

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Franklin Jerome Dunn, Sr.

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May his incredible work for The Lord reach
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Hebrews 11:4

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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to
Yvonne Kathryn Campbell Dunn,
my wife and co-worker,
for more than half a century,
the light and love of my life,
and to our four beloved children –
Dr. Jerry Dunn, Rodney, Chris,
and Holly Dunn – and their families.
– Frank J. Dunn

And

In Loving Tribute
to our mothers –
Mattie Mae Waters Dunn (1891-1981)
and
Helen Cayce Campbell Mowinckle (1906-1997)
– Frank and Yvonne Dunn

THE ONE BOOK OF THE ONE GOD

Knowing God And Obeying God.

The 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament form one complete book – the Bible – setting forth four great truths: (1) the reality of creation; (2) the everlasting nature of Christ; (3) the sovereignty of God and (4) man's freedom of choice and accountability unto God.

As to the first truth, the Biblical account of creation is real. All evidences support the literal 24-hour days of creation. How can this be true? How bring into existence something from nothing? We do not know. But “by faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear” (Hebrews 11:3, ASV).

The second truth which forms the heart of the Bible is that Christ was with God from the beginning. He and God are one. The Old Testament begins with Christ as “the Word who became flesh” (John 1:1, 14). And the New Testament ends with Christ, the author of salvation (Revelation 22:20).

The third great truth that unifies the Bible – the sovereignty of God – is demonstrated over and over again. God demands explicit obedience to His commands, as seen in many Old Testament examples such as the case of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3).

As for the fourth truth, God does not force anyone to obey Him, but “whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Each one then must give an account unto God for his choice (Romans 14:11, 12).

God's Revelation Of Himself To Man

It is most important for us to “know God.” One of the supreme aims of the Bible is to make the true God known

to man. God makes Himself known to man so that man can know his own nature, since he is made in the likeness of his creator, who enjoins, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalms 46:10).

Christ came into the world to “declare” the Father, to explain God, to make God known to man (John 1:18). Christ said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). He demonstrated God in the form of man.

God revealed Himself to man through Christ by His works of creation (Rom. 1:20-21); by means of His miracles (Exodus 7:5,17; Heb. 2:3-4); His rule over men and nations (Daniel 2:47), and by His perfect word, the holy Scriptures.

We need to realize that there are two sides to God’s nature. He is both merciful and just. Too many people see only I John 4:8, “for God is love.” We must also see that He is a God of vengeance upon the evil doer (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30,31). He is the God of mercy and justice, of goodness and wrath.

What is God like? What kind of God do we worship? If we think of Him as only a God of love, or only a God of vengeance, our worship and our service will be wrong. Therefore, it is very important for us to know what the true God is like.

THE BIBLE'S MESSAGE

(1) The central message of the Bible – God's revelation of Himself to mankind. The supreme aim of the Bible is to make God known to man in order that man can understand his relation to his Creator and achieve the divine purpose of his Maker and Redeemer.

Salvation in Christ is the theme both of the Old and New Testaments. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). The apostle Paul gave up all in order to know Christ and through Him "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:10, 11).

All must attain unto "the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13), through which He has "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). This perfect, saving knowledge is "the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

(2) The way of life – The supreme attainment of life is to know God, the noblest purpose of life is to glorify God, the worthiest aim of life is to please God, the greatest achievement of life is to be as godlike as it is humanly possible to be. The greatest need of life is to have an obedient faith in God and Christ. The highest goal of life is to be with God forever. Man's most valuable possession is his soul. The most coveted prize is the crown of life which God will give unto all who "have fought a good fight ... finished the course, and kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Christ came into the world to bring these blessings to all and make these aspirations possible for all men to attain. Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). He brought God down to man in order to bring men to God forever "in the heavenly places." Therefore He can say, "I

am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto
the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

– Frank J. Dunn

WHY KNOW THE BIBLE?

After 55 years of studying and preaching the word of God, the author gives the following reasons why we should all seek to know the Bible.

Why Must You Know Your Bible?

(1) Know Your Bible in order to have everlasting life. In praying to the Father, Jesus said, “and this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). The Bible is the only source of perfect, saving knowledge of God and Christ.

(2) Know Your Bible to know the greatest book ever written. The Bible is the best book because God is its author. There were forty penmen, but only one author. All of the writers were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). No other book can compare with the Bible. It is truly God’s book!

(3) Know Your Bible so that you will know who you are. Only from the Bible can you know your origin, mission, and destiny—where you came from, why you are here, and where you are going. You are not a product of evolution, but of divine creation. God made man in His image, and man became a morally responsible, living soul (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). Our mission is to glorify God and become as Godlike as possible in preparation for the judgment and our personal accountability to God (Romans 14:11-12).

(4) Know Your Bible to be saved from sin. The Bible is the only book that has as its main message the salvation of sinners. The Bible alone answers the world’s greatest question, “What must I do to be saved?” “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (I John 4:14). He saves sinners by His gospel, which is “the power of God

unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Therefore, Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

(5) Know Your Bible in order to identify the church of the Lord and know its importance. When one obeys the gospel by being baptized into Christ, he is born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5), into the family of God. This is the spiritual body of Christ, the church of which He is the head (Ephesians 1:22-23). Christ has only one body (Ephesians 4:4); church (Acts 2:47). In the New Testament, members of the Lord’s church were **Christians only** (Acts 11:26), and they were the **only Christians**.

(6) Know Your Bible to find the Christian way of life, worship and service. The inspired Scriptures are the only doctrine of the New Testament church. The Scriptures alone furnish us completely unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The inspired word teaches us that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

(7) Know Your Bible in order to reach the highest goal, “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Paul counted all things “but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8). We should strive to be like Paul, who near the time of his departure from this life could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

PREFACE

The author has given few references to the sources of the material in this series. He used many other Bible studies and outlines and the author's own gleanings. He developed these lessons on all the books of the Bible during the twenty-five years (1970-1995) that he preached for the Shenandoah congregation in San Antonio and the University Hills church, in Austin. He also presented them on a weekly radio program over WOAI-AM radio 1200, from San Antonio, that was heard in many states.

All of the radio sermons were professionally recorded at the studio. They are still available on cassette tapes.

Repetition of some material from lesson to lesson serves as review and an aid to memory. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless designated otherwise.

Frank J. Dunn

Chapter 1

Introduction To A Study Of The Old Testament

I. The Book of Books.

1. What is the Bible? The word is from **ta biblia**, Greek for “the books” (Dan. 9:2). It is a collection of 66 books contained in the Old and New Testaments, that make one perfect book, the complete revelation of God’s will for man.
2. What are some of the scriptural names given to the Bible?
 - (1) Scriptures or sacred writings (II Tim. 3:15).
 - (2) Oracles or spoken word of God (I Peter 4:11).
 - (3) Word of God (Heb. 4:12).
 - (4) Testaments (Heb. 9:15).
 - (5) Covenants (Heb. 8:6-9).
 - (6) Law, or laws of God (Psm. 19; James 1:25).
 - (7) Note the many names in Psalm 119 for the word of God.

II. What are the claims made in the Bible for its divine origin?

1. Divinely inspired scriptures (II Tim. 3:16-17).
2. Authors divinely inspired (II Peter 1:21; Gal. 1:11-12).
3. “I have put my words in thy mouth” (Deut. 18:18; Isa. 51:16; Jer. 1:9).
4. More than 2,000 times the writers of the Bible claimed to be speaking by divine inspiration – “God spake these words,” etc. (Exod. 20:1; Deut. 1:6; Heb. 1:1).

III. How, and why is the Bible a unit, one perfect book?

1. It has one central theme – the story of one Man, Christ (Rev. 19:10).

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III. How, and why is the Bible a unit, one perfect book?

1. It has one central theme – the story of one Man, Christ (Rev. 19:10).

2. It has one purpose – the salvation of man from sin (II Tim. 3:15).
3. One subject – one great scheme of redemption through Christ (I Peter 1:10-12, 18-20).
4. The nature and character of God are the same throughout the Bible (Psalm 102:25-27; Heb. 13:8).
5. The moral law is the same (Gal. 5:19-21).
6. The principle of obedience to God is the same (Eccl. 12:13).
7. All prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Christ and the establishment of His kingdom (over 300 prophecies) find complete fulfillment in the New Testament.
8. There were more than 40 penmen, separated by centuries of time and myriad conditions, and yet there is perfect harmony in their writings.
9. The sovereignty of God is the same throughout; he is supreme ruler over all.
10. The Bible has one author, He who knows the end from the beginning.

IV. Principal purposes of the Old Testament.

1. The examples of those who lived under the law were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11).
2. They testify to the Deity of Christ (John 1:45; Luke 24:44; Acts 10:43).
3. They help us understand principles of righteousness (Heb. 11; 1-12:2): Faith and obedience of Abraham (James 2:21-24); patience of Job (James 5:11); courage of Elijah, moral purity of Joseph, consequence of disobedience of Saul (I Sam. 15:13-23).
4. The Jewish covenant of the Old Testament served the purpose of making the Jews to know sin (Rom. 7:7; Gal. 3:19) and of bringing them to Christ (Gal. 3:23-25).
5. The law foreshadowed many New Testament

- institutions (Heb. 10:1; I Cor. 5:7; I Peter 2:5).
6. Christ lived under the dispensation of the law of Moses (Matt. 5:17-19).
 7. In his death, as the one perfect offering for sin, he fulfilled the law and “took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-16).

V. Why study the Old Testament?

1. The Old Testament gives us an explanation of how the universe and all things began.
2. It tells us who we are, where we came from, and in whose image we are made.
3. It explains the origin of sin and man’s need for a Savior.
4. It gives the historical background necessary to an understanding of the New Testament.
5. Many New Testament passages cannot be explained without a knowledge of the Old Testament, such as Galatians 4:21-31, Hebrews 7, 8, 11, and others.
6. Many “types” were given in the Old Testament to explain their anti-types in the New Testament, such as Christ our Passover, the atoning sacrifice of His blood, the tabernacle, priesthood, etc.
7. The Old Testament gives us many of the eternal principles such as love of God, faith, obedience to God, God’s concern and care for man, His sovereignty over all nations, etc.
8. It helps us to see the majesty and grandeur, the power and wisdom of God.
9. The Old Testament gives us many graphic life-stories designed to warn us against evil and guide us toward right and good.
10. It convinces us of the inspiration of the scriptures and Deity of Christ through its fulfilled prophecies.

VI. Principal sources of the Old Testament.

1. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, except for parts of Ezra (5:8; 6:12; 7:12-26), Daniel (2:4-7:28), and one verse in Jeremiah (10:11), which were written in the Chaldean language.
2. What are the sources of the Old Testament?
Manuscripts and versions.
 - (1) Manuscripts are copies in the original languages.
 - (2) Versions are translations. Some translations are actually older than existing manuscripts.
3. What are the principal texts from which the Old Testament is translated?
 - (1) **Masoretic text** – Hebrew manuscripts dating in the 10th century prepared by Jewish scholars known as Masoretes.
 - (2) **Septuagint Version** – Translation of Old Testament into Greek by about 70 Jewish scholars in Alexandria, about 270 B. C. This version was in use during Jesus' earthly ministry.
 - (3) **Dead Sea Scrolls** – Discovered in 1947 in Qumran caves near the Dead Sea, these are copies of Biblical books, apocryphal books, and books setting forth the beliefs and practices of the sect of the Essenes, who placed them in the caves sometime near the New Testament period. They contain a complete and a fragmentary copy of Isaiah and a copy of two chapters of Habakkuk, their date about 100 B. C.

Chapter 2

The Pentateuch

I. WHAT IS THE PENTATEUCH?

Meaning of the term – “Pentateuch” means “five-fold volume,” designating the first five books of the Old Testament, the Jewish **Torah**, or the Book of Law, also called “the book of the law of Moses” (Neh. 8:1), and “the book of the law of Jehovah” (Neh. 9:3).

Divisions of the Old Testament – The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are divided into five groups: (1) **The five books of law** – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; (2) **Twelve books of history** – Joshua through Esther; (3) **Five poetical books** – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon; (4) **Five major books of prophecy, by four prophets** – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, written by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and (5) **Twelve minor prophets** – Hosea through Malachi. It should be understood that these divisions are general, that the books of law are also historical, and that poetry and prophecies are found in them and in the other divisions as well.

Divisions in the Hebrew Bible – The Hebrew Bible contains the same material in the Old Testament, but in different arrangement. (1) **The Law** – the five books listed above; (2) **The Prophets** – Joshua through Kings, and 15 books of prophecy; (3) **The Writings** – Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (one book), and I and II Chronicles (one book).

II. AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

Dual authorship – As is true of all books of the Bible,

there is a human author, or penman, and the real author – the Almighty God, Himself. Throughout the ages, those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God have believed that Moses is the human author of these five books. Although it is not stated that Moses “wrote this law,” before Deuteronomy 31:9, his authorship is true of the four other books because their unity, harmony, and continuous history form a well connected narrative that indicate only one author.

Moses was well-qualified. James Burton Coffman, in his **Commentary on Genesis** states that Moses was the only person who could have possessed sufficient knowledge and ability to have produced such a comprehensive account of the events that occurred. As “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” Moses was “schooled in the royal family of the world’s greatest and most civilized kingdom...and at the same time, he was faithfully taught by his mother, Jochebed, during his earliest years, she and her husband, Amram, being faithful Levites, through whom Moses learned the history of Israel and received the true knowledge of the one Almighty God” (Introduction, p. 1). Coffman points out that Moses received “the best and highest of both the religious and secular truth of that generation,” and that there is no “rival candidate for the honor of authoring the Pentateuch.”

Moses was inspired of God. As is true of all the penmen of the Bible, Moses wrote and spoke “as he was moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). He records not only the events of Creation and other historical events that occurred over a period of about 2,500 years, but he also foretold future events that came to pass hundreds of years after the period of his own life. As prophet, lawgiver, and deliverer, he served as the great Old Testament type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. MOSES AUTHORSHIP ATTESTED BY CHRIST

Moses' use of existing materials. That Moses used such expressions as, "the book of the generations of Adam" (Gen. 5:1), which he incorporated into Genesis, does not detract from the divine nature of the Pentateuch. Luke mentioned writings of many others, which he may have consulted, but his account of the Gospel is unquestionably inspired of God.

According to Christ, the Old Testament, including the Pentateuch, is God's word – Many passages in the New Testament begin with the statement, "It is written (or spoken) through the prophet" (Matt. 2:5, 17; 3:3; 4:14; 12:17, etc.). Jesus combined two citations from Genesis (1:27; 2:24), saying, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). God is the author of the scriptures cited by Jesus.

