Solomon began his book with a discussion of the vanity of human pleasure and wisdom (chapters 1 and 2). He then proceeded to the hindrances and means of advancing earthly happiness (chapters 3-5). In 6:1-8:15 the foolish wise king reflected on true practical wisdom. True wisdom does not consist in striving after earthly sources of happiness (6:1-12), for even those who possess wealth do not attain to a true lasting enjoyment of them. True wisdom consists in a contempt of the world and foolish lusts (7:1-7), in a patient, calm, and resigned spirit (7:8-14), and in an earnest fear of God and a sincere acknowledgement of sin (7:15-22). Next, Solomon considered the relation of true wisdom to the life of man (8:16-20:20). God’s dealings with man are sometimes mysterious (8:16-9:6), but that should not discourage the wise man from taking an active part

in life. Though the result of human labor is sometimes uncertain, man should not be discouraged in his search for wisdom (9:11-16).

After his reasonings, some true and some false, Solomon came to his conclusions. These represent the very best that the natural man can do, apart from revelation, to attain to happiness and favor with God. His conclusions include:

- * Faithfulness in benevolence and in one's calling (11:1-6).
- * A calm and contented enjoyment of this life (11:7-10).
- * The fear of God for the young and old in view of a coming judgment (12:1-7).
- * The fear of God and the keeping of His commandments (12:13, 14).

Ecclesiastes reflects the utter vanity—emptiness and worthlessness—of life without God. No matter what Solomon tried and experienced, nothing replaced the love and blessings he had known in serving God. How sad the soul is who departs from the paths of God.

XXII. SONG OF SOLOMON

A. TITLE

In Hebrew the name of this book is “Song of Songs,” evidently so called from the fact that of all of Solomon’s songs (I Kings 4:32), this is the greatest.

B. THEME

Song of Solomon is a love story, glorifying pure, natural affection. However, it may also be applied in the following ways:

Literally—the love of man and woman
Dispensationally—the love of Jehovah God and Israel
Doctrinally—the love of Christ and His Church
Spiritually—the love of the Lord and the individual soul

Note: Song of Solomon is an oriental poem, and the Orientals are given to great plainness of speech in the most intimate of matters. Delicate and intimate as the language is in many places, there is nothing here that would offend the most modest Oriental.

C. AUTHOR

Solomon, the son of David and king of Israel, wrote this book.

D. CONTENTS

1. The Bride In Solomon’s Gardens (1:2-2:7)

The book opens with the bride asking for a pledge of love

and praising the bridegroom. She then pleaded with the daughters of Jerusalem not to despise her humble origin and asked where she might find the bridegroom. Following the answer of the maidens is an affectionate conversation between Solomon and his bride.

2. The Bride's Memories (2:8-3:5)

Lovingly, the bride recalled her lover's visit one spring and a dream concerning him.

3. The Betrothal (3:6-5:1)

The inhabitants of Jerusalem described the approach of the king and the bride. This is followed by another conversation between the king and his beloved.

4. At the Palace (5:2-8:4)

The bride related a dream she had concerning Solomon. She dreamed that he had departed, and that in her search for him, she had been harshly treated by the watchman of the city. In her dream, she inquired of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning him and described his beauty. Solomon then entered and praised her. The bride invited Solomon to visit her home.

5. The Bride's Home (8:5-14)

This last section is the conversation between Solomon, the bride, and the inhabitants of her country.

XXIII. ISAIAH

A. THEME

The book of Isaiah is the most beautiful and sublime of all the prophetic writings. Sometimes called the “Fifth Gospel” because of its emphasis of God’s grace and His redemptive work in relation to Israel and the nations, its two main divisions may be listed as Denunciation (1-39) and Consolation (40-46).

In the first chapters are prophesied Israel’s captivity by the Babylonians and the tribulation and judgments of the last days. The second section contains prophecies of Israel’s return from the Babylonian captivity and of their final restoration and regathering to Palestine in the endtimes. We may summarize the theme of Isaiah as follows: The wrath of God resulting in Israel’s condemnation and tribulation; the grace of God resulting in their salvation and exaltation. Isaiah is full of prophecies concerning the coming of the Saviour.

The key word of the *book is salvation*.

B. AUTHOR

Isaiah, perhaps the greatest of the prophets, authored the book that bears his name. His name means “salvation of Jehovah.” He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and perhaps during the reign of Manasseh, or approximately 757-697 B.C. He was a noble-born statesman as well as a prophet, speaking and acting in connection with the public affairs of the nation. Tradition states that he was sawed asunder by the wicked Manasseh.

C. SCOPE

The historical events recorded in Isaiah cover a period of about sixty-two years, from 760 to 698 B.C.

D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following dates should be kept in mind as one reads the book of Isaiah:

Hebrew kingdom divided	933 B.C.
Rise of Assyria as a world power	about 900 B.C.
Start of Assyrian captivity	734 B.C.
End of Israel (Northern Kingdom)	721 B.C.
Fall of Assyria/Rise of Babylon	607 B.C.
Jerusalem conquered and burned	606-586 B.C.
Babylonia captivity	606-537 B.C.
Fall of Babylon/Rise of Persia	536 B.C.
Return from captivity	536 B.C.

Other historical facts can be found II Chronicles 26:1 to 32:33.

E. CONTENTS

1. Denunciation (Chapters 1-39)

- * Prophecies Concerning Judah and Jerusalem (chapters 1-12)

Isaiah began his prophecy by denouncing the sins of Judah and Jerusalem. Utterly apostate, they had a form of godliness, but that was a stench in Jehovah's nostrils. Nevertheless, God promised pardon and restoration through judgment.

In chapters 2 to 4, Isaiah gave three pictures of Zion. He depicted her exaltation in the last days (the Millennium) (2:1-4); her then present condition of ungodliness, pride and idolatry (2:5-4:1); and her purification by the fires of judgment in the last days (4:2-6). These descriptions of Zion were followed by further denunciation of Judah's and Israel's sins (chapter 5).

Isaiah's prophetic call is recorded in chapter 6. He first saw the Lord high and lifted up, recognized and confessed his sin, received cleansing from his sin, heard the voice of God, and then volunteered for service.

May we all receive a renewed vision of God's holiness, humble ourselves before Him, and respond to the needs of the world by saying, "Here am I; send me."

Next, Isaiah gave several warnings to the king of Judah (7:1-9:7). These warnings concerned an alliance with Assyria. Israel, the northern ten tribes, joined with Syria and planned to invade Judah and place a strange king upon the throne of David. In fear, Ahaz turned to Assyria (I Kings 16). Isaiah sought to reassure the king to trust in Jehovah, the eternal King, instead of the Assyrian monarch. Still, Ahaz feared that the Davidic line would cease. Thereupon, Jehovah Himself gave a sign that the House of David would continue forever. The sign was the birth of a child by a virgin (7:14; see Matthew 1:21). The child would be a light (9:1, 2) and would reign over the House of David forever (9:6, 7).

The great truth of God manifested in flesh is revealed in Isaiah 9:6, 7:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the lord of hosts will perform this.

In 9:8, Isaiah began to enumerate the unheeded calamities that Jehovah had sent upon the ten tribes: Foreign invasion (9:8-17), anarchy (9:18-21), and impending captivity (10:1-4). God had commissioned Assyria to chastise Israel. Through the chastisement, Israel would learn not to put her trust in idolatrous nations and God would leave a remnant. Nevertheless, God would judge Assyria for their pride and arrogance against Him. The king of Assyria would be destroyed in a supernatural way (10:24-34). See II Kings 18 and 19.

Chapters II and 12 contain Messianic prophecies which should be carefully noted.

* Prophecies of Judgments on the Nations (chapters 13-23)

Chapter 13 begins a new section of prophecies which center around the judgment on the nations. These prophecies are both literal and symbolic. They are actually fulfilled in a literal sense in the Babylonian captivity. In a symbolic sense, they refer to the times of the Gentiles. One should remember that the dominant world power in Isaiah's time was Assyria. He sang of the fall of Babylon a hundred years before its rise. He clearly envisioned the rise of Babylon as though he was there; the fall is pictured in amazing detail. The Medes, almost unknown in Isaiah's day, were named as the destroyers of Babylon (13:17-19). Isaiah thus prophesied a soon-coming national tribulation (the Babylonian captivity) and restoration, while he also looked forward and foretold Israel's final tribulation and restoration in the last days.

* Prophecies of World Judgments Ending in Israel's Redemption (chapters 24-27)

The whole world will be judged because of sin. Afterwards God will bring Israel back into blessing, divine blessing, in a millennial age (chapter 24). This will be a glorious time for Israel, singing the song of restoration (25:1-26-19). Chapter 27 concerns the revival of God's vineyard.

* Prophecies of Judgment and Mercy (chapters 28-35).

Chapters 28-35 contain a series of woes against Samaria, Jerusalem and Edom. These are interspersed with comforting promises of Israel's restoration and blessing.

* The Invasion and Deliverance of Judah (chapters 36-39)

In chapters 36-39, Isaiah recorded the fulfillment of the prediction made earlier concerning the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians, and her deliverance by the Lord. This section also serves as an introduction to chapters 40-66. By recording the prophecy of the Babylonian captivity (39:5-8), the way was prepared for the promises of restoration.

The story of King Hezekiah is also found in this section.

2. Consolation (Chapters 40-66)

Isaiah's prophecies began a new theme in chapter 40. In the earlier chapters he had predicted divine judgment because of the sins of Israel and Judah. Now he turned from denunciation to consolation and prophesied of deliverance.

* Deliverance from Captivity Through Cyrus (chapters 40-48)

The theme of chapters 40-48 is the deliverance from captivity by Cyrus, the king of Persia (44:24-45:25). Cyrus was surnamed and commissioned by the Lord 150 years before his birth. However, Cyrus could only be a temporal deliverer. The prophecies looked beyond his ability to the spiritual deliverance promised through God's servant, the Messiah (42:1-43:13), whose coming was foretold in the beginning of this section (40:1-11). Verses 40:3-5 are quoted in all four Gospels as referring to Christ's arrival in the earth (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; and John 1:23).

One of the purposes of prophecy is to show Jehovah's power to predict future events (41:1-4, 22, 23). Chapter 48 reiterates God's exclusive and unique power to **predict and control the** course of history. The exiles in captivity-still in the future at Isaiah's writing-would not be able to say that the heathen idols caused their release by Cyrus as their deliverance was foretold 150 years earlier. The fall of Babylon was again prophesied.

* Redemption Through Suffering and Sacrifice (chapters 49-57)

Chapters 49-57 revolve around the Servant of God. The ministry of the Messiah is foretold in chapter 49. The humiliation of the Christ by rebellious Israel is shown in chapter 50. Chapter 51:1-52:12 encourages the faithful remnant of Israel to trust in God both for deliverance from their long Babylonian exile and from their present dispersion. Chapter 52:13-53:12 depicts the rejection, humiliation, death, resurrection and exaltation of the Messiah. Isaiah 53 is one of the most loved chapters in all the Bible. The details are so vividly described that one would almost think that Isaiah was an eyewitness, yet the chapter was written seven centuries before Calvary. This is one of the great evidences that holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God. The events portrayed could not possibly fit anyone other than Jesus Christ.

Isaiah prophesied of Israel's repentance for their rejection of the Messiah to be followed by their restoration (chapter 54). The result of Israel's restoration would be the call of all nations to faith in the Messiah (chapters 55, 56). Chapter 57 gives comforting promises to the faithful remnant in Israel and denounces the wicked of the nation.

* The Future Glory of the People of God (chapters 58-66)

The final chapters of Isaiah foretell of the establishment of God's universal kingdom and its triumph over every form of evil. The people were exhorted to practical religion as opposed to mere formality. Likewise, Israel was urged to forsake their sins which had separated them from God. God Himself (the Messiah) would come to rescue them, making an everlasting covenant with them and putting His spirit within them (59:16-21).

The remaining chapters concern the future state of Israel and the role of the Messiah as the Avenger and Judge. The book concludes with a glorious prophecy of the coming of the Millennial kingdom.

XXIV. JEREMIAH

A. THEME

Jeremiah, like Isaiah, carried a message of condemnation to apostate Israel. However, in contrast to Isaiah's vigorous and severe manner, Jeremiah's tone is mild and gentle. He carried an expression of Jehovah's sorrow because of Israel's sin. Whereas Isaiah dipped his pen in fire, Jeremiah's inkhorn was filled with tears. He stated in 9:1, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Because of this, Jeremiah is known as the "Weeping Prophet."

The theme of the book is Jehovah's unchanging love toward His backslidden people and His sorrow for their condition.

B. AUTHOR

Jeremiah, the son of the priest Hilkiah, is the author of the book that bears his name. He was called to the ministry while still young (1:6), about seventy years after the death of Isaiah. He ministered in Jerusalem and other cities for about forty years.

He lived under the reign of seven kings and suffered severe persecution under some. Jehoiakim imprisoned him because of his boldness in prophesying the desolation of Jerusalem. During the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah was arrested as a deserter and prisoned, but later he was released by Nebuchadnezzar. After this, he tried to dissuade the people from fleeing to Egypt. They ignored him and took him along. In Egypt he continued his efforts to turn the people to the Lord.

C. SCOPE

The historical events of Jeremiah cover a period of approximately forty years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah to the early part of the Babylonian captivity.

D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Much of the historical background for Jeremiah can be found in II Kings 22-25. Jeremiah lived about a 100 years after Isaiah. Isaiah had tried to save Jerusalem from Assyria. Jeremiah tried to save the city from Babylon, but he failed. The kingdom of the ten northern tribes, Israel, had already fallen by the time of Jeremiah's prophecies. Much of Judah was already in the hands of Babylon. Only Jerusalem was left.

On the international scene, there was a three-way contest for world supremacy. Assyria had ruled the world for three hundred years, but was growing weak. Babylon was on the rise, becoming a fierce challenger to Assyria. Likewise, Egypt, a world power a thousand years earlier, was ambitious to extend her influence. Babylon won the contest about the middle of Jeremiah's ministry. She ruled the world for seventy years, the same seventy years as the Jews' captivity.

E. CONTENTS

1. Jeremiah's Call and Commission (Chapter 1)

God called Jeremiah while he was young and commissioned him "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (1:10).

2. General Message of Rebuke to Judah (Chapters 2-25)

Jeremiah's first message was a review of Israel's past. It was filled with reminders of former blessings, rebukes for present backsliding and idolatry, and a plea to return to Jehovah.

The second message was a reminder to Judah that the ten northern tribes had been taken captive because of their idolatry. Yet, Judah did not heed the warning. Again Jeremiah appealed to captive Israel

to repent and exhorted Judah to turn from her idolatry. Because they rejected the appeal, God pronounced the judgment of the Babylonian invasion (4:3-6:30).

In his discourse in the Temple gate (chapters 7-10), Jeremiah listed the sins of Judah: formality in worship, idolatry, violation of God's law, rejection of His messengers, and universal and incurable backsliding. Because of these sins, Jehovah would give the land of Judah over to invasion and would scatter the inhabitants among the nations.

In the message of the broken covenant (chapters 11, 12), Jeremiah pronounced God's curse upon Judah because of the violation of the Mosaic covenant.

The message of the linen girdle (chapter 13) is an object lesson. The lesson portrayed God's election of Israel by the putting on of the girdle, His rejection of them for their rebellion by burying it, and His humbling of them by the Babylonian captivity by unearthing it.

The drought in Judah (chapters 14, 15) was the judgment of God. He declared that not even Moses and Samuel could intercede with Him as Israel's iniquity was so incurable. Nevertheless, God promised to preserve a remnant.

As a sign of the imminence of God's judgment, Jeremiah was commanded not to marry (16:1-17:18). The awfulness of the judgment would make the single state preferable to the married. He would not be permitted to mourn nor to engage in legitimate merrymaking which would be mockery in view of the impending judgment.

A violation of the Sabbath Day would be equivalent to a violation of God's covenant and bring the penalty prophesied by Jeremiah.

God's power to deal with the nations according to His sovereign will was symbolized by the potter's molding of vessels (18:1-19:13). God can mold them, mar them—if rebellious, and remake them—if they repent. Apostasy will lead to casting away. This graphic example has become a favorite text for preachers and shows the necessity of submission to the will of God.

Jeremiah suffered his first persecution after the object lesson of the potter's house (19:4-20:18). Afterwards he was tempted to seal his lips and refrain from prophesying. But the fire within was stronger than the fire without. Or as Jeremiah stated, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (20:9). Jeremiah continued to preach.

The king sent a message to inquire of the prophet concerning Babylon (chapters 21, 22). God told him to submit to the enemy and allow the Babylonians to carry them away into captivity. If they would show no resistance, God would spare their lives and bring them back again. If they resisted the enemy, they would suffer from a fearful siege and die by the edge of the sword. Examples of the surety of divine retribution are given in chapter 22.

An indictment against the false prophets is given in chapter 23.

The sign of the figs is given in chapter 24. The first captives to Babylon, symbolized by the good figs, would be restored and replanted in Palestine; the latter—bad figs—who remained in Jerusalem to resist Babylon with Egypt's help would be given up to the sword and scattered among the heathen.

In chapter 2.15 Jeremiah prophesied the seventy years of Judah's captivity in Babylon, which would be followed by Babylon's destruction. In the remainder of the chapter, God's judgment of the nations is described as a wine-cup of fury.