When Christ reproached the Pharisees, he quoted from the Pentateuch as the word of God. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother, but ye say," etc. (Matt. 15:3-4). Here Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 5:16, Exodus 21:17, and Exodus 10:12, as "the word of God."

Jesus received Jonah as truth, making Jonah the only OT prophet to be a type of Christ (Matt. 12:39-41). He made Sodom and Gomorrah a type of the final judgment of all men (Matt. 10:15). He made the flood a type of the final destruction of the earth (II Peter 3).

Many times Jesus referred to Moses and to his writings as true witnesses of God and of Christ, as did the inspired apostles. He said, "God spake unto Moses" (John 9:29), and, "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me: for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). Following His resurrection, Jesus said that the things that He suffered were for the purpose of fulfilling all things that were "written in the law of Moses, and the

prophets, and the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

God is the author of the Pentateuch and all of the Bible. In the preface to his **Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I – Genesis to Deuteronomy**, Adam Clarke noted that there are only three ways that these important records could have been brought down to the time of Moses: by writing, oral tradition, and divine revelation. There are no divinely inspired writings before Moses’ day. If facts and events were handed down from generation to generation from the time of Adam, Clarke observes that because of men living such long lives before the Flood, only one man, Methusaleh, could have known both Adam and Noah and transmitted earliest truths to Noah. Shem connected Noah and Abraham, as Isaac did Abraham and Joseph, and these things conveyed to Moses by his father Amram, who was contemporary with Joseph.

Although many events could have been accurately transmitted by such tradition, as we have seen, the writings have a much higher credibility. “Yet to preclude all possibility of mistake, the unerring Spirit of God directed Moses in the selection of his **facts** and the ascertaining of his **dates**. Indeed, the narrative is so simple, so much like truth, so consistent everywhere with itself, so correct in its dates, so impartial in its biography, so accurate in its philosophical details, so pure in its morality, and so benevolent in its design, as amply to demonstrate that it never could have had an earthly origin. In this case, also, Moses constructed every thing according to the pattern that God showed him in the mount.” (Clarke, I, 26).

IV. MODERN CRITICS DENOUNCED

Many attempts to disprove divine inspiration.

From the eighteenth century, various unbelieving “higher critics” have attempted to discredit the Bible as God’s infallible Word. In the name of scientific criticism, critical method, scholarship and the like, many so-called experts in

textual criticism have developed theories that if true would reduce the Bible to the level of human literature, with no more authority than the writings of Shakespeare.

“Other documents” – Although the self-styled “scholars” claim that their analysis of scriptures show that they were compiled from many “prior documents” and fragments, and arranged by unknown writers, they have yet to produce even one word or syllable of even one such document. One of the most fantastic of the modern writings is one that claims that the oldest parts of the Bible – the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Joseph, and Moses – were written by an unidentified woman, a descendent of King David working in the 10th century B. C.

We heartily concur with James Burton Coffman, who writes, “This whole monstrous collection of critical denials and contradictions is worthless...Satan is the author of all of them. Their purpose is not the shedding of light upon God’s truth, but for the purpose of discrediting it and reducing or destroying all faith in it” (*Ibid.*, 7-8).

We believe Christ. Jesus said that the Old Testament is “the word of God” (John 10:35). All who follow Christ are foolish indeed who will allow any man to spoil them “through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

“All scripture is inspired of God” (II Tim. 3:16). If it should be proved that any part, or parts, of the Pentateuch may have been written by someone other than Moses, such as Joshua, or some other author, we can be assured that he, too, was inspired by God.

Chapter 3

A Brief Description Of The Five Books Of Law

I. KEY NOTES OF EACH BOOK

I. *The Book of Genesis.*

- (1) **Key word** – Beginning.
- (2) **Key verses** – 1:1, 26-27; 2:7; 3:15.
- (3) **Message** – The beginning of all things and the foundation of all truth.

I. *The Book of Exodus.*

- (1) **Key word** – Deliverance.
- (2) **Key verses** – 3:8, 14-16; 6:2-6.
- (3) **Message** – Israel redeemed and delivered. Old Testament history changes from that of a family to a nation. Patriarchal Age ends and Jewish Age begins.

III. *The Book of Leviticus.*

- (1) **Key words** – Holy or holiness.
- (2) **Key verses** – 11:44-45.
- (3) **Message** – God's people must be holy, for He is holy.

IV. *The Book of Numbers.*

- (1) **Key words** – Wanderings, or sojourning.
- (2) **Key verses** – 14:22-23; 20:12; 22:18.
- (3) **Message** – The tragedy of unbelief and disobedience. God's people can inherit His promises only if they trust and obey Him.

V. *The Book of Deuteronomy.*

- (1) **Key words** – Obedience, and remember.
- (2) **Key verses** – 10:12-13; 30:19-20.
- (3) **Message** – Restatement of the law and renewal of God's covenant with Israel as the younger generation prepares to enter the promised land.

Ratification by Moses, the priests, the Levites, and all of Israel: "Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt therefore obey the commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day" (27:9-10).

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ... And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:1,26-27).

Chapter 4

A Brief Description Of The Twelve Books Of History

INTRODUCTION

These books, Joshua through Esther, cover a span of about 1,050 years (B. C. 1450-400).

KEY THOUGHTS ON EACH BOOK

1. *The Book of Joshua.*

- (1) **Key words** – “conquest,” and “possess.”
- (2) **Key verses** – Ch. 1:5-6: “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage.”
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (24:15).

2. *The Book of Judges.*

- (1) **Key word** – “Confusion.”
- (2) **Key verses** – “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “...right in his own eyes.”

3. *The Book of Ruth.*

- (1) **Key words** –Kinsman (redeemer), 13 times, “one who redeems.” Also, love, faith, rest, and redemption.
- (2) **Key verses** – “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 aught but death part thee and me” (1:16-17).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Entreat me not to leave thee.”

4. *The Book of First Samuel.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Prayed,” or “prayer.”

- (2) **Key verse** – “But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee” (13:14).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice” (15:22).

5. *The Book of Second Samuel.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Before the Lord.”
- (2) **Key verse** – “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me” (22:21).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Thou art the man” (12:7).

6. *The Book of First Kings.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Glory,” and “division.”
- (2) **Key verses** – “I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself” (2:2-3).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “As David, his father.”

7. *The Book of Second Kings.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Downfall,” and “captivity.”
- (2) **Key verses** – “And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days” (12:2).
“I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies...because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day” (21:14-15).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “According to the word of the Lord.”

8. *The Book of First Chronicles.*

- (1) **Key words** – Worship and praise.
- (2) **Key verse** – “Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (29:9).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Thou reignest over all..”

9. *The Book of Second Chronicles.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Restoration,” and “worship.”
- (2) **Key verse** – “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (7:14).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “Prepareth his heart.”

10. *The Book of Ezra.*

- (1) **Key words** – “The house of the Lord” (restoration of the temple).
- (2) **Key verse** – “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (7:10).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “The word of the Lord” (1:1; 9:4).

11. *The Book of Nehemiah.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Rebuilding,” “prayer,” and “work,” in regard to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
- (2) **Key verse** – “So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (8:8).
- (3) **Key phrase** – “For the people had a mind to work” (4:6).

12. *The Book of Esther.*

- (1) **Key words** – “Protection,” and “providence.”
- (2) **Key verse** – “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art

come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
(4:14).

- (3) **Key phrase** – "I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish"
(4:16).

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee (I Samuel 13:14).

And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; (1 Kings 14:8).

Chapter 5

Getting To Know The Books Of The Old Testament

FIRST DIVISION – “THE PENTETEUCH” – FIVE BOOKS OF LAW

All five books are attributed to Moses and were written probably about 1500 B. C. “Penteteuch” means five-fold volume, “the book of the law of Moses” (Neh. 8:1), also, “the book of the law of Jehovah” (Neh. 9:3).

Genesis (50 chapters) – The Greek name given this book in the Septuagint means “beginning,” the key word of the book. It contains an account of the beginning of God’s chosen people, whose history is recorded in the second division. The events in Genesis cover more than 2,500 years of the patriarchal dispensation, from Creation to the time of Joseph, including the flood, call of Abraham, promise to Isaac, and Jacob’s family in Egypt. Beginnings set forth: the universe, life, mankind, marriage, family life, sin, scheme of redemption, worship, cities, nations, languages, occupations, Hebrew race and Messianic line. Christ first promised (Gen. 3:15). Key verses: Chapter 1:1, 26-27; 2:7).

Exodus (40 chapters) – Means departure or going out. The key word is “deliverance.” The events cover about 200 years, from the death of Joseph to the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness (1490 B. C.). It tells of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, their journey to Mt. Sinai, and the giving of the law. Patriarchal age ends and Jewish age begins. Incessant murmuring of the people contrasted with God’s benevolent care. Ten Commandments given in 20th chapter. Key verses: “I am” (3:14-16; 6:2; and 20:2).

Leviticus (27 chapters) – The name is from Levi, a son of Jacob, whose descendants were priests, with Aaron

the first high priest. The key word is "holy," or "holiness," which occurs over 80 times. Contains many laws, most of which were ceremonial laws governing the priesthood, tabernacle worship, sacrifices, and feast days. Sacred seasons included the Passover, feast of Pentecost, feast of trumpets, day of atonement, feast of tabernacles, the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee. Leviticus is an important background for the book of Hebrews. Key verses: "I am holy" (11:44-45; 19:2).

Numbers (36 chapters) – So called because it contains the history of the numbering of the children of Israel at two different times, at the beginning and end of the forty years wandering. The key word is "sojourning." It gives the record of Israel's preparation for war, the march to the border of Canaan, the evil report of ten spies, faithful Caleb and Joshua, 38 more years of wandering, the fiery serpents, Balaam, and the return to Canaan. The story can be written in three words: discontent, disaster, and discipline. Key verse 22:18.

Deuteronomy (34 chapters) – Name signifies "second law," not a new law, but a restating of the law given at Sinai, made necessary by the fact that the former generation had died in the wilderness and a new generation was ready to enter Canaan. Key words are "obedience" and "remember." Altogether God gave the Jews 613 commandments, 245 "thou shalt," and 368 "thou shalt nots," pertaining to foods, diseases, purification, places of sacrifice, marriage, idolatry, vows, morality, penalties for disobedience, etc. The death of Moses on Mt. Pisgah is recorded in chapter 34. Key passages are chapter 6:4-9; 30:15-20; 5:29; and 10:12-13.

SECOND DIVISION – TWELVE BOOKS OF HISTORY

The books, Joshua through Esther, cover a period of about 1,000 years, B. C. 1450-400. The first three (Joshua, Judges and Ruth) contain the history of the independent

tribes; First Samuel through II Chronicles relate to the kingdom; and Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther tell about the return from captivity.

Joshua (24 chapters) – So called from its author and principal character, written possibly about 1400 B. C. The key word is “possess,” or “possession.” The events cover about 50 years, and include Joshua’s succeeding Moses, crossing the Jordan, fall of Jericho, taking the land of Canaan, and giving the tribes their part of the land. The failure of the Israelites to expel or destroy the Canaanites completely, as God commanded, led to their downfall. Key passages: 1:5-9 and 24:15.

Judges (21 chapter) – Covers about 300 years, written probably by Samuel about 1100 B. C., showing the decline of the Jews after the death of Joshua (2:12-16). The key word is “confusion,” and the key verses, “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25). It is an account of seven apostasies, seven servitudes to seven heathen nations and seven deliverances under 13 judges, Othniel through Samson. The record of two more judges, Eli and Samuel, is given in I Samuel. The sins of the people were: (1) They did not fully destroy or drive out the Canaanites; (2) they preached idolatry; and (3) they married the heathen.

Ruth (4 chapters) – A beautiful account in a pastoral setting of loyalty and love by which Ruth, a Moabitess, became the great grandmother of David, and thus an ancestor of the royal family of Judah and in turn of Jesus. It occurred about 1200 B. C., and covers about 10 years, during the period of the Judges (1:1, 4), and is an appendix to that book. Its key words are love, faith, rest, and redemption, and its sublime passage is 1:16-17. It is the only book of the Bible devoted wholly to the history of a woman, although two books bear the names of women – Ruth, a Gentile who married a Hebrew, and Esther, a Hebrew who married a Gentile. Probably written by Samuel

after the birth of David (4:22).

I Samuel (31 chapters) – Foundation of the Hebrew kingdom, a history of the judge-priests, Eli and Samuel, anointing of Saul and David, David slaying Goliath, the friendship of David and Jonathan, and death of Saul and Jonathan. Period covered, about B. C. 1171-1056. Samuel means “asked of God,” and the key word is “prayed.” The book first gives the expressions, “Lord of hosts” (1:3), “his anointed” (2:10), Ebenezer (7:12), seer (9:9), and “God save the king” (10:24). The key verse is, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (15:22). The author and date of writing of this and of II Samuel are unknown, but may have been Jeremiah or Ezra from memoirs of Samuel, Nathan or Gad.

II Samuel (24 chapters) – Main subject is the reign of David, 1055-1015 B. C., halfway between Abraham and Christ. David built a strong capital at Jerusalem and enlarged and consolidated the kingdom. David’s sin and the far reaching results of it are an example of one’s “reaping the whirlwind.” The truthfulness of the warning, “Be sure your sin will find you out,” is seen in the brave prophet Nathan’s rebuke of David, “Thou art the man” (12:7), the key verse of the book. In view of this, the key words are, “before the Lord.” The sins of David’s children, the rebellion of his son, Absalom, and Absalom’s death were tragic reminders of God’s retribution. The prophecy that David’s throne should be established forever (II Sam. 7:16) was fulfilled by his line continuing until the captivity and then, by the coming of Christ, when the eternal throne was established in His reigning over His church, which is His everlasting kingdom.

I Kings (22 chapters) – Originally one book with II Kings. Principal events were the reign of Solomon and the division of the kingdom under his son, Rehoboam, in 975 B. C. Ten northern tribes revolted and formed the kingdom of Israel under Jereboam, who built his capital at Schechem

and set up idols at Dan and Bethel. The books covers 119 years, from the death of David, 1015 B. C., to the death of Jehoshaphat, fourth king of Judah after the division, and the death of Ahab, seventh king of Israel. With I and II Samuel, the two books of Kings form a continuous history, which in old versions were called the four books of kings, from Saul to the Babylonian captivity and end of the kingdom. The early years of Solomon's reign were the Golden Age of Israel. His greatest work was the building and dedication of the temple. Key expressions are, "glory," and "as David his father." Key verses: 2:2-3. Author and date of writing are unknown, possibly Jeremiah or Ezra.