3. More Detailed Messages of Rebuke and Judgment and of Restoration (Chapters 26-39)

Jeremiah's repetition of his message concerning the destruction of Jerusalem again endangered his life (chapter 26). Nevertheless, he put a yoke, like that worn by oxen, on his neck and went about the city saying, "Thus shall Babylon put on the necks of this people" (chapters 27, 28). Jeremiah advised the captives of the first deportation (chapter 29) to be peaceful and obedient and prophesied the return to their homeland after

seventy years.

Chapters 30 and 31 are a song of restoration. Israel would be delivered from the final tribulation at the end of the age. They shall enjoy the blessing of the New Covenant. This is a definite prediction that the Mosaic Covenant would be superseded by another.

A year before Jerusalem fell, God commanded Jeremiah to purchase the field of Hanameel, his uncle's son. This is a good example of the Kinsman-Redeemer and a sign that the captives would return and cultivate the land (chapter 32). Jeremiah stated in 32:17, "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Jeremiah continued the theme of Israel's restoration through the prophecy of the "Branch" (chapter 33).

The people had promised to free the Hebrew slaves, a command they had long been breaking. They did not keep their promise. As a result, they too would become captives (chapter 34).

A rebuke was given to Israel in chapter 35 through the example of the Rechabites, descendants of Moses' brother-in-law (Numbers 10:29; Judges 1:16, 4:11-17, 5:24; 1 Samuel 15:6). They had continued in unwavering obedience to the simple rule laid down by their ancestor. Yet, Israel failed to obey their God.

The Lord commanded Jeremiah to commit to writing all the prophecies he had uttered since the beginning of his ministry. The reading of the book made a profound impression on some, but the king brazenly burned it. The book was then rewritten.

Once again Jeremiah found himself in trouble for preaching the word of the Lord. He was arrested on suspicion of being a traitor. King Zedekiah was friendly to the prophet, but was a weak king.

Chapter 39 records the final captivity and burning of Jerusalem. Knowing Jeremiah's admonition to Jerusalem to submit to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar offered to confer on him any honor that he would accept.

4. Messages After Captivity (Chapters 40-45)

Gedaliah, the governor Nebuchadnezzar appointed over Judah, was warned of a plot against his life. He refused to heed the warning and was assassinated. The remnant, fearing reprisal by Nebuchadnezzar for slaying the governor, fled to Egypt though explicitly warned by God that it would mean extinction. They took Jeremiah along, against his will. The remnant soon yielded to the lure of Egyptian idolatry and, when rebuked by Jeremiah, brazenly expressed their intention of sacrificing to the "Queen of Heaven." Jeremiah foretold their destruction and prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would invade Egypt.

5. Prophecies Concerning the Nations (Chapters 46-51)

Chapters 46-51 are messages of judgment against the heathen nations, especially Babylon. The fact that Jehovah used Babylon as a scourge upon Israel and the surrounding nations would not save her from judgment for her sins. Compare Isaiah 13, 14, and 47 with Jeremiah 50 and 51. The record of the fulfillment of the prophecies found in Jeremiah 50 and 51 can be found in Daniel 5. Jeremiah 50 and 51 should also be compared with Revelation 17 and 18. The fall of Babylon is a type of the overthrow of the antichrist's kingdom.

6. The Captivity of Judah (Chapter 52)

The book closes with the destruction of Jerusalem. The account recorded in II Kings 24, 25; II Chronicles 36; and Jeremiah 39 is repeated here.

XXV. LAMENTATIONS

A. THEME

The theme of Lamentations is the keen, heart-breaking sorrow of the prophet for the miseries and desolations of Jerusalem, which resulted from her siege and destruction. The main object of the book was to teach the Jews to recognize God's chastening hand in their calamities and to turn to Him in sincere repentance.

B. AUTHOR

The author of Lamentations is the Prophet Jeremiah.

C. CONTENTS

Lamentations consists of five poems which can be divided as follows:

1. First Poem

In chapter 1, Jerusalem is represented as a weeping widow. The special emphasis of this chapter is that the people brought the catastrophe upon themselves by their sins (verses 5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, and 22).

2. Second Poem

The second poem symbolized Jerusalem as a veiled woman, mourning amidst the ruins. The devastation is attributed to the anger of God.

3. Third Poem

In the third section, Jerusalem is typified by the weeping prophet, mourning before the throne of Jehovah the Judge.

4. Fourth Poem

Gold, dimmed, changed, and degraded, represented the city in the fourth part, Jeremiah could not keep his mind off of the horrors of the siege: cries of starving children (2:11, 12, 19; 4:4) and women boiling their babies for food (2:20; 4:10).

5. Fifth Poem

In the final division, the city is symbolized as a suppliant pleading with the Lord.

D. COMMENTS

To this day Lamentations is read in the synagogues on the ninth day of the fourth month (Jeremiah 52:6) throughout the world where ever there are Jews. In this manner, the Jews still breathe out their sorrow at the suffering and dispersion of Israel. Every Friday, Israelites, young and old of both sexes, gather at the Wailing Place in Jerusalem, near the southwest corner of the old Temple grounds, where an ancient wall fifty-two yards in length by fifty-six feet in height, is still revered as a memorial of the sanctuary of the race. Here Jews of many nations, dressed in black as a sign of grief, loudly lament the ruin of the house whose very memory is still dear to them, and recite amid tears the sad verses of the book and suitable Psalms as they reverently kiss the stones.

Nevertheless, Lamentations should not be considered simply as a dirge or lament as it does contain positive statements of God's mercy and power. A beautiful example is expressed in 3:22-26:

It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the

soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

XXVI. EZEKIEL

A. THEME

Ezekiel was a prophet of the captivity. He prophesied in Babylon during his entire ministry, which began seven years before the fall of Jerusalem, and ended fifteen years after the event. The center point of his predictions was destruction of Jerusalem. Before this event, he called the people to repentance, warning them that the sacking of their city and Temple was inevitable and fast approaching. After this event, his principal care was to console the exiled Jews by promise of future deliverance. The theme could be summed up as follows: The departure of God's glory from Israel in prospect of coming judgment; and the return of His glory in prospect of future restoration. The book is a revelation of the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22).

B. AUTHOR

This book of prophecy bears the name of its author, Ezekiel. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was both a priest as well as a prophet. He was carried captive together with King Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar about ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a married man, but his wife was taken from him in death that it might be a sign unto the house of Israel (Ezekiel 24:15-18)

C. SCOPE

The historical events recorded in Ezekiel span a period of twenty-one years, from 595 B.C. to 574 B.C. The section which is historical is combined with the which is prophetic. Thus the book ends with God's people enjoying the fullness of the blessing of the millennial land which is still in the future.

D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Assyrian captivity of Israel had occurred 120 years before Ezekiel's ministry. Northern and eastern Israel and Galilee had fallen to Tiglath-pileser in 734 B.C. Thirteen years later in 721 B.C., Samaria and the rest of Israel were conquered by Sargon. In 701 B.C., Sennacherib took 200,000 inhabitants of Judah.

The Babylonian captivity of Judah was accomplished during Ezekiel's ministry. The first group of captives, including Daniel, was taken in 606 B.C. This was followed by a second wave in 597 B.C. which included Ezekiel. Jerusalem was burned in 586 B.C. The Babylonian captivity lasted for seventy years, from 606-536 B.C. Ezekiel was there from 597 B.C. to at least 570 B.C.

E. CONTENTS

1. The Prophet's Call (Chapters 1-3)

Ezekiel's prophetic call was preceded by a vision of the glory of the Lord. The living creatures mentioned in chapter 1 are the cherubim, an order of angelic beings. Ezekiel was then commissioned and given a message of condemnation to a disobedient people. He was appointed as a watchman over the house of Israel and given a solemn warning against neglect of duty. Thereupon he had a second vision of God's glory. However, he was not to immediately begin his ministry, but to refrain from speaking until so instructed by the Lord.

2. The Fate of Jerusalem and of the Nations (Chapters 4-24)

Ezekiel had been ordered by the Lord to be silent until instructed to prophesy (3:26, 27); but though silent concerning oral messages, he was commanded to speak to the nation by means of symbolic actions, or signs (chapters 4-6). By the sign of the tile and iron pan (4:1-3), he acted out the siege of Jerusalem. The sign of the prostrate prophet was the second object lesson (4:4-8). He was then told to lie for a certain period on his left side, then for another period on his right side (390 days).

Each day was to represent a year of burden, first for Israel (right side or north), then for Judah (the left side or south). The third sign was of famine. Ezekiel was to eat his bread by weight and to drink his water by measure (4:9-17). The destruction of the people of Jerusalem by famine, pestilence, and the sword was indicated by the sign of cutting the prophet's hair (5:1-17).

Chapters 6 and 7 contain messages of desolation upon the land and judgments upon the people.

Ezekiel's vision of the destruction of Jerusalem is contained in chapters 8-11. The cause of the destruction was idolatry: beast worship of Egypt, immoral rites of the worship of Tammuz, and Persian sun worship. Chapter 9 records the vision of the slaughter of the people and the sealing of the remnant, while chapter 10 is the vision of the scattering of the altar fire over Jerusalem. The departure of God's glory from Jerusalem, a sign of coming judgment, is found in chapter 11.