II Kings (25 chapters) – A sequel to I Kings, covers about 300 years, from the reign of Ahaziah, son of Ahab, to the fall of Israel in 721 B. C., and the reign of Jehoram in Judah to the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian captivity in 586 B. C. Altogether, Judah had 19 kings and one usurper, over a period of 390 years, Rehoboam to Zedekiah, all of one family, descendants of David. Israel, in 254 years, had 19 kings, Jeroboam to Hoshea, of seven dynasties. The main message is that loyal, faithful obedience to God's law will insure happiness, while disobedience will be attended by loss, disaster and retribution. Some of Judah's kings were good, such as Jehoshaphat and Josiah, but most were bad. All of Israel's kings were bad, with Ahab, who married Jezebel, being the worst. Leading prophets were Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Key expressions are "downfall," and "according to the word of the Lord." Key verses: "Evil in my sight" (21:15 and in 20 other passages), and "right in the eyes of the Lord" (12:2, and in seven other references). Ezra may have been the author.

I Chronicles (29 chapters) – Originally one book with II Chronicles. Name given by Jerome means "diaries, journals, or annals." A condensed Hebrew history from Adam to Solomon, written to give the Jews a correct genealogy as they resettle in Judah after 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

It is primarily a supplement to I and II Samuel, its chief topic, the reign of David. Key words are “worship,” and “thou reignest over all.” The message is Jehovah is sovereign Lord. Key verses: 29:9-11. The writer, or compiler, probably was Ezra.

II Chronicles (36 chapters) – A supplement to I and II Kings, a history of Judah from the reign of Solomon to the captivity and the later granting of her freedom by Cyrus. History of the Northern Kingdom is omitted. It covers about 430 years, relating the building of the temple, the divided kingdom, finding the book of law during the reign of Josiah, religious reforms, destruction of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian captivity. Spiritual conditions are emphasized rather than the political history. “Seek ye the Lord” is a recurring phrase (7:14; 15:2, 4, 12-13, 15, etc.). Key words are “restoration,” “worship,” and “prepareth his heart.” Key passages are chapter 1:10-13 and 7:14. Its message is the place of prayer and trust in God in giving deliverance and victory.

Ezra (10 chapters) – Named for the priest and scribe, an exile in Babylon, who probably wrote it and who is a central character. It tells of the first return in 536 B. C. of the Israelites, about 30,000 in number, from Babylonian captivity. They were led by Zerubbabel, who supervised the rebuilding of the temple, completed 20 years after its beginning. It also tells of the return of Ezra with about 2,000 exiles in 457 B. C., his separating of the people from heathen wives and neighbors, and reestablishing the observance of the law. Covers 80 years, from 536-456 B. C., from the first year of Cyrus’ reign over Persia to the eighth year of Artaxerxes. The key phrase is, “The word of the Lord” (Ezra 1:1; 9:4), and the message, the place and power of the word of God in the religious, social, and civil life of his people. The key verse, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (7:10).

Nehemiah (13 chapters) – Named for the man who probably compiled the book and who is the principal figure, contemporary with Ezra. Gives the history of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem against the opposition of the heathen. Covers 13 years from the 20th year of Artaxerxes, for whom Nehemiah was cupbearer (445 B. C.), to the close of the Old Testament period (432 B. C.). Key words are “rebuilding,” “prayer,” and “work.” Its message is that work, prayer, and vigilance are essential to success in our service to God (4:6, 9, 17, 20).

Esther (10 chapters) – Named for the principal character, a lovely Jewish maiden, who became queen of Persia and because of her bravery and obedience to God, was able to save her people from death. Probably occurred between the time of Zerubbabel’s return and the return of Ezra, or about 480 B. C. It is one of the two books of the Bible in which a woman is the principal character. The key word of Esther is “protection,” and its message is to show the reality of God’s providential help in times of distress. Yet, it is the only book of the Bible in which the name of God does not appear. The key verse is, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (4:14). Probably Mordecai or Ezra was the author.

THIRD DIVISION – FIVE POETICAL OR DEVOTIONAL BOOKS

These five books consist of poetry, drama, wise sayings, songs, praises of God and His word, prayers, rules of life, and other divinely inspired thoughts. These books treat five great problems and their solution: Job, the problem of suffering; Psalms, the problem of prayer; Proverbs, the problem of conduct; Ecclesiastes, the problem of the chief good; Song of Solomon, the problem of love.

Job (42 chapters) – Named for the chief character, whose name means “persecuted.” Author and date of writing are

unknown. Job was a real person (Ezek. 14:14, 20; James 5:11), who may have lived in Abraham's time. This probably was the first book written, of the Bible and of all literature. It is the story of the trials, patience, and triumph of Job, whom God called "a perfect and upright man" (Job 1:8). With Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, it is one of the wisdom books. It justifies the wisdom and goodness of God, especially in regard to human suffering, and shows that suffering is not always the result of sin. Key words are suffering, trials, and tested. Key verses: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (13:15, KJV), and "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (28:28). Chapter 28 is a great passage on wisdom, and in chapters 38-41, we have one of the greatest, most profound passages in all literature, setting forth the wisdom, power, and omnipresence of God. The message of Job: We must patiently endure the trials of life, with unswerving trust in God. Instead of our suffering being evidence of God's wrath, it may be proof of His love for our good (II Cor. 12:9-10).

Psalms (150 divisions) – A collection of sacred songs and prophecies, the Jewish hymnal. The longest book in the Bible contains 150 songs, with 73 attributed to David; to the Sons of Korah, 11; Asaph, 12; Solomon, 2. Others were written by many poets on various subjects. Many prophecies are given, some concerning Christ, as Psalms 16 and 22. The Psalms were written mostly during the 300 years from David to Hezekiah. Subjects are the only true God, Christ, the word of God, man, Israel, worship, sin, the blessings of the righteous, and the unhappy end of the wicked. The key word is praise. A key verse is, "Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (90:2). Psalm 23 is one of the best known and most beloved passages in the Bible. In Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, God's word is praised in almost every line. Message: The blessings of walking in the way of the Lord (Psm. 1).

Proverbs (31 chapters) – These are wise sayings,

maxims, or rules of life. Most were written by Solomon. Subjects are wisdom, justice, temperance, industry, purity, and other moral instructions. The purpose is stated in chapter 1:2-6: "To give wisdom and instruction...to the young man knowledge and discretion." The key thought, "the fear of the Lord," occurs 14 times. Key verse: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10). Message: Salvation and happiness come only to those who "trust in the Lord with all thine heart" (3:5). These are only part of the 3,000 proverbs that Solomon spoke (I Kings 4:32).

Ecclesiastes (12 chapters) – The name is from a Greek word, meaning, "a preacher." Solomon is the author. Such expressions as "I saw," "under the sun," and "vanity of vanities," indicate it is not the will of God that is developed, but a man is telling of his own ventures and utter failure. Solomon sought satisfaction in wisdom, pleasure, wealth, power, fame, and great works, all of which he found to be vanity and vexation of spirit. The message is that happiness does not come through realization of worldly aims, hopes and aspirations, but through obedience to God and divine service. The key word is "vanity." Key verse: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13).

Song of Solomon (8 chapters) – "Song of Songs" or "Canticles," probably the choicest of all the 1005 songs that Solomon wrote (I Kings 4:32). It is the story of a country girl who resists the wooing of a king and remains faithful to her shepherd lover. It may be a historical account of King Solomon's attempt to win the girl for his harem. Or it may be an allegory in which the shepherd-lover is Christ and the maiden is His bride, the church. The key word is love, or beloved (2:16). Key verses: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart...Many waters cannot quench love" (8:6-7). The message is that happiness comes only through a genuine love for God and faithfulness to Him.

FOURTH DIVISION - FIVE MAJOR BOOKS OF PROPHECY

The period of the prophets covered about 400 years, 800-400 B. C. The central event of the period was the destruction of Jerusalem, about the middle of the period, and was the time of the greatest prophetic activity. The 17 books, Isaiah through Malachi, are called "Major Prophets" and "Minor Prophets," based on the size of the books.

The historical books, Genesis to Esther, are the story of the rise and fall of the Hebrew nation. The poetical books, Job to Song of Solomon, belong chiefly to the Golden Age of the nation. The prophetic books belong to the days of the fall of the Hebrew nation.

The prophets were God's spokesmen, primarily preachers and reformers. They appeared at times of crisis in Israel's history, as the champions of righteousness. Their calling also combined the office of teacher, statesman, and seer. They were conscious of their gift of inspiration, for one of their commonest expressions is, "Thus saith the Lord."

Isaiah (66 chapters) – His name means, "Salvation of Jehovah." He is referred to as the "Evangelical Prophet," the "Messianic Prophet," and the "Prophet of Redemption," because of the many predictions concerning the coming of Christ and the work He would do for the human race. Thus the book is called, "The Gospel according to Isaiah." Many scholars regard Isaiah as the greatest and most sublime of the prophets. He began to prophesy in 759 B. C., midway between Moses and Christ, and 38 years before the fall of the Northern Kingdom. The key word is "salvation." The key phrase, "Holy One of Israel," and simply, "Holy One," occur 33 times. The theme of Isaiah is the glory of God, His judgment against evil, and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ. Notable passages are the vision and call of Isaiah (chapter 6), and the suffering of Christ (chapter 53). Some key verses: "Come, let us reason together, saith the

Lord; tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (1:16-18). "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (7:14). "Unto us a child is born. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. The government of his father David shall be upon his shoulder..." (9:6-7).

Jeremiah (52 chapters) – His name means, "Exalted of Jehovah." He is the "weeping prophet," who foretold and witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the great temple. He warned of the captivity and suffering of the Jews, that came as divine punishment for their backsliding and idolatry. He foretold also the return of a remnant after 70 years of bondage in Babylon and spoke of the coming of "the Branch..." (23:5-6; 33:16). The message is God's judgment because of sin, yet His eternal love that provided salvation from sin through the gift of His Son. Jeremiah lived about 100 years after Isaiah and prophesied in Judah for 60 years (B. C. 626-566). The book contains biography, history and prophecy. Key words are "forsake" and "forsaken," which occur 24 times; "backslider" and "backsliding," 13 times; and "return," 47 times. Key verses: "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord" (3:12). "Ask for the old paths" (6:16). "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom...but him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me..." (9:23-24). "Yea, I have loved thee with everlasting love" (31:3). Some great passages are God's warnings against wicked shepherds and lying prophets and His promise of the righteous Branch (chapter 23), and God's redeeming love and new covenant (chapter 31).

Lamentations (5 chapters) – Sequel to Jeremiah, poems of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity

of the Jews. In the Septuagint it is called, "Tears of Jeremiah," with this preface, "And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with lamentation over Jerusalem." The key word is "sorrow." Key verses: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow..." (1:12). "The Lord...hath fulfilled his word" (2:17). The highlight of the book is the assurance that "the Lord is good unto them that wait for him" (3:22-25; v. 33). The message is that sin brings misery and punishment, but that God still loves the sinner and will show compassion upon all who repent.

Ezekiel (48 chapters) – His name means, "God strengthens." Like Jeremiah, he was a priest. He was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, B. C. 597, and was called to prophesy in Babylon five years later. He preached among the exiles the same message that Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem—the certainty of Judah's punishment for her sins and the promised return from captivity. He endeavored to convince them that before they could hope to return to Jerusalem they must return to the Lord. Ezekiel abounds in allegories, parables, visions, and symbols, resembling Revelation, but the book is not quoted in the New Testament. The key word is "glory." Key phrases are: "That ye may know that I am the Lord," which occurs at least 66 times; and "the glory of the Lord," which appears 14 times in the first eleven chapters. A key verse is, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (18:4,20). Great passages are Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God (chapter 1); his call to be God's watchman (3:16-21; 33:1-6); his reproof of lying prophets as using untempered mortar (13:8-16), and the valley of dry bones, a vision of the restoration (chapter 37). The message is the goodness and severity of God as seen in His dealing with sin. Sin must be punished; it destroys both men and nations. But God's mercy is great in His forgiveness of our sins when we repent and do His will.

Daniel (12 chapters) – His name means “God is my judge.” Daniel wrote this book in Babylon, probably near the close of his life, B. C. 533. He was one of the first group of captives taken from Jerusalem, B. C. 606, when he was 18 years old. He lived through the entire period of captivity and became God’s statesman in Babylon, where he probably died. He and his companions showed great courage in the midst of trials. His prophecy tells of the development and fall of four great kingdoms of the world (Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman) and of the establishment and triumph of the kingdom of God. The key phrase is, “The Most High ruleth.” The main theme is the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men and nations in all ages. The key verses are those which establish this theme: “Of a truth your God is the God of gods” (2:47); “till thou know that the Most High ruleth” (4:25); “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven” (4:37); “for he is the living God...and his dominion shall be even unto the end” (6:26). The most notable passage is chapter 2, Daniel’s interpretation of the king’s dream of the great image which represented the four great world empires and the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

FIFTH DIVISION – THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

The theme of the Minor Prophets, like that of the Major Prophets, is the justice of God, yet His matchless mercy, as seen in His overruling providence in the affairs of the divided kingdoms and of all the nations. Through the dark tapestry of righteous judgment runs the bright cord of divine love in the promise and realization of restoration of a remnant in Jerusalem and the shining hope of the Redeemer, who was yet to come.

Hosea (14 chapters) – His name means, “deliverance.” He was the only writing prophet of Israel, who preached to Israel. His ministry was about 786-726 B. C., while Isaiah

and Micah were prophesying in Judah. Hosea pictured Israel as God's adulterous bride and denounced their idolatry. He foretold their fall and captivity. The theme is God's persistent love for His people, in contrast to their unfaithfulness to Him. The key word is, "return," which occurs 15 times. The key verse is, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (4:6). Chapter 14 is a great passage for backsliders.

Joel (3 chapters) – His name means, "Jehovah is God." He was probably the first prophet to Judah. The key phrase is, "The day of the Lord," which appears five times. He predicted a time of terrible trouble while promising that God would drive away their enemies and "be a refuge unto his people." He foretold the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:28-32), which prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the church began (Acts 2:16-31). A key verse is Joel 2:32, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (shall be saved, Acts 2:21). The theme is God's chastening love for His people.

Amos (9 chapters) – His name means, "Burden," as borne by God. Often times the message of a prophet was referred to as his "burden," especially a prophecy of doom (Isa. 13:1; Jer. 23:33, etc.). He was a herdsman of Judah, an early prophet contemporary with Joel and Hosea, at a time of outward prosperity but spiritual bankruptcy. As the prophet of "woe," he declared that Judah would not escape punishment for her sins. He promised restoration and the Messianic kingdom. The key word is, "punishment," and the key phrase, "seek the Lord," which occurs five times. The key verses are, "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live" (5:14), and "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (6:1). The theme is God's righteous and holy love for His people.

Obadiah (1 chapter) – His name means, "Servant of Jehovah." He prophesied about the time of Judah's overthrow in 586 B. C. He foretold the overthrow of Edom

and assured the Jews of God's blessings, although they were to suffer much from the nations round about them. The key phrase is, "Thou shouldest not have." The key verse is, "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto you" (v. 15; Gal. 6:7-8). The theme is the delivering, or vengeful love of God for His people.

Jonah (4 chapters) – His name means, "Dove," and he is called the "reluctant missionary." He was an early prophet of Israel, whose message was to Ninevah, capital of Assyria. The key word is repentance. The key verse: "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness" (4:2). The theme is God's universal, forgiving love, for Gentiles as well as Jews.

Micah (7 chapters) – His name means, "Who is like the Lord?" He was a simple countryman, younger contemporary of Isaiah, who prophesied both to Israel and Judah, showing God's hatred of evil and His delight in pardoning the penitent. He foretold the birthplace of Jesus (5:2). The heart of his message is God's controversy with His people. The key word is "hear." Key verses: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8); and, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity...?" (7:18). The theme is God's pleading, punishing, and pardoning love for His people.

Nahum (3 chapters) – His name means, "Consolation." He tells of God's goodness and His vengeance as he predicts in detail the destruction of Nineveh, "that bloody city." Nahum does not allude to the sins of the people or to the impending fall of their nation. His message was to Judah concerning their enemies. He describes the grandeur, power, and justice of the Judge, and the certainty and completeness of His judgment. The key word is "doom," and the key phrase, "an utter end." Key verses are, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust him. But with an overrunning flood he will make

an utter end of the place thereof" (1:7-8). The theme is God's avenging love for His people. God's love for mankind demands that He punish sin.

Habakkuk (3 chapters) – His name means, "Embracing." He was likely a contemporary of Jeremiah and prophesied in Judah, B. C. 628-608. He tells how wicked the people had become and of God's punishment of them through the Chaldeans. He promises that God will also punish Chaldea for their cruelty and greed and that the time will come when God will be glorified in the earth. Habakkuk shows that God reigns over all the nations, that the just shall live and that the unjust shall die. The key word is, "Why?" The key verse: "The just shall live by faith" (2:4), which is quoted three times in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The theme is God's providential, delivering love for His people.

Zephaniah (3 chapters) – His name means, "He whom the Lord has hidden." A descendant of King Hezekiah, Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah in Judah, about 630 B. C., and was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk. His message is, "the great day of the Lord," in which divine judgment would come upon all nations, including Judah. A remnant would be restored, and these would worship the Lord "everyone from his own place." The key word is divine jealousy (1:18; 3:8), and the key phrase, "the day of the Lord." Key verse: "The day of the Lord is at hand" (1:7, 14). The theme is God's jealous love for His people. A beautiful thought is expressed in chapter 3:9: "For then will I return to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

Haggai (2 chapters) – His name means, "the festive, or joyous one." This, and the two following books, belong to the post-exile period, after Cyrus let the children return to their homeland, as Isaiah had predicted (44:28). Haggai was born in Babylon, returned with Zerubbabel, and prophesied

during the time of rebuilding the temple, about 520 B. C. he encouraged the people to resume work on the temple, which they had discontinued soon after laying the foundation sixteen years before. The key word is build. Key phrases are, "Saith the Lord," and "Lord of hosts" (12 times each), "consider" (4 times), and the "word of the Lord" (5 times). Key verse: "Consider your ways" (1:5, 7). The theme is God's encouraging love for His people. The permanent message is that materialism, laziness, lukewarmness and indifference are enemies of spirituality and hindrances to one's success in serving God (See Rev. 3:15-22).

Zechariah (14 chapters) – His name means, "Remembered of the Lord." He, too, returned with Zerubbabel and was a co-laborer with Haggai, beginning two months later and continuing two years longer. There are eight visions assuring them of God's love and care and encouraging them to overcome their complacency and to complete the temple. The heart of his prophecy is the coming of the "Prince of Peace" (Ch. 6:13; Isa. 9:6). The key word is, "remember," and the key phrase, "The Lord of hosts" (Ch. 1:3-4, 6, 12, etc.). Key verse: "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts" (1:3). The theme is God's remembering love for His people. God was jealous over them with a great jealousy, even as Christ has a godly jealousy for His church (II Cor. 11:2).

Malachi (4 chapters) – His name means, "Messenger of the Lord." He was the last of the Old Testament prophets and prophesied about 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah. Malachi was connected with the reform movement of Ezra and Nehemiah. After the completion of the temple, the people fell away into many sinful practices. Malachi reproved them for heathen marriages, divorce, polluted sacrifices, corruption of the sabbath, withholding tithes, and other sins. He foretold the coming of the "forerunner" of the Messiah (4:1), which Isaiah also predicted. The key word is "rebuke,"

and the key phrase, “ye say,” which occurs 12 times (1:2, 6-7, 12-13, etc.). The theme is the constant, continuing love of God for His people in contrast to their lack of steadfastness.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).

Chapter 6

The Book Of Genesis

I. KEYS TO GENESIS

Key word – Beginning.

Key verses – Chapter 1:1, 26-27 –

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

2:7 – And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

3:15 – And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

12:1-3 – Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

22:18 – And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Key phrase – “In the beginning God.”

Key chapters – Chapter 1 and 2 – The Creation. Creation of the world (1:1-2:3). Creation of man and institution of marriage (2:4-25).

Message – The origin of the heaven and earth and all things therein, the foundation of all truth, and man's relationship to God. Genesis is more than the history of man. It is the first chapter in the redemption of man. To reveal the nature and work of God in order that we may come to know our own nature and God's eternal purpose for us and to create in all men the desire to be restored to the original image – "in the likeness of God."

II. THE PURPOSE OF GENESIS

Main theme of Genesis. Man's relation to God is the central truth of Genesis. God made man in His image for the purpose of man's walking with God and serving God with unending happiness. After the fall of man, we see his complete failure, with few exceptions, to fulfill the God-given design. In Genesis, human failure is met with divine grace in the promised means of salvation from God. Here we have the record both of man's sin and the initial steps taken by God for man's redemption. "Christ is coming," the dominant chord of the Old Testament, has its overture in Genesis.

Immediate purpose. God's immediate purpose in revealing these oracles to Moses, which he probably wrote during the wilderness wanderings, was to instruct the new generation of Jews shortly before they entered the promised land of Canaan. It was necessary to the national unity of Israel to have an accurate record of their national origin in Abraham and of God's covenant with him and his descendants. It was of even greater importance that they remember their origin from creation and their spiritual relationship with God.

Permanent design. Genesis has a most important purpose for all men for all time. It reveals the nature and

work of God as the Almighty Creator and preserver of life and of all things, the Supreme Law-Giver, Righteous Judge, and Merciful Sovereign over all.

Genesis is more than history. Although Genesis gives us the only reliable account of the origin of heaven and the earth, and of the origin and nature of man, the purpose of the book is primarily religious. Man is a spiritual being, made in the image of God, and he can never find lasting happiness until the image is restored. This can be accomplished only by man's knowledge and acceptance of God's divinely revealed plan of redemption in Christ, through his obedience to the gospel of Christ, "which is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Purpose summary. Genesis reveals the nature and work of God, the origin of the universe and of mankind, the origin of sin and beginning of redemption from sin; also, the nature of man, the nature of sin, and the universal need for redemption, the place of the Abrahamic covenant in the divine plan for redemption, and national origin of Israel.

III. THE SCOPE OF GENESIS

The book of beginnings. Genesis comes from a Greek word meaning "origin," and the book begins with the Hebrew word that means "beginning." It covers primeval history and the period of the great patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Events recorded occurred mostly between 4,000 and 1,700 B. C., from the creation of mankind to the death of Joseph, including the fall of man, the flood, the call of Abraham, and Jacob's family in Egypt. Beginnings set forth include the origin of the universe, of the earth, of life, the human race, covenants between God and man, names, marriage, family life, sin, redemption, moral order, worship, sacrifices, nations, government, occupations, music, literature, art, agriculture, mechanics, cities, languages, godless civilization, divine punishment of the wicked, the

Hebrew race, and the Messianic line.

Foundation of revelation. The first book of the Bible is of supreme importance. It forms the foundation on which all of divine revelation rests and on which it is built up. The germ of all truth that is unfolded in the Bible is found in Genesis. It covers more than half the period of time of the Old Testament. Genesis alone tells us of the events that transpired before Moses. Throughout the Bible, the inspired penmen refer to the events given in Genesis as true and accurate. This book is truly the “warp and woof of Holy Writ.”

Selective history. Genesis is not primarily the history of man. It is not a complete history of the human race. It is mainly the history of one family, one race and one nation. With its constant theme of man’s need for redemption from sin, it is a highly selective interpretation of history.

IV. MAIN DIVISIONS OF GENESIS

Two divisions. The two parts of this book are: (1) Chapters 1-11 – the creation of the world and of man, to Abraham; and (2) Chapters 12-50 – the history of the patriarchs.

The four great events of chapters 1-11: (1) **Creation.** God is the creator of matter, energy, space and time. Man is the crown of creation. (2) **The Fall.** Because of his sin, Adam is separated from God, and God gives the first promise of the Messiah (3:15). (3) **The Flood.** As man multiplies, sin also multiplies and God is compelled to destroy all men with the exception of Noah and his family. (4) **Nations.** Because of rebellion at the Tower of Babel, God scatters people over the face of the earth and confuses their language.

The four great people in Chapters 12-50: God focuses on one man and his descendants, through whom he would bless all nations. (1) **Abraham.** The calling of Abraham and God’s covenant with him are the pivotal points

of the book and the foundation of God's plan of salvation for all mankind. (2) **Isaac**. God renews His covenant with Isaac as the spiritual link with Abraham. (3) **Jacob**. God changes his name to Israel, the father of the twelve tribes. (4) **Joseph**. Joseph delivers his family from famine and brings them out of Canaan to Goshen in Egypt.

Divine selectivity. The religious purpose of Genesis unfolds as the record constantly drops all but the chosen race through whom the Savior was to come. Thus, Cain first appears, then is dropped in favor of Seth. Shem is chosen over his brothers. Ishmael is dropped and Isaac chosen. Esau, the elder brother, is dropped in favor of Jacob. In His selective process, God chose only one man from the entire human race, faithful Abraham, to receive His promise. From that point on, the Bible is the history of one family, whom God chose to become the Hebrew nation and to whom He gave assurance through many prophetic promises of the coming of the Redeemer.

Christ in Genesis –

(1) The promised “seed” of woman (Gen. 3:15); fulfilled in Matthew 1:21-23 and Galatians 4:4.

(2) The promise to Abraham, “in thy seed shall nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18); fulfilled in Galatians 3:16.

(3) The promise that “Shiloh,” the Prince of Peace would come through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10); fulfilled in Hebrews 7:14 and Revelation 5:5.

A book of faith – Genesis, as well as the entire Bible, is not a book of science or of history. It is a book of faith. God's word is the source of faith (Rom. 10:17). It is by faith that we know how the worlds were made (Heb. 11:3). Genesis gives the history of Abraham, the great example of faith, and of many other heroes of faith, such as Abel, Enoch and Noah (See Heb. 11).

Major divisions of the book

Chapters 1-11 – Primeval history, that covers more than

2,000 years and forms an introduction to the history of Israel, which began with Abraham.

Chapters 12-36 – Patriarchal period, history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Chapters 37-50 – The story of Joseph, the ideal man. He was an ideal son, ideal brother, ideal servant, and ideal administrator.

Outline of Genesis – The book is often studied as the book of generations. There are ten sections that begin with the phrase, “the generation of,” as follows: (1) Of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26), (2) Of Adam (5:1-6:8), (3) Of Noah (6:9-9:29), (4) Of the sons of Noah (10:1-11:9), (5) Of Shem (11:10-12:6), (6) Of Terah (11:27-25:11), (7) Of Ishmael (25:12-18), (8) Of Isaac (25:19-35:29), (9) Of Esau (36:1-37:1), and (10) Of Jacob (37:2-50:26).

The main events of Genesis are more clearly grouped under five headings:

I. **Beginning of mankind** – Creation, place of man in the world, fall of man, pre-flood races and patriarchs, sinfulness of the world, the flood, the posterity of Noah and the early races of the Near East (1:1–11:32).

II. **Life of Abraham** – Abram’s call, his acceptance of the covenant by faith, birth of Isaac, posterity of Abraham (12:1-25:18).

III. **Life of Isaac and his family** –Birth of Esau and Jacob, sale of Esau’s birthright to Jacob, Esau’s marriages (25:19-26:35).

IV. **Life of Jacob** – Jacob in his father’s home, exile and journey, with Laban, his return to the promised land, posterity of Jacob and Esau (27:1-37:1).

V. **Life of Joseph** – Joseph’s boyhood, promotion in Egypt, Joseph and his brothers, his reception of Jacob in Egypt, Jacob’s last days and final prophecies, Joseph’s assurance to his brothers of complete forgiveness (37:2-50:26).

Five great spiritual characters in Genesis:

- (1) Enoch, “who walked with God” (5:23-24).
- (2) Noah, “a righteous man,” who did “according to all that God commanded him to do” (6:9, 22).
- (3) Abraham, the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:3; James 2:21-23).
- (4) Jacob, the man whose life was transformed by his devotion to God (Gen. 28:6-22; 32:22-32; 35:1-15).
- (5) Joseph, who rose from slavery to become premier of Egypt (Ch. 37-50).

GENESIS, IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK

Importance of Genesis to science – Genesis is not a book of science. It makes no attempt to explain many things in the fields of geology, biology, astronomy, etc. “Science does not come by revelation, but by observation, investigation, combination, conclusion.” Science cannot explain the origin of the material universe and of life. Therefore, it offers many theories concerning the beginnings set forth in Genesis 1 and 2. Critics turn to these in their unceasing efforts to overthrow the Genesis account. Until recently, many scientists held that the universe had no beginning and is eternal. But, honest scientists admit that there is a beginning point beyond their geological timetables for which they have no scientific explanation and that there must have been some force (first cause, or Prime Mover), unknown to them, that brought into existence the materials of which the universe consists. The answer to their question, “What came before the beginning?” is Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The beginning is not a matter of scientific explanation, but of faith (Heb. 11:3). That original cause, or force, is God. We do not know how long ago “in the beginning” was, but we believe that creation occurred literally and miraculously as related in Genesis, on six 24 hour days, not more than 4,000 to 6,000 years before Christ.