In chapter 12, Ezekiel moved his household goods as an indication of the impending captivity. This was followed by a denunciation of the false prophets in chapter 13 and of the insincere leaders in chapter 14. The burning vine in chapter 15 depicted Israel's worthlessness while the figure of the harlot in chapter 16 symbolized Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness. The great eagle in chapter 17 represented the punishment of Zedekiah's treachery.

Jehovah vindicated Himself in chapter 18. The people of the captivity tried to lay the blame on their fathers, not accepting that they had sinned. Chapter 19 is a lamentation over the fall of the House of David; chapter 20 is a review of Israel's history. The sighing of the prophet and the sword of God in chapter 21 are another warning concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Verses 26 and 27 are prophetic of the overthrow of the throne of David until the Messiah comes.

The prophet enumerated the sins of Jerusalem in chapter 22; purification would come through the fiery furnace of affliction. He gave the parable of Aholah and Abolibath, referring to Israel's apostasy and punishment in chapter 23. In chapter 24, the boiling pot of oil represented the seething wickedness of the city. The destruction of the Temple was symbolized by the Lord's taking away of Ezekiel's wife (24:15-20).

3. Prophecies Against the Nations (Chapters 25-32).

In chapters 25-32, Ezekiel prophesied against the neighboring nations of Israel:

- * Ammon (25:1-7)
- * Moab (25:8-11)
- * Edom (25:12-14)
- * Philistia (25:15-17)
- * Tyre (chapters 26-28)
- * Zidon (28:20-24)
- * Egypt (29-32)

4. The Restoration of Israel (Chapters 33-48)

The final section of Ezekiel deals with Israel's restoration. After the arrival of the news of the capture of Jerusalem, Ezekiel's commission was renewed and he was allowed to speak plainly instead of preaching by means of signs and symbols (chapter 33). He rebuked the false shepherds of Israel and promised the coming of the true Shepherd (chapter 34). In chapters 35 and 36, Edom, representative of Israel's enemies, was punished and Ezekiel prophesied the gathering of Israel, their complete restoration to a restored land of Palestine and their conversion. The valley of the dry bones in chapter 37 is one of Ezekiel's better known prophecies. It represents Israel's present national death and future national resurrection under the Messiah. The whole nation would be bound to Jehovah by an everlasting covenant.

Chapters 38 and 39 foretell of the attack of the Gentile nations upon Israel after they have been restored to Palestine. Many scholars believe that Russia is referred to in 38:2, Mesheck being Moscow, and Tubal, Tobolsk. The people are spoken of as dwelling in the uttermost parts of the north, and there can be little doubt that he meant nations beyond the Caucasus Mountains. A glance at the map makes it plain that Ezekiel had in mind that part of the world we now call Russia. Also see Zechariah 12:1-4, 14:1-9; Matthew 24:14-20; Revelation 14:14-20, 19:17-21.

The final chapters, 40-48, concern the rebuilt Temple.

XXVII. DANIEL

A. THEME

The book of Daniel is a prophetic history of Gentile world power from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the coming of Christ. Unlike the other prophets, Daniel emphasized God's sovereignty in relation to the Gentile world empires and revealed Him as the One controlling and overruling in their affairs, until the time of their destruction at the coming of His Son. The vision is that of the overruling God, in wisdom, knowing and, in might, working; of kings reigning and passing, of dynasties and empires rising and falling, while God, enthroned above, ruled their movements. Thus, Daniel revealed God as the One controlling the rise and fall of the kingdoms of this world until their final destruction and establishment of His own kingdom.

B. AUTHOR

The Prophet Daniel penned this book. He was of the tribe of Judah and probably a member of the royal family (1:3-6). While yet a youth, he was carried captive to Babylon in the third year of King Jehoiakim (II Chronicles 36:4-7), eight years before Ezekiel. Together with three other young men, he was stationed at the court of Nebuchadnezzar for special training in the learning of the Chaldeans. There he attained one of the highest ranks in the kingdom, a position which he retained under the Persians rulers who succeeded the Babylonians. He prophesied during the whole of the captivity, his last prophecy being delivered in the reign of Cyrus, two years before the nation's return to Palestine.

C. SCOPE

The historical elements in Daniel cover approximately seventy-three years, from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, or 607 B.C. to 534 B.C.

D. CONTENTS

1. Daniel and His Companions (Chapter 1)

Four outstanding young Jews, including Daniel, were chosen to receive instruction in the king's court. Surrounded by the sensuality of this oriental environment, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself (verse 8). He and his companions chose not to partake of the food of the king, which would have been a sanction of his idolatry. Put to the test, the plain food they ate proved better as they were healthier in body and clearer in mind than any others. They were allowed to continue on their own fare.

2. God's Control of the Nations of the World (Chapters 2-7)

In response to an unexpressed desire on the part of Nebuchadnezzar to know the future of his great empire, God gave him a dream, which, as interpreted by Daniel, gave the monarch a revelation of the rise, progress, and fall of Gentile world power during that period described by Christ as "the time of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). "The time of the Gentiles" refers to that period of time during which world dominion is in the hands of the Gentiles instead of the Jews. This period began with the captivity, 606 B.C., and will end with the second coming of Christ.

The succession of world empires was set forth under the figure of a gigantic image composed of various metals. In the diminishing value of the metals composing the image, we may see the deterioration of world empires in relation to their character of government. The following is the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

- * The head of gold symbolized Babylon, the empire of Nebuchadnezzar (606-538 B.C.).

- * The breast and arms of silver represented the empire of the Medes and Persians (538-338 B.C.), which was inferior to the Babylonians.
- * The lesser value of the belly and thighs of brass typified the Grecian empire (330-30 B.C.). This empire was later divided into four parts (7:6; 8:8).
- * The legs of iron and the feet and toes of part clay and part iron indicated the Roman empire (from 30 B.C. until the return of Christ). The two legs symbolize the eastern and western parts in which the empire was divided. The ten toes signify that in the last days, the empire will be divided into ten parts. Many scholars see a fulfillment of this in the European Economic Community, often called the Common Market. The EEC is now comprised of ten nations: Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, and Greece.
- * The stone cut without hands, falling at the feet of the image, typifies -the coming of Christ at the time when the Roman empire will have been restored. The destruction of the image and the growth of the stone indicate the destruction of Gentile world power and the establishing of Christ's kingdom.

Almost every Sunday school student is well acquainted with the story of the deliverance of the three Hebrew children from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace as recorded in chapter 3. They were thrown into the furnace because they refused to bow to the king's image. However, God miraculously delivered them.

Chapter 4 deals with Nebuchadnezzar's insanity and recovery. Daniel's personal history under Belshazzar and Darius is covered in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 also contains the story of the fall of Belshazzar and the Babylonian empire, including the account of the writing on the wall. Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions and his advancement are recorded in chapter 6.

The vision of the four beasts is found in chapter 7. As with Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the theme of this vision is the rise and fall of Gentile world power. It can be interpreted as follows:

- * The lion symbolizes the Babylonian empire.

- * The bear represents the Medo-Persian empire. The superior strength of the Persian empire is expressed by the bear being raised on one side. The three ribs in its mouth stand for the three kingdom conquered by this empire: Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon.
- * The leopard signifies the Grecian empire. The wings indicate the rapidity of its conquests. The four heads denoted the four divisions of the empire following Alexander's death.
- * The terrible beast typifies the Roman empire. The beast had ten horns which symbolize ten nations. A new horn sprouted up in the midst of the ten and plucked up three of the other horns from the roots and destroyed them. The ten horns symbolize ten kings, and the one horn was another king who will subdue three kings. This horn will make war with the saints and prevail against them (7:21). Each of these kingdoms will be subdued by the Ancient of Days, who, with His followers, has the final victory.

3. Daniel's Visions In Relation to the Fortunes of God's People (Chapters 8-12)

The vision of the ram and goat in chapter 8 foretold the coming conflict between Greece and Persia. The vision of the seventy weeks prophesied of the coming of the Messiah (chapter 9). Daniel's last vision (chapters 10-12) was of the glory of God, overthrow of Persia by Greece, the kings of the north and south, and the great tribulation and the deliverance.

XXVIII. HOSEA

The book of Hosea is the first of the **Minor Prophetical** books. These books are termed “minor” not in relationship to their importance, but because of their length.

A. THEME

The book of Hosea is a message to the northern kingdom. It is a great exhortation to repentance to the ten tribes of Israel during the fifty or sixty years prior to their captivity.

The theme revolves around Israel, the unfaithful wife who abandoned her Husband, and Jehovah, the compassionate Husband who received her again. The sins of the nation in her condition of separation from God are summed up by the prophet as the sin of spiritual adultery. This was illustrated by his own experience in his marriage to an unchaste woman and her forsaking him for another lover. Israel was living in gross sin; the kings and priests were murderers and debauches. They were worshiping idols; resorting to Egypt or Assyria for help, rather than the Lord; imitating the moral vileness of the Canaanites; God and His word was forgotten. Her sin was more grievous than the other nations surrounding her because they had had no relationship with Jehovah.