Harmony between Genesis and science – Genesis indicates several points that are in harmony with scientific knowledge:

- (1) There was a beginning of the universe and all things therein.
- (2) Things did not come by chance.
- (3) Like can only beget like. In both the plant and animal kingdoms, everything must bring forth after its kind (Gen. 1:12, 21, 24).
- (4) There is a Creator who continues to take an interest in and controls the universe.
- (5) There was orderly progress in creation from the less and more simple to the greater and more complex forms of life.
- (6) Everything else was brought into existence for man, who is the crowning work of creation.
- (7) Science is helpless to explain the conscience and spiritual consciousness of man if he is only the product of materialistic evolution.

General importance of Genesis – Without it, the Bible would be incomplete. It covers more than half of the time of the Old Testament. Genesis alone tells us the events that transpired before Moses. It is the key to understanding the origin and earliest history of mankind. “Genesis is the seed-plot of the whole Bible, and it is essential to the true understanding of its every part. It is the foundation on which Divine Revelation rests, and on which it is built up. It is not only the foundation of all Truth, but it enters into and forms part of all subsequent inspiration; and it is at once the warp and woof of Holy Writ.”

Great value of the book – In many respects, it is the most important book in the Bible. It is the foundation of all divine revelation. It should be studied historically, prophetically, dispensationally, and spiritually. The matchless truths of Genesis, that have withstood the critics’ blows through the ages, are proof that the Bible is God’s word. The book is so

vast and awesome in its scope, yet so simple, consistent and correct in its history as to demonstrate its divine origin.

Beginning of God's eternal purpose – Genesis is the book of beginnings. Its main events are the creation, the fall of man, the flood, call of Abraham, and the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt, all of which are related to the development of the scheme of redemption. The theme of the Old Testament, “Christ is coming,” begins in Genesis. God’s promise that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15) pointed to Christ (Gal. 4:4), who came as Immanuel, born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23), “to destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). God leads us “in triumph in Christ” (II Cor. 2:14) and gives “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Other assurances of the redeemer in Genesis are the promise to Abraham that “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16), and Jacob’s prophecy that “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh come” (Gen. 49:10). Shiloh means “bringer of peace.” Christ was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5), the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), who gives to His followers the peace that passes understanding (John 14:27; Phil. 4:7).

Redemption through Christ alone – Thus, the main theme of the Bible begins in Genesis.

(1) Because of his sin, man is separated from God, and in need of redemption (Gen. 3; Isa. 59:1-2).

(2) The first promise of the redeemer (Gen. 3:15).

(3) All accountable persons share the need for redemption (Rom. 3:22-23; I John 1:8; Ezek. 18:20).

(4) Man was, and is, hopeless to save himself apart from Christ (I Cor. 1:21; Heb. 9:22; 10:4, 11).

(5) Mankind was in need of redemption for 4,000 years after the first sin, until God sent His Son in the fulness of time to redeem us from sin (Gal. 4:4-5).

(6) Redemption is through Christ, alone (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:9; 9:26; 10:10; I Peter 1:18-19).

(7) Christ, our redeemer, is the heart of the Bible as well

as the center of Genesis (Rev. 19:10; Luke 4:18-19; 24:25-27; 24:44-47; I Peter 1:10-11).

Seven covenants – The seven great covenants in the Bible are God's covenants with Adam (Gen. 3:14-19), with Noah (Gen. 8:20-9:27), with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), with the Israelites through Moses (Exod. 19-30), with the Jews after the wilderness warnings (Deut. 30:1-20), with David (II Sam. 7:5-29), and with all men by means of the new covenant, or testament of Christ (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-17). Of these, three covenants are found in Genesis:

(1) The covenant with Adam (3:14-19) – God's curse upon Adam and Eve and His promise of the redeemer.

(2) The covenant with Noah (8:20-9:27) – Never again until the end of time will God smite the earth for man's sake, "neither shall there be any more flood to destroy the earth" (9:11).

(3) The covenant with Abraham (12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-18; 17:1-8; 22:17-18) – Two-fold promise of God: Abraham to be the father of a great nation to whom God would give all the land of Canaan, and in Abraham's seed, Christ, all nations to be blessed (Gal. 3:16).

Salvation is by an active faith – All of the examples of faith in Genesis are of submissive, obedient faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). "By faith Enoch was translated...because...he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). "By faith Noah...prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). Noah's faith is seen in his obedience. "Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him; so did he" (Gen. 6:22). By his works Abraham's faith was made perfect (James 2:22). Paul preached the gospel of salvation which makes known to all nations "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26). In Christ, it is "faith that works by love" that avails (Gal. 5:6).

Some other great lessons in Genesis:

(1) **The rainbow** – God set the rainbow in the cloud as a token that He would never again destroy all flesh with a flood (Gen. 9:12-17). Peter refers to the flood as evidence of God's power to intervene in the course of nature and of humanity. He warns that the heavens and the earth are “stored up for fire” and that when the day of the Lord comes, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:5-13).

(2) **Law of exclusion** – In Genesis, God set forth His law of exclusion. When He told Noah to build the ark of Gopher wood, His instructions ruled out all other kinds of wood (Gen. 6:14). Throughout the Bible, God's people are warned not to go beyond, or add to, the word of God, which is a presumptuous sin (Psalm 19:13-14; Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; II John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

(3) **God's providence** is seen in Genesis, as well as throughout the Bible. Nowhere is it more evident than in the dramatic events in Joseph's life. The house of Potiphar was blessed “for Joseph's sake” (Gen. 39:5). Later, Joseph said to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery in Egypt, “God did send me before you to preserve life” (Gen 45:5), and “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (50:20).

(4) **Inspiration for parents** – “Do not sin against the child” (Gen. 42:22). “His life is bound up in the lad's life” (44:30).

(5) **The beginning of the nations** from Noah's descendants (Ch. 10-11) – According to Josephus, Caucasian races came from Japheth, all Semitic peoples (Jews, Syrians, and Arabs) from Shem, and black races from Ham.

(6) **The growth of man's sin** shows his utter failure and hopelessness in attempting to live without God. In Genesis, human failure is met by divine grace and activity. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

(7) **The goodness and severity of God** – God’s vengeance is demonstrated by His punishment of sinful mankind with the flood. His providential care, grace, and love are seen in His promise to Abraham and the preservation of the patriarch’s descendants in Egypt in order to make them His chosen race, the great Hebrew nation, and through them to send the Redeemer. The beautiful refrain of the Bible begins in Genesis: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3).

Some other notable passages in Genesis

1:26-27 – “Let us make man in our image.”

2:7 – “Man became a living soul.”

2:18 – “It is not good that man should be alone.”

2:23 – “Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”

2:24 – “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

3:19 – “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

4:1 – “I have gotten a man with the help of God.”

4:9 – “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

5:24 – “Enoch walked with God.”

6:6 – “It repented the Lord that he had made man.”

11:1 – “The whole earth was of one language and one speech.”

19:26 – Lot’s wife looked back.

22:8 – “God will provide.”

25:34 – Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage.

27:22 – “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”

32:28 – Jacob’s name changed to Israel after he wrestled with an angel.

39:9 – “Can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

49:1-27 – Jacob’s prophecies concerning his sons. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah” (v. 10).

Chapter 7

The Book Of Exodus

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Key word – Deliverance (Some scholars suggest “Redemption,” as the key word because Israel was redeemed from bondage in Egypt into a covenant relationship with God at Mt. Sinai.)

Key verses – Chapter 3:8 (God’s declaration to Moses that He would deliver his people):

And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

3:14-16 – (The identity of the one who called Moses and sent him to deliver the Israelites): And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you...The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which was done to you in Egypt.

6:2-8 – (The names of their deliverer and redeemer): And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am

the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord.

12:23 – (How the deliverance was accomplished – the Passover): For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Key chapters – Chapters 12-14 – The deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. As typical of our deliverance from sin, the exodus may be called the central thought and climax of the Old Testament, as the cross is of the New Testament. The book of Exodus is the world's greatest epic of deliverance, the epic of the most remarkable people in history.

Key phrase – “Let my people go.”

Message – Exodus is a sequel to Genesis, while the events show a contrast to those in Genesis. Genesis speaks of man's failure under many tests and conditions and God repenting that He had made man. Exodus shows God remembering, rescuing, and redeeming His chosen people, the Israelites. The appeal of Exodus is given in chapter 19:4-6, which is an excellent summary of the book:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all

the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The name. The title, Exodus, is from the Greek Septuagint. It means, "going out," or "departure," from the account of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The Hebrews named the book after the first words: "Now these are the names."

Time covered. Principally the events recorded are from the birth of Moses to the erection of the tabernacle at Sinai, about 80 years (B. C. 1571-1490). From the death of Joseph to Sinai is a period of about 200 years. We cannot accurately determine the length of the Egyptian bondage. According to the Hebrew text, it was 430 years, but according to the Septuagint, it was just half that time, 215 years. Stephen said that the Jews were in bondage 400 years (Acts 7:6). Probably he meant that it was 400 years from the call of Abraham to the end of the bondage. Jacob migrated to Egypt in 1706 B. C., according to the accepted chronology. Since the deliverance took place in 1491 B. C., the entire sojourn in Egypt was 215 years. Joseph died about 1635 B. C., and Moses was born in 1571 B. C., so that the period of affliction was probably a little more than 100 years. We do not know how long it was after Joseph's death until the dynasty arose with the tyrannical Pharaoh, "who knew not Joseph" (Exod. 1:8).

Author and time of writing. Exodus was written by Moses, who is also the principal character, probably near the close of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. It continues the story of Jacob's descendants in Egypt and forms a link between the events recorded in Genesis and the history of Israel after the giving of the law at Sinai. With the four other books of the Pentateuch written about the same time by Moses, Exodus was a divinely inspired record of the beginning of the Jewish nation and of God's laws for the younger

generation now ready to enter the promised land after the period of wandering and for their posterity. From the close of Genesis to the opening of Exodus, about a century intervenes, from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses.

National purpose. At this point Old Testament history changes from that of a family to that of a nation. The patriarchal age ends and the Jewish age begins with the giving of the law. Exodus begins by telling how God came down in grace to deliver an enslaved people. It ends by declaring how God came down in glory to dwell, in the tabernacle, in the midst of a redeemed people. Thus, the aim is to give an account of the first stage in the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarchs with reference to the place and growth of the Israelites.

Everlasting purpose. Israel's redemption from bondage is a type of the redemption of all men in Christ. The exodus is a type of our deliverance from sin (Rom. 6:23; I Cor. 10:1-2). In Genesis are human effort, sin, and failure. In Exodus are divine power, deliverance, and triumph. In Exodus, God provided physical redemption, under the cover of the blood of the passover lamb, as He delivered them from bondage and death in Egypt. This is a type of our redemption in Christ, who is our passover (I Cor. 5:7). We are delivered from the bondage of sin and spiritual death by His blood (Eph. 1:7), "as a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:19).

III. PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN EXODUS

Principal events. The main events recorded in Exodus are the oppression of Israel by Pharaoh, birth and mission of Moses, the ten plagues, the institution of the passover, the departure from Egypt, Israelites crossing the Red Sea, the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, miraculous provision of manna, quails, and water, the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, worship of the golden calf, the appointment of a priesthood, and erection of the tabernacle. From the departure, recorded in chapter 12, to the end of

the book, chapter 40, is a period of about one year.

EXODUS, THE BOOK OF DELIVERANCE

Aim – The book of Exodus is the world's greatest epic of deliverance, the story of the most remarkable people in all history. The aim is to give the first stage of the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, God's covenant with him that in the fourth generation God would give to his descendants all of the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:12-21).

Birth of a nation – The book shows the development of God's chosen family into a nation, the transition from the family of Abraham to the nation of Israel. The emergence of the nation was a testimonial to other nations of the sovereignty and kingship of Jehovah.

Contents – The historical section of Exodus is included in chapters 1-19, and the legislative, chapters 20-40. The first section records Israel's need of deliverance; the birth, training and call of Moses, the deliverer; the contest with Pharaoh, and the deliverance and march through the wilderness to Sinai. The second part of the book records the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, the consecration of the nation, the covenant upon which it was to become a nation, and the building of the tabernacle, which was to be the heart and center of the nation. The ten commandments (chapter 20), and the other laws covered the moral, ceremonial, civic and social needs of the people, with divine directions for the establishment of the priesthood and the tabernacle. As stated in **Getting To Know The Books Of The Old Testament** – "Deuteronomy" – God gave the Jews 613 commandments, 245 "thou shalt's," and 368 "thou shalt not's."

The Ten Commandments (Exod. 20; Deut. 5)

- (1) Duties to God – first four commandments.
- (2) Duties at home – fifth commandment.
- (3) Duties to fellow-man – last five commandments.
- (4) These commandments regulate the affections, speech and day of worship toward God; they control the home; and

they protect the possessions, the life, the reputation and the character of neighbors.

Three major divisions of the book of Exodus

Chapters 1:1-12:36 – Israel in Egypt: the bondage, the deliverer, and the ten plagues.

Chapters 12:37-18:27 – Israel journeys to Sinai: the passover, departure, journeying to the Red Sea, and from the Red Sea to Sinai.

Chapters 19-40 – Israel at Sinai: the people prepared, the ten commandments, civil laws, covenant between God and Israel, directions for building the tabernacle, and the tabernacle constructed and dedicated.

Moses – Exodus records the first 80 years of Moses' life, 40 years of his early life in Egypt and 40 in Midian, where he married the priest's daughter and lived in obscurity, until God called him at the burning bush. He made four excuses: (1) personal unfitness (chap. 3:11), (2) fear of unbelief of the people (4:1), (3) lack of eloquence (4:10), and (4) request that some other leader be sent (4:13). God promised Moses His divine presence, authority and power, and God gave him his brother, Aaron, to be his spokesman (4:2-16). Moses enjoyed more intimate fellowship with God than any other person, for God "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend" (Exod. 33:11).

Moses was deliverer, prophet, and divinely inspired writer. As the courageous deliverer and lawgiver of Israel, Moses is the most outstanding hero of the Old Testament. Regarded as a great prophet by Christians, Jews, and Moslems, he is the most widely respected man who ever lived. His most signal honor was his witness of Christ (John 5:46; Luke 24:44), and as a prophet, his being the type of Christ (Deut. 18:15-16; Acts 3:22-23).

The sovereignty of God in Exodus:

(1) He is the supreme ruler over all nature, as seen in the 10 plagues.

(2) He had power over Pharaoh; therefore power over all

kings and nations.