B. AUTHOR

Hosea wrote the book that bears his name. He was a prophet of the northern kingdom. He prophesied at the same time as Amos in Israel and Isaiah and Micah in Judah. His prophetic ministry, lasting about sixty years, is the longest of all the prophets.

C. SCOPE

The historical events referred to in this book cover a period of about sixty years, ranging from about 785 B.C. to the time of the captivity of the ten tribes. II Kings 14:23 to 15:31 give the historical background of the book.

D. CONTENTS

1. Separation: Israel, the Unfaithful Wife of Jehovah (Chapters 1-3)

God often spoke to His people through signs and symbolic actions. These made a forceful illustration for His message. Hosea's marriage to an unchaste woman at the command of the Lord was a sign to the people that they, as the wife of Jehovah, had been unfaithful to their vows of fidelity. Three children were born to Hosea and Gomer. Jezreel, the first child, whose name means "God will scatter," was a sign of the doom of the nation. Loruhammah, "unpitied," symbolized God's withdrawal of mercy from His people. The third child's name, Lo-ammi, means "not my people" and indicated that God would disclaim His chosen people. Nevertheless, 1:10 and 11 foretell of restoration of Israel in the last days and their union with Judah under the Messiah.

Israel, the unfaithful wife, is the theme of chapter 2 which is an explanation of the signs in chapter 1. Jehovah would strip her of her gifts and bring her into desolation (verses 9-13). Through tribulation Israel would return to her husband, Jehovah, to whom she will be betrothed forever.

In chapter 3, as a sign of Jehovah's mercy and love, Hosea is commanded to take back his unfaithful wife who had deserted him. She had been sold into slavery from whence Hosea redeemed her. Before full restoration to full conjugal rights, many days were to intervene during which she was to live free from impurity. In like manner, Israel is to remain for a long period free from all idolatry until the time of her restoration to full covenant privileges under the Messiah (verses 4, 5). One should note that for hundreds of years they have been without a king or a prince, without priest or sacrifice, and since the return from the Babylonian captivity, they have been free from idolatry.

2. Condemnation: Israel, the Sinful Nation (4:1-13:8)

In this section, Hosea enumerated the different sins which made up Israel's apostasy. Because of Israel's sin and guilt, Jehovah exhorted them to repent.

3. Reconciliation: Israel, the Restored Nation (13:9-14:9)

Although Israel had destroyed herself through sin and died as a nation, God would bring about her national resurrection. Compare 13:9-17 with Ezekiel 37. As one teaching a child to pray, Jehovah gave Israel the very words she should use in returning to Him. As soon as Israel is ready with the words of repentance, Jehovah is ready with words of blessings and restoration (14:1-9).

XXIX. JOEL

A. THEME

The occasion for Joel's prophecy was an unusually severe invasion of destructive insects, locusts, which devastated the land, destroyed the harvest and brought on a general famine. The prophet saw in this calamity a visitation from God and referred to it as a type of the final world judgment, the Day of the Lord (1:5). Joel predicted the future in the light of the present, regarding a present and imminent event as a type of the future event.

The key phrase of Joel is "The day of the Lord."

B. AUTHOR

Little is known concerning Joel. It is believed that he prophesied during the time of Joash, king of Judah (II Kings 12).

C. CONTENTS

1. The Day of the Lord Invisioned as Immediate (Chapter 1)

Joel opens with an invasion of locusts. This was a literal plague, one of which frequently left in its wake millions of dead insects decomposing, producing pestilence and death. Although this was an actual invasion, there was also a spiritual as well as literal application. The prophet was seeking to arouse the people to a sense of responsibility by telling them that this was not something that was uncontrollable, but rather that God had permitted the famine because of their sins.

2. The Day of the Lord Invisioned as Future (Chapters 2-3)

Joel likened the invasion of the insects to an invading army. This doubtlessly not only referred to the coming Syrian host (II Kings 18:13-37, 19:1-28; Isaiah 36), but also to the armies of the antichrist (Revelation 9:1-11, 19:11-21). The prophet then issued a call to repentance and looked forward to the deliverance from sin through the anointing of the Holy Ghost in Christ (2:18-32). The promise of the Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and continues to this day (Acts 2:38, 39). Verses 30-32 are yet to be fulfilled.

Chapter 3 is a prophecy of the restoration of Israel. In it the prophet saw Armageddon, the judgment of the nations, and Israel's full restoration.

XXX. AMOS

A. THEME

The theme of Amos can be summarized as: Judgment to come and restoration to follow. The certain sameness of the themes of many of the prophets is explained by the fact that there was one predominating cause that brought forth their messages; this was national sin. Therefore their messages were, in most cases, of condemnation. While they had a message for the nation at large, they also had a message of consolation and restoration for the faithful remnant. Amos enlarged on his theme by setting forth the sins of a privileged people, whose privileges brought them responsibility and whose failure under that responsibility brought them judgment according to the light they had received.

B. AUTHOR

Amos was a native of Tekoa, a village about six miles south of Bethlehem. This village was inhabited primarily by shepherds. As a gatherer of sycamore fruit, Amos belonged to this class.

C. AMOS' CONTEMPORARIES

1. Judgment on the Nations (Chapters 1, 2)

Amos pictured Jehovah as the judge of all nations, administering impartial judgment. Each message began, "For three, . . . yea, for four. . . ." This was a figurative way of declaring the God does not act immediately in judgment, but that He waited in order to give every nation the chance of repentance. Amos then listed the sins of the nations such as Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Judah sinned by despising God's laws (2:4, 5). Israel's sin was corruption and oppression (2:5-16).

2. Judgment of Israel (Chapters 3-9:6)

The judgment of Israel was set forth in three discourses and by five visions.

The three discourses began with the words, "Hear this word." The first homily (chapter 3) centered on Israel's ingratitude for God's love. As a result, judgment would come, but a remnant would be spared. The second sermon (chapter 4) focused on the oppression by the nobles and the general idolatry of the nation. Because of these two sins, Amos predicted chastisement. Israel was to prepare to meet their God in the last and worst judgment of all. The final lecture (5:1-6:14) offered the hope that impending judgment may be averted by seeking Jehovah. Because of the nation's deserting God's true service in imitation of their fathers in the wilderness, they would be led into captivity.

The five visions were of the following:

- * The locusts, which typified the Assyrians, who were constantly ravaging Israel (7:1-3). At the intercession of the prophet, Jehovah promised that all Israel would not be utterly destroyed.
- * The burning of the deep (7:4-6)
- * The plumbline, a sign that judgment was about to be meted out according to righteousness (7:7-9)
- * The basket of summer fruit, an indication of Israel's ripeness of judgment (8:1-3).
- * The Lord standing upon the altar (9:1-6)

3. Restoration of Israel (9:7-15)

Amos closes with a prophecy of restoration for Israel. They would be dispersed for their sifting and purification (verses 7-10). The Davidic kingdom would be reestablished (verse 11).

The whole nation of Israel will be the head of the nations (verse 12). The land of Palestine will prosper (verses 13,14). And Israel will inherit it forever.

XXXI. OBADIAH

A. THEME

The theme of Obadiah is Edom's great sin of violence against Judah and the attending punishment, national extinction.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Edom was descended from Esau, and Israel, from Jacob. The struggle between them began in Rebekah's womb (Genesis 25:22). The Edomites were a proud, bitter, resentful people, ever seeking an opportunity to harm Jacob's posterity. Israel and Edom were perpetually at war. During the Assyrian captivity of Israel, Edom rejoiced and took part in the plunder and massacre (Psalm 137:7). Jesus Christ was a Jew, a descendant of Jacob, and was brought before Herod, a Edomite. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the nation of Edom disappeared from history.

C. AUTHOR

Nothing is known about Obadiah.

D. CONTENTS

Obadiah's prophecy dealt with the sin and punishment of Edom and the salvation and victories of Jacob. One of Edom's sins was pride. However, the judgment of national extinction would primarily befall because of the violence done to Israel. Verse 10 states, "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." Conversely, of Israel the prophet stated in verse 17, "But upon

mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

XXXII. JONAH

A. THEME

This book is peculiar among the prophets in that it contains no direct message, to Israel, the message of the prophet being addressed to the Ninevites. The book is a display of God's vast mercy, both to the city of Nineveh and to the reluctant missionary, Jonah.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nineveh, the city to which Jonah was to preach, was the capital of Assyria, the then dominate world power known for its cruelty. It had oppressed many peoples, including the Jews. Hence, God had asked Jonah to go and preach in an alien country, to a people who had grievously treated his own people, and who were still his enemy. The Assyrian nation later conquered all of Israel.