(3) He had a right to choose Israel as His own people (Deut. 7:6-8).

(4) He had ability to defend and care for His people, and would do so.

God's assurance to Moses –

“I am the God of thy fathers” (3:14-15).

“I am Jehovah” (6:2).

“I will bring you out” (3:17).

“I will smite Egypt” (3:20).

“I will be thy mouth and teach you” (4:15).

“I have established my covenant” (6:4).

“I have heard thy groaning” (3:7; 6:5).

“I will remember my covenant” (6:5).

“I will rid you...redeem you...bring you out...bring you in...and give it to you” (6:6-8).

God's promise fulfilled –

(1) The visitation of the ten plagues.

(2) The agencies to lead the people – cloud, fire, angel.

(3) The opening of the sea; death of the enemy.

(4) Sweetening of the water of Marah (15:22-26).

(5) Provisions of food (Ch. 16).

(6) Water provided at Rephidim (Ch. 17).

(7) Giving of the law (Ch. 19-20).

(8) The law of worship and pardon (Ch. 24-33).

(9) The promise of Canaan as a home (Ch. 23:20-33).

(10) The defeat of Amalek.

GREAT LESSONS FROM EXODUS

Foundation thought – The foundation thought of the Old Testament is God's promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 22:18). The second foundation thought is God's covenant with Israel, that if they would serve Him in the midst of a world of idol-worshipping peoples, He would bless them in the land of Canaan, but if they forsook Him and served other gods, He

would pluck them out of the land and scatter them among the nations (Exod. 19; Lev. 26; Deut. 4 and 28).

The name Jehovah – God revealed Himself to the patriarchs as God, **Elohim**, the all-powerful Creator (Gen. 1:1-2, 26-27) and as Almighty God, **El Shaddai** (Gen. 17:1-8). For the first time, God appeared to Moses as Jehovah, **Ehyeh**, the great “I AM” (Exod. 3:14; 6:2), the everlasting, ever present, ever existent one. Thus he is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13).

God is a jealous God – The first of the ten commandments makes it clear that God is a jealous God and will not allow His people to worship other gods (Exod. 20:2-3; 34:14). The strange gods that the people worshipped in Egypt (Ezek. 20:7-8), their worship of the golden calf at Sinai, and all other forms of idolatry were strictly forbidden. In the same way, He is jealous over the church as the bride of Christ, which must remain pure for His sake (II Cor. 11:2-3).

God's care and provision for His people is seen throughout this book. The introduction (1:1-7) gives the connection of the contents with Genesis, which closes with the Hebrews in high favor with the Egyptians. Exodus opens on a race of slaves. The introduction is followed by seven parts, in which God's concern is clearly seen.

(1) God's pity for Israel in their suffering in Egypt, for which human help is insufficient, and God hears their cry and calls Moses to deliver them (1:8-7:7).

(2) Jehovah's power is shown by the ten plagues upon Egypt (7:8-13:16).

(3) The love of Jehovah is shown in His institution of the passover and His guidance of the children of Israel to Mt. Sinai (13:17-18:27).

(4) The righteousness of God is seen in His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai, the ten commandments and other ordinances (19:1-24:18).

(5) The grace of God provided directions for building the

tabernacle, where He would dwell in their midst (25:1-31:18).

(6) The patience of God is seen in His renewal of the covenant, after Israel's apostasy in the worship of the golden calf (32:1-35:3).

(7) The glory of God was shown in the building, erection, and dedication of the tabernacle, or tent of meeting, when His glory filled it (35:4-40:38).

Christ in Exodus

(1) Christ is our passover (I Cor. 5:7) – The paschal lamb's bones were not broken (Exod. 12:46). Not one of Christ's bones was broken on the cross (John 19:31-37; Psalm 34:20). By His blood we are delivered from the bondage of sin (I Peter 1:18-19).

(2) Christ is the anti-type of Moses, the great prophet of whom Moses prophesied (Acts 3:19-26; 7:37). He fulfilled Moses' law (Matt. 5:17-18), and gave a new law of grace and truth (John 1:17; Heb. 8:6; I Cor. 9:21). Moses delivered God's house, while Christ delivered His own (Heb. 3:6). Christ is greater than Moses (Heb. 3:3) and His law superior to the law of Moses (Heb. 10:1-10).

Pattern of redemption – Israel's deliverance from bondage became a type of redemption of all men from the bondage of sin. God brought Israel out of Egypt that He might bring them into the promised land (Deut. 6:23). Through Christ, He brings us out of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13; I Peter 2:9). Christ is our deliverer, captain, shepherd, redeemer, sin offering, passover, high priest, apostle, prophet and smitten rock. The deliverance of Israel was like our redemption in that it was through the power of God, with the strict obedience of man, by means of a deliverer, under cover of blood, and required passing through water (I Cor. 10:1-2).

That ye shall know that I am the Lord – One of the chief aims of the Bible is to make God known to man, in order that we may know our relationship to God and glorify Him in our lives. Repeatedly God said that the ten plagues and other miracles were for the purpose of causing both Israel and the

Egyptians to “know that the Lord is God” (Exod. 6:7; 7:5, 17; 8:22; 10:2; 14:4, 18). Later, He said that manna and quail were designed to show Israel the glory of Jehovah, so “ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out of the land of Egypt” and that “I am the Lord your God” (Exod. 16:6, 12).

The tabernacle – The importance of the tabernacle may be seen in the amount of space given to it in Exodus. Omitting the two chapters on the priesthood (Ch. 28-29), eleven chapters are devoted to instructions about the tabernacle, more than one-fourth of the whole book (Ch. 25-27, 30-31, and 35-40). This included directions for the structure, the pattern God showed Moses in the mount (Heb. 8:5), the materials needed and willingly contributed by the people, the making of the tabernacle and its furniture, setting it up, and the glory of God filling the tabernacle. The first room, where the priests ministered daily, represents the church, in which all Christians are priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God (I Peter 2:5). The holy of holies, which was entered only by the high priest, is typical of heaven, where Christ, our high priest, has entered before us (Heb. 4:14-16; 6:20) and “ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25).

Some notable passages – “The place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (3:5). “I am come down to deliver them out of the land of Egypt” (3:8). “I AM THAT I AM” (3:14). “What is that in thy hand?” (4:2). “When he seeth the blood...the Lord will pass over the door” (12:23). “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (14:13). “The Lord shall fight for you” (14:14). “The Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea” (14:27). “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation” (15:1-2). “And Moses built an altar and called the name of it the Lord is my banner” (17:15). “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (20:3-4). “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (21:23-25). “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (23:2). “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (32:31-33). “The Lord

God, merciful and gracious” (34:6-7). “The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God” (34:14). “Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone” (34:29).

Compromises offered by Pharaoh – When Moses asked permission to take the people three days’ journey into the wilderness to worship God, Pharaoh’s proposals to him are typical of Satan’s attempts to compromise Christians.

(1) Pharaoh first said that the Israelites could not go out of the land. Worship God in your own way, but do it in the land, amidst the abominations of Egypt (Exod. 8:25-26). Christians must “have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

(2) Pharaoh then suggested that if they went outside the land, they should not go very far (Exod. 8:28). Christians must “come ye out from among them, and be ye separate” (II Cor. 6:17).

(3) Pharaoh next proposed that if they go themselves, they should leave their children behind (Exod. 10:8-11).

(4) His last proposal was made to leave their cattle.

(5) Moses replied, “We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds” (Exod. 10:9). Christians should serve God with all their house (family) and all their substance (Acts 10:2, 33; 16:31-34; I Cor. 16:2).

Pharaoh’s heart hardened – Moses says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Exod. 9:12; 10:1-2; 10:20, 27; 11:10). He also says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exod. 8:15, 32; 9:34). When a person continues to reject God’s word and disobey His commands, he will resist the word more and more and his heart will become hardened, until his conscience is seared so that he will not hear God (I Tim. 4:1-3). The gospel will save those who believe (Rom. 1:16), but it will harden those who reject it (Acts 7:51; Matt. 13:15). God said that He hardened Pharaoh’s heart “that I might show these signs before him: and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt...that ye may know

how that I am the Lord” (Exod. 10:1-2).

Archeological notes – Discovery of documents, chronicles, and inscriptions written before the Exodus prove that writing was used long before the times of Moses. Research has confirmed the truthfulness of the Exodus record, but has brought to light nothing that discounts it. It has shown that the Pharaoh of the oppression was Rameses II and the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Merenptah II. Mummies of these and other rulers of the period have been found, as well as the statue of Hatshepsut, the great queen, who may have been the princess who brought up Moses. Two of the Pharaohs were not succeeded by their first-born, which seems to indicate that something happened to the first-born (Exod. 12:29). Naville’s discovery in 1883 of Pithom, which Rameses II claimed to have built, and Kyle’s exploration (1908) revealed lower courses of brick filled with good straw; the middle courses with stubble plucked up by the root; and the upper courses of brick made of clay without straw, a remarkable confirmation of Exodus 5:7-19.

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:2-6).

Chapter 8

The Book Of Leviticus

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Key word – Holiness, found 87 times in Leviticus. In contrast with “holy,” the words sin and uncleanness in various forms are used 194 times. “Blood” as a means of cleansing occurs 89 times, and “atonement,” at least 45 times.

Key verses – Chapter 11:44-45 –

I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy...For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: for ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

19:2 – Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.

20:7-8 – Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you.

Key phrase – “I am the Lord your God,” occurs 21 times.

Key chapter – Chapter 16 – The day of atonement (“Yom Kippur”), the most important and solemn day in the Hebrew calendar, when the high priest entered the holy of holies to make atonement for the sins of the Israelite nation. He alone could lawfully enter the holy place, and that only once a year, to “make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord” (Lev. 16:30).

Theme – The theme of the book is holiness. God is holy. The question is, how can a sinful man approach a holy God? God alone can determine how. This books shows

that man can gain access to God only on the basis of sacrifice through the shedding of blood. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). In the Christian dispensation, also, sinners are cleansed by blood, the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission...so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:22, 28).

II. THE PURPOSE OF LEVITICUS

God's purpose in Leviticus: (1) To show that God is holy and that man is sinful and must continually return to God for cleansing and forgiveness; (2) To show how a sinful people can approach a holy God; (3) To provide the law of approach to God in acceptable worship; (4) To keep Israel a holy nation.

Israel a holy nation. "It has been said that it took God only one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel" (**The Open Bible**, p. 96). Leviticus served as a handbook for the Levitical priesthood, giving divine instructions and regulations for the cleansing of the priests and of the people and for their worship and service.

Ultimate aim. All the events of Leviticus point to Christ, our redeemer, sacrifice for our sins, and author of the perfect law of liberty, the means of everlasting salvation for all who obey him. The aim of the book is to reveal Christ in type as sin-bearer (John 1:29; Heb. 9:26; 10:10; I Peter 2:24), and great high priest through whom we gain access to God (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25-28).

Connection of Leviticus with former books. In Genesis man is left in ruin because of his sin, yet with the

promised “seed,” who was to be the redeemer (Gen. 3:15; 22:18; Gal. 4:4). In Exodus the people are delivered from bondage by the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb and by God’s leading them through the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai. Exodus closes with the tabernacle completed and dedicated. Leviticus gives the laws which governed tabernacle worship and the various offerings by which the redeemed gained access to God. The Israelites have been led out from the bondage in Exodus and into the sanctuary of God in Leviticus. In Genesis, we see the enormity of man’s sin; in Exodus, the foreshadow of redemption, and Leviticus, the basis of true worship. In Exodus, God spoke from the mountain; in Leviticus, he spoke out of the tabernacle. Exodus tells of God’s approach to His people. Leviticus gives directions for their approach to God.

III. BACKGROUND OF LEVITICUS

The Name. Leviticus is the name given in the Septuagint because the book has to do with the services of sacrifice and worship administered by the Levites, with emphasis on the feast days and the Jewish priesthood. The rabbis called it, “The Law of the Priest,” and “The Law of Offerings.” The Hebrew title was derived from the first three words of the book, “And the Lord called,” which is more in keeping with the contents of the book than its other titles. It gives God’s call to His people to access, worship in His presence and to holiness of body and soul, while the Levites are mentioned only once (Ch. 25:32-33). The companion book to Leviticus in the New Testament is Hebrews (See Heb. 8:5; 10:1).

Author and time of writing. Leviticus was written by Moses (Ch. 27:34), probably near the end of the wilderness wanderings, in 1452 B. C. The events and instructions recorded cover one month only, from the completion of the tabernacle to the departure from Mt. Sinai. The Jews, from ancient times, support the Mosaic

authorship. Christ ascribes the Pentateuch, which includes Leviticus, to Moses. He cited the law of Moses in reference to cleansing of lepers (Matt. 8:2-4; Lev. 14:1-4), the priest's eating the showbread (Matt. 12:4; Lev. 24:9), and purification of women after childbirth (Luke 2:22; Lev. 12:2-6).

God is the author. No other book in the Bible contains more direct messages from God. Fifty-six times in the twenty-seven chapters of Leviticus it is stated that God gave these laws to Moses: "The Lord spake," or "said," or "commanded" (Ch. 1:1; 4:1, 6:1, 24; 8:1). Also, "I am the Lord (Jehovah)," occurs 21 times; "I am Jehovah, your God," 21 times (ASV); "I am," three times, and "I Jehovah do," twice.

LEVITICUS, THE BOOK OF HOLINESS

Laws in Leviticus – These are a continuation of the laws of Exodus, where we find the ten commandments, instructions for building the tabernacle and laws governing the priesthood. Leviticus contains laws governing civil, sanitary, ceremonial, moral and religious duties. Exodus provides for acceptable worship of God, with the tabernacle at the center of their lives and service. Leviticus gives the method of approach to God through the sacrifice of sin offerings and other oblations. God dwelt among His people in His holy tabernacle. This book gave them directions for worshipping God in holiness. They could draw near to God through their offerings and purity of devotion, but only the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Analysis of the book – The method of approach to God for the Jews was typical of God's plan for man's atonement through Christ.

- I. **By dedication** – the law of sacrifices (Lev. 1:1-6:7) (five kinds of offerings).
 1. Burnt offering – need for perfect consecration, spotless life – foreshadowed Christ, who offered Himself without spot to God for our sins (Ch. 1).