C. AUTHOR

Jonah was a Galilean from the town of Gath-hepher, near Nazareth. He ministered to the ten tribes during the reign of Jeroboam II and prophesied concerning the restoration of Israelitish territory (II Kings 14:25-27). When Elisha's ministry closed, Jonah's was beginning.

Jesus Himself bore witness to Jonah's personal existence, miraculous fate, and prophetic office (Matthew 12:40). The story of Jonah in the belly of the fish was a prophetic picture of the Lord's death and resurrection.

D. CONTENTS

1. Jonah's First Commission, His Disobedience, and the Results (Chapters 1, 2)

Jonah was commissioned to go and preach repentance to the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Because Nineveh was the great enemy of Israel and had committed many atrocities among the nations, Jonah was not willing to obey God's command. Instead, he boarded a ship sailing for Tarshish, attempting to run away from God.

As the result, a great storm overtook the ship and Jonah was thrown overboard—at his own request—so that the ship could be saved. Thereupon Jonah was swallowed by a great fish that had been prepared by the Lord, apparently as a means of saving the prophet. While in the fish's belly, Jonah repented of his rebellion. He was then vomited out on dry land.

One must remember that the story of Jonah and the whale is not an allegory or parable. Jesus put the fish, the repentance of the Ninevites, His resurrection, and the judgment day in the same category (Matthew 12:39-41). It was the Lord who "prepared" the fish. It could have been one especially created. Nevertheless, there is also documented evidence of other men being swallowed by great whales.

2. Jonah's Second Commission, His Obedience, and Its Results (Chapter 3)

"The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. . . ." But the words were the same, "Go unto Nineveh." (See Romans 11:29.) In obedience, Jonah went to the great city and delivered his soul. His message convicted the Ninevites, who believed God and repented.

3. Jonah's Complaint and God's Answer (Chapter 4)

Even though Jonah obeyed and preached to the Ninevites, he apparently was hoping that they would not heed the message and would still be destroyed (verse 5). By the lesson of the gourd, God dealt gently with His servant and rebuked him. Verse 11 reveals God's compassion.

E. VALUE

From this book we may learn the importance of obedience to the will of God and catch a glimpse of His great and tender mercies.

XXXIII. MICAH

A. THEME

Prophesying about the same time as Isaiah, Micah's theme was: Israel was misled and destroyed by false leaders, but would be saved and restored by the true leader, the Messiah. Micah had a message for both Judah and Israel. He predicted captivity for both kingdoms.

B. AUTHOR

Micah was from Judah and a contemporary of Isaiah. His greatest work was done in the reign of Hezekiah, who was deeply moved by his prophecies (Jeremiah 26:10-19).

C. CONTENTS

1. Denunciation (Chapters 1-3)

Micah began his prophecy by pronouncing judgment upon Samaria for her incurable disposition to idolatry (1:1-8). He stated that Judah was affected by Israel's sinfulness and involved in her guilt (1:9-16). Because of the wickedness of the rulers and the people, they would go into captivity (2:1-11). Yet, the righteous remnant would be restored (2:12, 13). He strongly rebuked the leaders in chapter 3 and indicated that the nation, which shared the iniquity of the leadership, would suffer (verse 12). Compare this prophecy with Jeremiah 5:31.

2. Consolation (Chapters 4-7)

Although Zion would be destroyed (3:12), yet in the last

days it would be restored and exalted (4:1-8). For the present, the prophet saw only dismay, helplessness, and captivity. However, there was hope for the future. In chapter 5 Israel received a prophecy of the coming Messiah, their true ruler. His birth place was even foretold seven hundred years before His birth (5:2). He was a pledge of Israel's deliverance from all their enemies and their final restoration (5:3-15).

In chapter 6 Jehovah issued a challenge to Israel. Could they produce any excuse for forsaking Him (6:1-5)? Their religion was mere formality, their nation, universally corrupt. It was almost impossible to find a good man (6:6-7:6). Yet there remained a faithful remnant, represented by the prophet (7:1-14). God promised that Israel would be purged of her sins and the covenant made to their fathers would be fulfilled. Israel would be restored.

XXXIV. NAHUM

A. THEME

The outstanding theme of Nahum is the destruction of Nineveh. It is a sequel to the prophecy of Jonah. Nahum preached about 150 years after Jonah brought a revival to the Assyrian capital. By this time they had reverted to their former cruelties, oppressions, and idolatry. Nahum pronounced the judgment of God against them in the form of utter destruction.

B. AUTHOR

Practically nothing is known concerning Nahum. He prophesied during the early part of the reign of Josiah.

C. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. This empire came out of Babylon, being founded by Babylonian colonists. For centuries Assyria was either subject to or in conflict with Babylon. Both were founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10). For years Assyria had expanded by absorbing her neighboring nations, then deporting the people in the hope that they would lose their patriotism. The Assyrians were exceedingly cruel to their captives.

At the time of Nahum's prophecy, Nineveh was known as the "Queen of the Earth." It was built by the enslaved captives who suffered terrible brutalities. Nahum likened it to a den of ferocious lions. The city was thirty miles long and ten miles wide, surrounded with five walls and three moats. The inner walls were wide enough for four chariots to ride abreast and were one hundred feet high. This was the city against which

Nahum pronounced doom.

From before the time of Christ until the discovery of its site in 1845, Nineveh's location was unknown. This prophecy was made one hundred years before it was fulfilled, but all came to pass exactly as the prophet declared that it would.

D. CONTENTS

1. Jehovah, the Righteous Judge (Chapter 1)

Nahum began his prophecy with the burden of Nineveh. He then declared the majesty of God who visited judgment on His adversaries, but who was slow to anger and remembered those who trusted in Him. Nahum stated it was vain for the Assyrians to imagine that they could resist the Lord (verses 9-11). However, God would surely deliver His own people. They were to remain loyal to the Lord; He would deliver them.

2. Jehovah's Righteous Judgments (Chapters 2-3)

Because of her sins, Nineveh's destruction was certain. She would be besieged and captured (2:1-13). In chapter 3 Nahum listed the sins of Nineveh and confirmed her doom.

E. VALUE

Aside from the value of fulfilled prophecy as a proof of the validity of God's word, the importance of Nahum is shown in the lesson concerning God's mercy and judgment. God is kind, longsuffering, and willing to forgive. However, His mercies can not be treated lightly. God is also holy and His holiness demands judgment for unrepented sin.

XXXV. HABAKKUK

A. THEME

The book of Habakkuk presents a picture of a man of God who is perplexed by Jehovah's seeming toleration of evil. Habakkuk was full of doubts and questions. But he took his perplexities to the Lord who quickly dispelled them and presented a solution: The just shall live by faith (2:4). Consequently, the theme may be summarized as the conflict and ultimate triumph of faith.

B. AUTHOR

Little is known of Habakkuk. He predicted the downfall of the Chaldean empire. His ministry as a seer is unusual as all the other prophets spoke to men on the behalf of God and were His mouthpieces. Habakkuk spoke to God on the behalf of men. His ministry was more of the priestly order than the prophetic, yet the Scriptures speak of him as a prophet.

C. CONTENTS

1. The Conflict of Faith (Chapters 1, 2)

Habakkuk's first conflict concerned the iniquity of the land. Why did God permit it? God answered by showing the prophet the coming vengeance by the Chaldeans (1:5-11). This gave rise to the second conflict: Why would God use a much less righteous nation to punish His people? See 1:12-2:1. God responded with the solution: The just shall live by faith. He still knew what He was doing. And although He would use the Chaldeans as a scourge upon His people, the former would not go unpunished (2:2-20). Habakkuk was to write this prophecy of the

Chaldeans' ultimate overthrow and post it where all could read it.

2. Triumph of Faith (Chapter 3)

Habakkuk remembered God's majesty in delivering His people in the days of old. This was an implication that His past mercies to Israel were a pledge of His future mercies. This helped to establish Habakkuk's faith. Whatever the circumstances, he would rejoice in the Lord, the God of his salvation.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make to walk upon mine high places (3:17-19).

D. VALUE

Habakkuk teaches that regardless of the circumstances, man must trust in God. Although man views things from the standpoint of time, God sees everything in light of eternity. Based on the fact of God's absolute holiness which can not be stained with the slightest bit of evil or sin and His fathomless love for man, the man of faith can rest assured that all things are working for his good in view of eternal values (Romans 8:28, 29).

XXXVI. ZEPHANIAH

A. THEME

The Great Day of the Lord is the theme of Zephaniah. The night of judgment on Israel and the nations would be followed by the morning of restoration for the former and conversion for the latter.

B. AUTHOR

Evidently Zephaniah was a direct descendant of King Hezekiah (1:1). He prophesied during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah. A great reformation was wrought under Josiah, who followed the long and wicked reign of Manasseh. Josiah ruled from 639-608 B.C.

C. CONTENTS

1. A Warning of Judgment (Chapter 1)

The dire prediction of God's severe judgment opens the book of Zephaniah. This is followed by a prophecy of the overthrow of idolatry. Judah would be punished. The punishment would fall on all classes. Verses 14-18 describe the day of the Lord.

2. A Call to Repentance (Chapter 2:1-3:7)

Zephaniah warned the wicked to repent to escape judgment and exhorted the just to persevere in meekness and righteousness in order that they may be hid in the coming day of the Lord. The call to repentance was enforced by the certainty of judgments on the surrounding nations (2:4-15). This was literally fulfilled within twenty years of the prophecy. The sites which mark where these cities used to be are now desolate wastes. Tragically, Israel would not escape; she failed to heed the warnings of Jehovah (3:1-7).

3. A Promise of Restoration (3:8-20)

The judgment of the nations in the last days will be followed by their conversion and the institution of universal worship of Jehovah (verses 8, 9). Jehovah will purge from Israel those who reposed in a self-righteous pride of their covenant privileges (verses 12, 13). He will lift His chastening hand from Israel, will bless the remnant, punish Israel's enemies, and will dwell in the midst of a restored and exalted nation (verses 14-20).

XXXVII. HAGGAI

Haggai is the first of the prophets which are post-exilic or who prophesied after the captivity. The other two are Zechariah and Malachi. They belong to the period told about in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Haggai and Zechariah aided in building the Temple (520-516 B.C.). Malachi is thought to have been associated with Nehemiah, nearly one hundred years later, in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

A. THEME

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, about 50,000 Jews returned to their own land in 536 B.C., and began to build the Temple. But they had scarcely begun when the work was halted by their enemy neighbors, the Samaritans. The people who had returned with so much enthusiasm lost heart. For sixteen years the Temple remained unfinished until the reign of Darius, when the Persian king issued an order permitting its completion. But in the meantime, the people had become indifferent and selfish, and instead of building the Temple, they were occupied with the beautifying of their own homes. As a result of this negligence, they were punished with drought and barrenness. The theme of the book then is as follows: The neglect of the Temple's completion resulted in divine displeasure and punishment. Completion will bring divine blessing and promise of future glory.

B. AUTHOR

Little is known of the personal history of Haggai except that he prophesied after the captivity and that his mission was to encourage the people to rebuild the Temple.

C. CONTENTS

1. **First Message: The Neglect of the Second Temple's Completion** (1:1-1,15)

Although the people made excuses, the prophet pinpointed the cause of neglecting to rebuild the Temple as selfishness. The punishment for this sin was drought and barrenness. He urged them to repent and to set to work.

2. **The Second Message: The Glory of the Second Temple** (2:1-9)

The people's discouragement was met with divine encouragement, a prophecy of future glory.

3. **The Third Message: Sacrifice Without Obedience Will Not Sanctify** (2:10-19)

In the third message, Haggai gave a parable. Sin can mar holiness, but holiness cannot cleanse sin. Their disobedience had polluted the land (verses 15-18). However, from the day that the foundation of the Temple was laid, God promised to bless them.

4. **The Fourth Message: The Safety and Perpetuity of the House of Israel** (2:20-23)

The coming world commotion is certain. Yet there is an assurance of safety for God's people.

XXXVIII. ZECHARIAH

A. THEME

The historical background of Zechariah's prophecy is the same as that of Haggai, both seers ministering during the same period and having similar missions. Zechariah's ministry was to encourage the Jewish remnant by the promise of present success and future glory. His theme then was: In view of the future glories of the times of the Messiah, the nation should serve God faithfully through their present distress.

B. AUTHOR

Zechariah was probably born in Babylon. He was Haggai's colleague and began prophesying a short time after him.

C. CONTENTS

1. **Symbolic: Visions of Hope** (Chapters 1-6)

The book begins with an admonition and then continues with a series of nine visions symbolic of hope. The visions are:

- * The horses
- * The four horns and carpenters
- * The measuring line
- * Joshua, the high priest
- * The golden candlestick and the olive trees
- * The flying roll
- * The ephah
- * The four chariots
- * The symbolic crowning of Joshua, the high priest. This was a symbolic merger of the two offices of king and priest in the coming of the Messiah.

2. Practical: Exhortations to Obedience and Piety

(Chapters 7, 8)

Even though the Jews were experiencing some difficulty, the prophets exhorted them to obedience and piety.

3. Prophetical: Promises of Glory Through Tribulation

(Chapters 9-14)

Zechariah began this section with prophecies of God's judgment on the surrounding nations. He then pictured Zion's coming King (9:9, 10). Verse 9 is quoted in the New Testament as referring to the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:5; John 12:15). The book closes with a Messianic prophecy of Israel's future.

XXXIX. MALACHI

A. THEME

Malachi was the Lord's last messenger to be heard for four hundred years. His book closes with the prophecy of the coming of Elijah, the Messiah's forerunner. As the last Old Testament prophecy, the book is a revelation of a rebellious and insincere people, a loyal remnant, and a coming Messiah who will judge and purify the nations.

B. AUTHOR

Nothing is known of the personal history of Malachi. It is believed that he prophesied during the time of Nehemiah.

C. CONTENTS

1. **Warning and Rebuke: Messages to the Rebellious** (1:1-3:15)

Malachi's messages to the rebels can be divided into three parts. He first addressed the whole nation (1:1-5). He then turned his attention to the priest (1:6-2:9). They were guilty of lack of reverence for the Lord, offering blemished sacrifices, performing God's service in the spirit of indifference and discontent, and violating the Levitical covenant. Finally he rebuked the people (2:11-3:15). He listed their sins as profaning God's holiness, skepticism, and withholding the tithe. A Messianic prophecy is contained in 3:1-6.

2. **Predictions and Promises: Messages to the Faithful** (3:16-4:6)

After rebuking the rebellious Jews, Malachi addressed the righteous. The last exhortation in the Old Testament is “Remember ye the law of Moses” (4:4); the last Old Testament prophecy foretold the coming of Elijah, the Messiah’s forerunner, who would prepare the people for His coming (4:5, 6).

RECOMMENDED READING

Collett, Sidney, *All About the Bible*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Flemming H. Revel Company, 1972.

Halley, Henry H., *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965.

Mears, Henrietta C., *What the Bible Is All About*, Glendale, California: Regal Books (Gospel Light Publications), 1970.

Pearlman, Myer, *Through the Bible Book by Book*, Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1979.

Phillips, John, *Exploring the Scriptures*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1970.

Slemming, C. W., *Bible Digest*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1975.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test One: Genesis and Exodus

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. The beginning of God is recorded in Genesis.
True or False
2. Ishmael was the son of a divine promise.
True or False
3. Exodus 1 - 19 are historical.
True or False
4. The Bible spends very little space on the first 2,000 years of time because it emphasizes redemption not history.
True or False
5. Egypt suffered plagues and death because of Pharaoh's pride.
True or False
6. Birds and fish were created on the fourth day of Creation.
True or False
7. A nation governed by God is called a democracy.
True or False
8. The life of Jacob teaches faith.
True and False
9. Moses' life went in twenty-year cycles.
True and False
10. The miracle birth of Isaac is a type of Christ.
True or False

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Two: Leviticus and Numbers

Short Essays: Use another sheet of paper for your answers.

1. Describe the theme and lessons included in Numbers.
2. Describe the Trespass Offering and its purpose.
3. Describe the numbering of both the Levites and Israel at Sinai.
4. Describe the Feast of Pentecost and its purpose.
5. What is an alternate name for Numbers? Why?
6. Describe the Peace Offering and its purpose.
7. Describe the sin of Moses and the events surrounding it.
8. Describe the Burnt Offering and its purpose.
9. Describe the rebellion's of Israel and their consequences.
10. Describe the Atonement and what each part typified.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Three: Deuteronomy and Joshua

Fill in the blanks.

1. The key words of Deuteronomy are _____, _____ and _____.
2. Moses emphasized two reasons for obedience to God. They were _____ and _____.
3. In return for signs and wonders, God asked for _____ and _____.
4. The _____ was an agreement between God and Israel for possession of Palestine.
5. Because of _____, Moses could not enter Canaan.
6. _____ is the first of the Historical Books.
7. The theme of Joshua is _____ and _____.
8. The spies sent to Jericho were hidden by _____.
9. The city of Jericho was surrounded by _____.
10. The _____ stood still for nearly an entire day while Israel fought for the Gibeonites.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Four: Joshua—II Samuel

Fill in the blanks.

1. The Book of Judges is one of _____.
2. Give a Scripture reference for each of the seven oppressions and give the major event found in each oppression.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. _____
3. The Book of Ruth shows _____ and _____ of character.
4. Ruth's nationality was _____. She is important in Christ's genealogy because _____.
5. Elimelech and Naomi were in Moab because _____.
6. The theme of I Samuel is _____.

Identification

How were the following characters important in I Samuel? What did each do to make him/her noteworthy? Give a Scripture reference to support your view.