2. Meal offering – perfect service; fruits of the ground represented labor – Christ is the bread of His people (Ch. 2).
 3. Peace offering – communion, God and man participating – Christ is our peace, giving us communion with God (Ch. 3).
 4. Sin offering – refers to sins against God – the fallen are safeguarded by sacrifice – Christ gives Himself for the sins of the whole world (Ch. 4).
 5. Trespass offering –trespasses against men are also sins against God (Ch. 5:1-6:7).
- II. **By mediation** – the law of the priests (Ch. 6:8-10:20).
1. Consecration of Aaron and his sons, death of Nadab and Abihu.
 2. Christ, our high priest, is the one mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5).
- III. **By separation** – the law of purity. The people must be God-governed, with no other gods, and God-manifested, wholly separated from all unclean persons and unholy things (Ch. 11-22).
1. They must be a people of pure food, pure body and house, pure nation, pure marriages, pure morals, and pure priests.
 2. Christians must be a people of pure body, pure heart, and pure souls (Matt. 5:8; II Cor. 6:17; 7:1).
- IV. **By consecration** – the law of feasts, fasts, and years (Ch. 23-25).
1. Annual feast days (Ch. 23).
 - a. Passover – commemorated deliverance from Egypt – Christ is our passover (I Cor. 5:7).
 - b. Pentecost, or feast of weeks – commemorated first harvest in Canaan. Always fell on the first day of the week. The church began on Pentecost, therefore on Sunday, or the Lord's

day (Acts 2). The first ingathering of Christians, the firstfruits of the gospel harvest.

c. Tabernacles – commemorated God’s providential care during the wilderness wanderings.

2. Annual fast – Day of Atonement – the only fast day commanded, the day of remembrance of sins (Ch. 16 and 23:27-32).

3. Sabbatical year – rest for the soil every seventh year (Ch. 25:1-7).

4. Year of Jubilee – every 50th year slaves were liberated, debtors freed, etc.

V. **Special laws** – (Ch. 26-27) – Obedience and disobedience, vows and tithes.

GREAT LESSONS FROM LEVITICUS

Messages of Leviticus –

(1) A leading thought of Leviticus is the supreme importance and necessity of acceptable worship. Man **must** worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

(2) Sin results in man’s separation from God and his loss of communion with God (Isa. 59:1-2).

(3) Man can gain access to God, with the privilege of communion and worship, only on the basis of sacrifice through the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22).

(4) God’s love and mercy are seen in His plan of atonement, in which the sacrifices of the law were typical of the one perfect sacrifice for all (John 3:16; Heb. 9:26).

The sacrificial system – According to the law of Moses, the approach of sinful man to a holy God was through the divinely appointed system of sacrificial offerings. For the most part, the required offerings were of cattle, sheep, goats, doves and pigeons. In the burnt offerings, the animal was wholly burned, signifying entire self-dedication to God. In many offerings the fat was burned and the flesh given to

the priests, to be eaten. The smoke of their offerings was “an odor of sweet smell to God,” even as Christ’s sacrifice of Himself and of our sacrifice to God (II Cor. 2:14; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18). “Whatever the immediate applications and implications may have been to the Jews, the unceasing sacrifices of animals, and the never ending glow of altar fires, beyond doubt, were designed of God, to burn into the consciousness of men a sense of their deep sinfulness, and to be an agelong picture of the coming sacrifice of Christ, toward whom they pointed and in whom they were fulfilled” (Halley’s **Bible Handbook**, 24th ed., p. 135).

There remains “no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26), since Christ put away sin for every man by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). However, God does require real sacrifices of Christians, even as He provided a typical sacrificial system in previous dispensations. The sacrifices with which God is well pleased are a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17), sacrifices of faith (Phil. 2:17), of benevolence (Phil. 4:18), of praise (Heb. 13:15), good deeds (Heb. 13:16), and above all, our bodies as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1).

The Priesthood – Leviticus means “pertaining to the Levites,” and the book contains a system of laws, administered by the Levitical priesthood, by which the Israelites gained access to God. The tribe of Levi was chosen and consecrated for God’s service, whom God took in lieu of firstborn sons. God claimed all the firstborn, both of men and flocks. The Levites did not receive a separate allotment of land, but were supported by tithes and lived in 48 designated cities (Num. 35:7). One family of Levites, Aaron and his sons, were set apart to be priests. Aaron was the first high priest and all his successors were of his descendants (Num. 17). In Canaan, Aaron’s family received 13 cities (Josh. 21:19). The rest of the Levites served in courses as assistants to the priests. They had the care of the tabernacle, and later of the temple. They were overseers

of the work of the Lord's house, who praised God publicly, and served as doorkeepers, musicians, officers, and judges (I Chron. 23).

This background helps us to appreciate the solemn duty of all Christians, as God's chosen and sanctified people, to be "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably in reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). The Lord's church does not have a separate priesthood, but every Christian is a priest, who must "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" through Christ our high priest and only mediator (Heb. 13:15).

Aaron and Christ – Aaron was high priest of fleshly Israel, the Jewish nation, Christ is high priest of spiritual Israel, the church (Heb. 3:1; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). Christ was not a Levite, but of the tribe of Judah; not a high priest after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:6; 6:20-7:17; Gen. 14:18-20). Aaron offered sacrifices for himself and for the people (Lev. 9:8-17; Heb. 5:1-3; 7:27; 9:7). Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, not for Himself, but for the sins of every man (Heb. 2:9; 10:10-14). The Levitical high priest entered the most holy place once a year, on the day of atonement, in behalf of the Jewish nation (Lev. 16:1-7). Christ entered the holy of holies – heaven – one time only in behalf of the whole world (Heb. 4:14-16; 6:19-20; 9:12, 23-28; I John 2:2). The Levitical priests were mediators between God and the Israelites. Christ is the one mediator between God and man, through whom we are reconciled to God, and who ever lives to make intercession for us (I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:5; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; II Cor. 5:18-19).

The day of atonement – This was on the 10th day of the 7th month, which corresponded to October. It was "a sabbath of solemn rest," the most solemn day of the year, the only fast day commanded in the law, when the Jews

were to afflict their souls as they remembered their sins year by year (Lev. 23:27-32; Heb. 10:3). Their sins were never actually forgiven, “for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Those sacrifices could never make the worshippers perfect (Heb. 9:9). There was only symbolic atonement for their sins, as animal sacrifices pointed forward to the removal of sins once for all through the blood of Christ (Zech. 3:4, 8-9; 13:1; Heb. 10:14). Directions for observance of the day of atonement are given in Leviticus 16, a key chapter of the book.

The high priest first offered a bullock as a sin offering for himself. Then he took two he-goats and cast lots upon them at the door of the tabernacle, one to be offered as a sin offering to God on behalf of the people, and the other to be a scapegoat, or Azazel (ASV), which means removal. Only on this day did the high priest enter the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the mercy seat for his own sins and the blood of the goat as an atonement for the people.

He was then to place both of his hands upon the head of the live goat “and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Lev. 16:20-22). This was to be an everlasting statute to the Jews to make an atonement for their sins once a year (v. 34).

Thus, their sins were taken away only symbolically. “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Heb. 10:1). The offerings of the law pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God, who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to take away the sins of the whole world

(Heb. 9:26; 10:10; I Peter 1:18-19; I John 2:2). He made peace through the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20), and through our obedience to the gospel, God forgives our sins and remembers them no more (Heb. 7:25-28; 8:12; 10:17).

First fruits – God claimed as His own, not only the tithes, but also the firstborn sons of all families (in lieu of whom He accepted the tribe of Levi), and the firstborn of all flocks and herds, and the first fruits of the field. The first fruits of the harvest were to be offered at Pentecost and no part of the new crop could be used until this was done (Lev. 23:14, 17). The lesson is that we must make God first in our lives, “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase” (Prov. 3:9). “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). It was fitting that Christ should die on the Passover, since He is our passover, the lamb without spot and without blemish (I Cor. 5:7; I Peter 1:18-19). It was also fitting that the church should begin 50 days later, on the day of Pentecost, when 3,000 souls were baptized and the Lord added them to His church, the first fruits of the gospel harvest, in response to their obedience to the word of God, which is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11; Acts 2:1, 41, 47).

Other great lessons –

(1) Man is a creature of choice. Note the use of the conditional conjunction, “If his offering be...” (1:3, 10, 14; 2:4-7, 14; 3:1, 6-7), as in John 7:17, “If we will to do his will.”

(2) “I am the Lord your God” occurs 21 times in Leviticus. Notice how many times this solemn affirmation is found in chapter 19 in connection with the duty of obeying God. It is His right to command, ours only to obey.

(3) Note the laws concerning honorable conduct (Ch. 19:9-18; v. 32-37).

(4) God promises blessings for obedience (Ch. 26:1-13).

(5) God warns of divine punishment for disobedience (Ch.

26:14-39). Thus, we see the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22).

(6) God promises mercy to the penitent (Ch. 26:40-46).

(7) The divine punishment of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire upon the altar (Lev. 10:1-7) is one of the many examples in the Bible that prove that in every age God has demanded explicit obedience of His commandments. We must not go beyond the things that are written, lest our worship become vain (I Cor. 4:6; II John v. 9; Matt. 15:8-9).

(8) "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18).

(9) "If ye walk in my commandments...I will give you peace in the land" (26:3, 6).

(10) "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (26:12).

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (I Peter 1:14-16).

Chapter 9

The Book Of Numbers

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Key words – Wanderings, or sojourning. Other words that tell the story of Numbers are service, work, and war.

Key verses – Chapter 14:22-23 –

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.

20:12 – And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

22:18 – And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

32:23 – But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Key phrases – “Because ye believed me not.” “All that are able to go to war” (ch. 1:3), occurs 14 times in the first chapter. All who could fight were mustered for the battles that were ahead.

Key chapter – Chapter 14 – The critical turning point in Israel’s journey from bondage to the promised land is seen in Numbers 14, when the people through fear and

unbelief refused to go up and conquer the land. Therefore God condemned all “from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,” to perish in the wilderness, save Caleb and Joshua. “But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die” (v. 31-35).

Subject – The central lesson of Numbers is that unbelief bars entrance into abundant life and heavenly hope (Heb. 3:7-19). Unbelief has been the besetting sin of God’s people in every generation (Heb. 12:1). Through God’s dealings with them in the wilderness, the Israelites learned to serve God with reverence and explicit obedience to His commandments. These lessons were given also to prove the younger generation – “...to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deut. 8:2).

Application – “Beware of unbelief.” We must learn from Israel’s experience that God expects humble obedience and faithful service from all people of every generation. These warnings were our examples (I Cor. 10:6), and were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (I Cor. 10:11).

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Central thought – obedience and orderly service.

In this book God shows clearly the necessity of obedience and the results of disobedience. God gave them the law, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and His abiding presence in order to bring them into the promised land, where if they obeyed His commandments, all would be well with them and they would live long in the land.

The tabernacle typified service and order. Just as the tabernacle was at the center of the camp, so service to God was the center of their lives. The book shows God's love of, and demand for order. In the Christian dispensation, we are admonished, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). Each tribe and family had its allotted position, and every man had his work assigned him in camp or on the march. God's people are always saved to serve. The New Testament provides the divine order for salvation from sin, acceptable worship, Christian living, work, service, organization of the church, and "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). God demands that we make all things according to the pattern that He has given us in the inspired scriptures (Heb. 8:5; II Tim. 3:16-17).

Faithful obedience. When Moses and Aaron disobeyed God in smiting the rock, God said, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12). Faith and obedience are inseparable. Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Tragic results of disobedience. In no other book are the consequences of obedience and disobedience brought into clearer focus or seen in sharper contrast than in Numbers. Three such instances are the rebellion of the people at Kadesh, when they refused to enter Canaan (Ch. 13-14); Korah's rebellion, when he led 250 princes of the

congregation against Moses (Ch. 16), and the disobedience of Moses and Aaron at Meribah, as cited above (Ch. 20).

For their rebellion at Kadesh, the people were barred from Canaan and made to wander forty years and perish in the wilderness. God caused the earth to open up and swallow Korah and his band and their households, and “all that appertained to them, went alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them” (Ch. 16:32-33). The disobedience of Moses and Aaron cost them entrance into Canaan. Moses smote the rock in anger (Psm. 106:32-33). Truly, “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

Faith and obedience. In two of these examples, unbelief and disobedience are interchangeable. The people “could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19), an “example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11, ASV). Moses disobeyed God, and God said, “Ye believed me not” (Num. 20:12). There is no difference between belief and obedience, or of faith and works, in the sight of God. Saving faith is always an obedient faith (Rom. 1:5, 16; 16:26). We are warned to beware of unbelief (Heb. 3:12), and also of faith without works (James 2:26). “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

NUMBERS, THE BOOK OF WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Main theme – The fourth book written by Moses, Numbers is so called because it contains the history of the numbering of the children of Israel two different times, at the beginning and end of the forty years’ wandering, at Mt. Sinai (Ch. 1) and at Moab (Ch. 26). Its name in the Hebrew Bible is taken from the phrase in Ch. 1:1, “In the wilderness.” It gives the record of Israel’s preparation for war, the march to the border of Canaan, the evil report of ten spies, faithful Caleb and Joshua, the fiery serpents, Balaam and the return to Canaan, covering in all about 38 years (Num. 1:1; Deut. 1:3). It is a sorrowful book, whose

story can be written in three words: discontent, disaster, and discipline.

Three main divisions of the book – (1) The first numbering and the divine order for service, the last ten days at Sinai (Ch. 1-10); (2) from Sinai to their sad failure at Kadesh and the 38 years of wandering and murmuring that followed (Ch. 11-20); (3) victory over pagan kings in Moab, the second census, and preparation to enter Canaan (Ch. 21-36).

Connection with other books – Genesis begins with man made in the image of God and ends with man ruined by sin. Exodus tells of deliverance and redemption of a chosen people. Leviticus deals with God's provision for their worship and fellowship with God. Numbers records Israel's failures and victories in service, work, and war while wandering in the wilderness.

Relation to Leviticus – As Exodus is connected with Genesis, so is Numbers with Leviticus. In Leviticus the theme is Israel's worship; in Numbers, their walk. The first stresses purity, and the other, pilgrimage; the one, spiritual position, and the other, spiritual progress. Leviticus is ceremonial, and Numbers is historical. The one emphasizes fellowship with God, and the other, faithfulness to God. Leviticus speaks of the priests and access to God, and Numbers, of the Levites and service for man.

The census – At Sinai, there were 603,550 men, "from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war" (Ch. 1). At Moab, the number was 601,730 (Ch. 26). This did not include the Levites (Ch. 1:47-54). A conservative estimate of women and children gives a population of at least two million of Abraham's seed who made the journey through the wilderness. It is sad that most of that number perished and many failed to enter the promised land "because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). Many thousands of them were destroyed because of immorality, lust, murmuring, and idolatry (I Cor. 10:1-12). The old nation died, with the

exception of Joshua and Caleb, and a new nation was trained in obedience to God in preparation of entering Canaan (Ch. 13-14).