1. Hannah
2. Eli

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Four: Joshua-II Samuel (Continued)

3. Sons of Eli

4. Saul

5. David

6. Jonathan

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. Moses authored II Samuel.
True or False

2. David rejoiced in the death of Saul.
True or False

3. David sowed the seed of sin which resulted in immorality, murder, alienation, and rebellion in his own family.
True or False

4. When David was made king, the entire nation of Israel rejoiced.
True or False

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Five: I Kings-1I Chronicles

Short Essays: Use another sheet of paper for your answers.

1. List the kings of Judah and Israel. Indicate if each was wicked or godly.
2. I Kings shows that people's relationship with God depends upon what?
3. God offered Solomon anything he would ask for. What did Solomon choose and why?
4. What was Solomon's downfall?
5. Who followed Solomon to the throne. What happened to the kingdom of Israel?
6. List four main events in the life of Elijah as recorded in I Kings. Give a Scripture reference for each.
7. Why was Zedekiah captured by Babylon? What happened to him?

Match the king with the prophet who served him.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. Jehu | a. Isaiah |
| 2. Jeroboam | b. Habakkuk |
| 3. Uzziah | c. Nahum |
| 4. Jehoiachin | d. Joel |
| 5. Hezekiah | e. Elisha |

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Five: I Kings—II Chronicles (Continued)

Fill in the blanks.

List and give references for ten highlights in the life of Elisha as recorded in II Kings.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____
- j. _____

- 2. Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity because of _____.
- 3. _____ invaded Judah in _____ B.C. and carried away the first captives.
- 4. The theme of IChronicles is the _____ of _____.
- 5. I Chronicles describes David bringing the ark to _____.
- 6. II Chronicles 6 describes Solomon's prayer _____ of at the completion of the _____.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Six: Ezra-Job

Fill in the blanks.

1. The theme of Ezra is _____.
2. Nehemiah was _____ in the palace.
3. After the wall was repaired, Nehemiah began to address the _____ of Israel.
4. Esther is the story of the Hebrews' _____.
5. Job is the first of the _____ books.

Short Essays: Use a separate sheet of paper for your answers.

1. Who called Cyrus by name? Give a Scripture reference for this prophecy. What did the prophecy predict?
2. What was the principal sin of Judah faced by Ezra and how was it dealt with?
3. What was Israel forced to do because the Samaritan opposition became so intense?
4. What makes Esther different than any other book in the Bible?
5. What question is answered in Job?
6. What sin did Satan imply when talking to God?
7. List the three friends of Job, the charge each brought against him, and his response to each charge.

Matching

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Feast of Ahasuerus | a. A feast to plead for a nation. |
| 2. Feast of Purim | b. A drunken feast that resulted in dethroning a queen |
| 3. Feast of Esther | c. A feast to commemorate deliverance from annihilation |

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Seven: Psalms—Song of Solomon

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. In Psalms we see God speaking to man.
True or False
2. All Psalms were written by King David.
True or False
3. Parallelism of thought is liberally used in the Psalms.
True or False
4. Although Solomon wrote much of Proverbs, other writers contributed to the book.
True or False
5. Ecclesiastes teaches that true wisdom does not come with the attainment of riches.
True or False
6. Song of Solomon was written by King Solomon.
True or False

Fill in the Blanks.

1. Psalms is a collection of inspired _____.
2. The one predominate note of Psalms is _____.
3. Psalms has been considered the _____ of Israel.
4. Proverbs is a book of _____.
5. Proverbs 1 -10 give counsel to _____.
6. Proverbs closes with a description of the _____.
7. "Ecclesiastes" means the _____.
8. The Song of Solomon is a _____ story.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Seven: Psalms-Song of Solomon (Continued)

Short Answers

1. Name the six authors of the Psalms and the number of Psalms which are attributed to each.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____

2. How do the five parts of the Psalms relate to the Pentateuch?

3. What is the recurring phrase of Ecclesiastes? What does it mean?

4. What is the theme of Ecclesiastes?

5. Name the five sections of the Song of Solomon. Give a brief description of each.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____ Date: _____

Test Eight: Isaiah—Daniel

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. The Assyrian captivity began in 900 B.C.
True or False
2. Isaiah began his prophecy by denouncing the sins of Israel and Jerusalem.
True or False
3. Isaiah 13 begins a new section of prophecies that are both literal and symbolic.
True or False
4. The tone of the book of Jeremiah is gentle and mild.
True or False
5. God called Jeremiah to prophesy when he was well up in years.
True or False
6. In Jeremiah 25, the prophet foretold Judah's seventy year captivity in Babylon.
True or False
7. In Jeremiah 30 and 31 is a prediction of the Mosaic Covenant being overshadowed by another.
True or False
8. The main theme of Lamentations is the sad condition of Israel.
True or False
9. The author of the Lamentations is Ezekiel.
True or False
10. Lamentations is still read in synagogues on the fourth day of the ninth month of each year.
True or False
11. The Book of Ezekiel is a revelation of the goodness and severity of God.
True or False
12. When Daniel and his friends refused to partake of the King's meat, they grew thin and weak.
True or False

Fill in the blanks

1. In Isaiah 9, the prophet foretold the calamities of _____, _____, and _____ which would be sent by Jehovah.
2. After the judgment of the world, Israel will have _____ of God again.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Eight: Isaiah—Daniel (Continued)

3. Isaiah told of Israel's deliverance from captivity _____, by king of _____.
4. Jeremiah was the son of a _____.
5. The historical background for Jeremiah can be found in _____
_____.
6. The historical events for the book of Jeremiah covered about _____ years.
7. Jeremiah advised the captives to be _____ and _____.
8. Ezekiel prophesied in _____ during his entire ministry.
9. Ezekiel was both a _____ and a _____.

Short Essays: Use a separate sheet of paper for your answers.

1. What is the book of Isaiah sometimes called and why?
2. During the reigns of which kings did Isaiah prophesy?
3. Describe the three pictures of Zion given in Isaiah 2-4.
4. Describe Isaiah's call.
5. What great truth is shown in Isaiah 9:6-7.
6. Describe Jeremiah's treatment by the kings of Israel.
7. List and summarize Jeremiah's messages.
8. What symbolic actions or signs were used by Ezekiel to prophesy to Israel?
9. Describe and interpret the image seen by Daniel.
10. Describe and analyze the four beasts seen by Daniel.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Nine: Hosea—Malachi

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. The term “minor,” as in minor *prophets*, comes from the importance of the book.
True or False
2. Hosea was commanded to take his adulterous wife back as a sign of Jehovah’s love.
True or False
3. Amos’s three discourses began, “Here this word .
True or False
4. Obadiah was the son of a shepherd.
True or False
5. Jonah tried to run from God’s call by boarding a ship going to Tarshish.
True or False
6. The story of Jonah and the whale is an allegory.
True or False
7. Micah began his prophecy by pronouncing judgment on Samaria for idolatry.
True or False

Fill in the blanks

1. The theme of Amos can be summarized as _____ and _____.
2. One of Edom’s sins was _____ but the judgment of _____ would fall because of cruelty to Israel.
3. _____ was the capital of Assyria and was known for its cruelty.
4. Nahum’s prophecy was important because of the lessons in God’s _____ and _____.
5. In the prophecies of Habakkuk, we learn that God sees every thing in light of _____.
6. Malachi addressed his prophecies to three groups of people. They were _____, _____, and _____.

Bible Survey II: Self Help Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Test Nine: Hosea—Malachi (Continued)

Short Essays: Use another sheet of paper for your answers.

1. What were the names of Hosea's children? What was the significance of each name?
2. What was the explanation of the biblical type of Gomer?
3. Why and how was the prophet Joel trying to arouse the people?
4. Describe each of Amos's visions and what they represented.
5. Of what is the story of Jonah and the fish a prophecy?
6. Describe each of Habakkuk's conflicts and God's answer to each.
7. To whom did Zephaniah prophesy and what did he tell each group?
8. Describe each of Haggai's four messages.
9. Give six visions of hope as given by Zechariah.

Matching

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. Hosea | a. A gatherer of sycamore fruit from Tekoa |
| 2. Joel | b. The last godly messenger recorded for 400 years |
| 3. Amos | c. Spoke to God on man's behalf |
| 4. Obadiah | d. Prophet ' of northern Israel who prophesied for about sixty years. |
| 5. Jonah | e. A direct descendant of King Hezekiah who wrote about the Day of the Lord |
| 6. Micah | f. Prophesied about Edom's great sins against Judah |
| 7. Nahum | g. Wrote how the Jewish nations should remain faithful to God even in times of trouble |
| 8. Habakkuk | h. A reluctant prophet sent to Nineveh |
| 9. Zephaniah | i. Prophesied about false leaders and eventual restoration of Israel |
| 10. Haggai | j. Prophesied because of an unusually severe infestation of insects |
| 11. Zechariah | k. Was thought to be an associate of Nehemiah |
| 12. Malachi | i. Prophesied of the utter destruction of Nineveh |