Leading topics and events:

- (1) Organization at Mt. Sinai (Ch. 1-10).
- (2) Seventy elders appointed (Ch. 11:16-25).
- (3) The quails sent (Ch. 11:31-34).
- (4) The jealousy of Miriam and Aaron (Ch. 12).
- (5) The disobedience at Kadesh Barnea (Ch. 13-14).
- (6) The events during the 40 years of wandering (Ch. 15-19).
- (7) The return to Kadesh, the sin of Moses, and death of Aaron (Ch. 20).
- (8) The brazen serpent (Ch. 21).
- (9) Balaam and the corruption of Israel (Ch. 22-25).
- (10) The second numbering (Ch. 26).
- (11) Additional laws and preparation for entering Canaan (Ch. 27-32).
- (12) Cities of refuge (Ch. 35).

The seven murmurings of the people:

- (1) Concerning the way God led them (11:1-3).
- (2) Concerning the food He fed them with (11:4-6).
- (3) Concerning the land and the giants in it (13:33-14:2).
- (4) Concerning their leaders that God appointed over them (Ch. 16-17).
- (5) Concerning God's judgments (14:39-45; 16:41).
- (6) Concerning their thirst in the desert (20:2-5).
- (7) The second time concerning God's provision of manna (21:4-9).

Their murmurings were complaints against God. They showed their unbelief and ingratitude and were a source of grief to God and to Moses.

Three great rebellions – Between Israel's captivities in Egypt and Babylon, there were three instances of national rebellion against God: (1) the one at Kadesh-barnea, in 1490 B. C., recorded here; (2) the one in the time of Samuel, in

1095 B. C., when the people demanded a king, and (3) the one in 975 B. C., when the kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon. In every case, their rebellion led to great suffering and affliction, while devotion such as that of Caleb and Joshua is always rewarded with spiritual victory and eternal joy (Rom. 8:18; I John 5:4).

The crisis at Kadesh – Only two of the 12 men sent to spy out the land of Canaan proved loyal to God – Caleb and Joshua. The others brought back an “evil report” of giants in the land, against whom “we are as grasshoppers.” Caleb and Joshua said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (13:30). The land was, indeed a good land that flowed “with milk and honey,” and the faithful men urged the people, “And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. “If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us...Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land...the LORD is with us: fear them not (Num. 14:6-9). But the people refused to listen and determined to choose a captain to lead them back to Egypt. God was ready to destroy them, but upon Moses’ intercession for them, God spared them to wander for 40 years in the wilderness.

GREAT LESSONS FROM NUMBERS

Message – The two-fold message of Numbers is that God’s people are saved to serve and that they must beware of unbelief (Heb. 3:12).

The story – The story of Israel in the wilderness, as related in Numbers, can be written in three words: Discontent, Disaster, and Discipline.

(1) **Discontent** – The Israelites marched from Sinai to the brink of the promised land, only to become afraid,

murmur, complain and rebel.

(2) **Disaster** – Because of their rebellion against God, He turned them back and would not permit them to enter Canaan. Delivered from slavery to Egypt, they now were enslaved by their own sins.

(3) **Discipline** – For 38 years God caused them to wander in the wilderness before they finally returned to Canaan to enter the land of promise.

Their experiences are our examples, written for our learning, that we may not make the same tragic mistakes in our lives and be denied heaven's blessings (I Cor. 10:10-11; Rom. 15:4).

Christ in Numbers – Messianic types in the book are:

(1) The smitten rock (20:7-11; see I Cor. 10:4).

(2) The brazen serpent (21:6-9; see John 3:14).

(3) The cities of refuge (Ch. 35; see Heb. 6:18).

(4) Animal sacrifices outside the camp (19:3; see Heb. 13:12).

The brazen serpent – When the people murmured against God because of the way, he sent fiery serpents among them, “and they bit the people; and much people died” (21:6). When they repented and Moses prayed for them, God instructed Moses to erect a serpent of brass on a pole, which, when those bitten looked upon, they lived. John referred to this as typical of Christ's being lifted up on the cross for the sins of all men (John 3:14-15). The Israelites were required to look on the serpent. Those who refused died. We must believe and obey Christ (Heb. 5:8-9). Otherwise, we will suffer the second death, eternal punishment (Rev. 20:14-15). The folly of the Israelites, years later, was revealed again when the young king, Hezekiah, removed the places of their idolatry, and “brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan” (II Kings 18:4). (Nehushtan means “a thing of brass.”)

Balaam – The false prophet Balaam (Ch. 22-24) at first refused the offer of Balak, king of Moab, if he would curse Israel, later accepted the gold and silver, only to find that blessing, instead of curse, came from his mouth. However, he did cause Israel to sin (Num. 31:16; II Peter 2:15-16). He prayed that he might die the death of the righteous (Num. 23:10), but he died an ignoble death when slain by an Israelite's sword in the slaughter of the Midianites (Num. 31:8). The teaching of Balaam is condemned as one of the sins of the church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:14).

Other high points in Numbers:

(1) The Nazarite vow (Ch. 6) – Both Samson and John the Baptist were Nazarites. One of the sins of corrupt Israel that led to their destruction was their mocking of the Nazarites (Amos 2:11-12).

(2) The “grasshopper complex” – The people refused to enter Canaan because they believed the discouraging report of the ten spies. There were giants in the land, who might look upon them as grasshoppers, although later Joshua records that the Canaanites feared Israel (Josh. 2:8-11). The tragedy was when the people came to believe that “we were in our own sight as grasshoppers” (Num 13:33). Fear, doubt, and unbelief will bar many from heaven (Rev. 21:8).

(3) One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, the priestly blessing that God gave to His people: “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Num. 6:24-27).

The pilgrimage of Israel, a type of the Christian life:

(1) The Egyptian bondage, a type of the bondage of sin (John 8:34).

(2) Moses, their deliverer, a type of Christ, who is the deliverer from sin (John 1:17; Eph. 1:7; Gal. 5:1).

(3) Their going out of Egypt typifies the abandonment of the sinful life (Rom. 6:1, 6; II Cor. 6:17-18).

(4) The passover lamb was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

(5) Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel (Exod. 14:8-9), a type of Satan's pursuing Christians (I Peter 5:8; II Cor. 11:14-15).

(6) The opening of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:21), typical of hindrances removed and of God's provision for His people (I Cor. 10:13; Phil. 4:13).

(7) Israel's baptism in the sea and the cloud (I Cor. 10:1-2), a type of the baptism of sinners into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27), at the beginning of the Christian life.

(8) The pillar of cloud and fire (Exod. 14:19-20), a type of the abiding presence of Christ and His followers (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6).

(9) The song of Moses (Exod. 15:1-19), a type of songs of spiritual victory (Eph. 5:19), especially of the final triumph of the saints (Rev. 15:3).

(10) The flesh pots (Exod. 16:3), a type of the sensual pleasures of the old life (Gal. 5:19-21), which we must not love and which we must abandon.

(11) Their transgressions were typical of our backsliding (I Cor. 10:6-12).

(12) The manna (Exod. 16:4), a type of Christ, the bread of life (John 6:31-35).

(13) The water from the rock (Exod. 17:6), a type of Christ, the living water (I Cor. 10:4).

(14) Israel, the church in the wilderness, was typical of the Lord's church in the world (Acts 7:38; I Cor. 5:9-11), in the world, but not of the world.

(15) Their incessant murmuring is typical of our complaining and ingratitude, in contrast to God's benevolent care (I Cor. 10:10).

(16) The upholding of Moses' hands (Exod. 17:12), was typical of our cooperation with the church's leaders (I Thess. 5:12-13).

(17) In the wilderness the tabernacle was built according to the divine pattern, the priesthood appointed, the order of acceptable worship given, and God taught them the necessity of their explicit observance of all His arrangements for service well pleasing unto Him. In the New Testament the church was established, with every member a priest to offer spiritual sacrifices in worship to God in spirit and truth (Acts 2; I Peter 2:5; John 4:24).

(18) All encampments were around the tabernacle. The Christian life is centered around the church.

(19) The sabbath was then given; in the New Testament the first day of the week is the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10; Psalm 118:24).

(20) In the law the true worship was pictured (Heb. 10:1); in Christianity the true worship was realized (John 4:21-24).

(21) The promised "rest" in Canaan was typical of the Christian's final rest in heaven (Heb. 3:18; 4:11).

(22) Their failure to enter into the promised land is typical of the unfaithfulness of many of the church (Heb. 3:16-17; Matt. 22:14).

(23) Their unbelief is called disobedience (Heb. 3:19; 4:11, ASV), as Moses' disobedience was called unbelief (Num. 20:12). Belief and obedience (faith and works) are interchangeable terms (John 3:36, ASV; 6:29). Only faith that works by love will avail (Gal. 5:6).

(24) Their unbelief and hardness of heart caused them to fall. This is a warning to us of "an evil of heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:7-15; 4:7).

(25) Their worship of the golden calf typifies our worship of material things (I Cor. 10:14; Gal. 5:20; Col. 3:5). We must keep ourselves from all covetousness (Luke 12:15). We cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).

(26) Their sojourn in the wilderness was typical of our pilgrimage through this world of sin and hardship. We must pass the time of our sojourning in fear (I Peter 1:17), with

blameless behavior (I Peter 2:11-12; Phil. 2:14-16).

(27) Their battles with the pagan nations prefigured our warfare with the powers of Satan (II Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20).

(28) Their crossing the Jordan into the promised land was typical of our crossing over the river of death to be with our Lord forever.

(29) Their entrance into Canaan was a type of our gaining the Beulah land of heaven (Isa. 62:4; II Peter 1:11).

(30) God's abundant provision for them in the wilderness and His giving them the land of milk and honey reminds us of His loving care for us now and His promise of eternal life and joy hereafter (Phil. 4:19; II Peter 1:3-4; Rev. 21:4).

Places – The story of Numbers is also told by the places of their journey.

(1) **Mt. Sinai** – where the first census was taken and the duties of the Levites, the order of encampment, the plan of march and other laws were given.

(2) **Taberah** (11:1-3) – means “burning,” the place where God sent fire to burn their camp because of their murmuring.

(3) **Kibroth-hattaavah** (11:4-34) – means “the graves of lust,” the place where God smote the people when they gorged themselves on the quails that He sent.

(4) **Hazereth** (11:35-12:15) – The place where Miriam was smitten with leprosy when she and Aaron complained against Moses.

(5) **Kadesh-barnea** (Ch. 13-14; 20:1) – the place where the spies first entered Canaan and the people rebelled.

(6) **Meribah** (20:2-13) – means “strife,” the place where Moses in wrath smote the rock and was forbidden of God to enter Canaan because of his disobedience.

(7) **Mt. Hor** (20:22-29) – Where Aaron died and Eleazar, his son, was divinely appointed to succeed him as high priest.

(8) **Moab** (Ch. 22-36) – The land where the Israelites

were victorious over pagan kings, Balaam attempted to curse Israel, the people were numbered again, and preparations were made to enter Canaan.

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not (Numbers 14:6-9).

Chapter 10

The Book Of Deuteronomy

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Key words – Remember, obey and covenant.

Key verses – Chapter 5:29; 10:12-13; 29:29; 30:19-20:

5:29 – O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.

10:12-13 – And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

29:29 – The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

30:19-20 – I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Key phrase – “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God” (6:5).

Key chapters – Chapters 27-29 – The formal

ratification of the law of Moses in chapter 27, marks the renewal of the covenant by the younger generation as they prepare to enter the land of Canaan. Here Moses, the priests, the Levites speak to the people saying, "Take heed, and hearken, O Israel: this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God" (27:9). The curse of disobedience was placed on Mt. Ebal, and the blessing of obedience on Mt. Gerazim. In chapters 28 and 29, Moses appeals to Israel to choose the way of obedience and blessing, life and good, and he warns them of the fearful consequences of disobedience.

Theme – Deuteronomy is called the "Book of Remembrance." It consists of a series of discourses by Israel's 120-year old leader to the new generation who survived the forty years of wilderness wanderings and were now ready to possess the land of promise. The book is the record of the renewal of the old covenant, given at Mt. Sinai, with the younger generation. Deuteronomy is a divine treatise on obedience. It is an exposition of the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (6:5). Jesus called this the first and greatest commandment and in it He summarized the whole of the old covenant (Matt. 22:37). The appeal of the book is to know God, to love God, and to obey God.

DEUTERONOMY, "THE SECOND LAW"

The name – The book gets its name, which means "The Second Law," from a mistranslation in the Septuagint of chapter 17:18, rendered, "And he shall write for himself this repetition of the law." In later versions it is correctly translated, "And he shall write him a copy of this law." It is truly a restatement of the law with a strong appeal for the Israelites to keep the law and to teach it to their children.

Occasion and purpose of the book – Deuteronomy is the fifth book of law, the last of the five books of Moses. The review of the law was necessary because the former generation had perished in the wilderness and a new generation was ready to enter Canaan. It was not a new law or a mere repetition of the law given at Mt. Sinai, but rather an application of the law in view of the conditions Israel would meet in Canaan. The purpose was two-fold: (1) To call the younger generation to “remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and prove thee” (8:2-3); and (2) to lead them to obedience and to warn them against disobedience. Obedience is the way of life and blessing, while disobedience is the way of curse and death (11:26-32; 30:15-20).

A new crisis – The history of Israel is largely a record of their many crises, most of which were the result of their doubt and disobedience. God now instructs Moses to prepare them for the crisis of entering the land of “milk and honey.” Their life was to be changed from wandering in the wilderness to dwelling in cities and villages, and from dependence upon manna to cultivation of the fields. They would be beset everywhere by the most seductive forms of idolatry. Especially would they as farmers be tempted to worship Baal, whom the Canaanites thought to be the god of their lands and crops.

The author – Moses, the grand warrior who had led Israel for forty years, spurning all temptation to doubt, to be selfish or to become discouraged, had never lost a battle. At Meribah, Israel tried his patience when they complained for lack of water, as they had done more than ten times before (Num. 20). Exasperated, Moses brought water from the rock, using words that gave credit to him rather than God.

Now as they prepare to enter Canaan, Moses looks upon a new generation, a new land, a new life, new duties,

and a new leader. He rehearses God's past dealings with Israel and tells them of his encounter when God denied his request to go over and see the good land. He reminds them of God's great love and care for them. He relates how God permitted him from the top of Pisgah to see the promised land beyond the Jordan (Deut. 3:23-29; 34:1-4). Moses then died in the land of Moab and God buried him (34:5-7). Another author, perhaps Joshua, penned Moses' epitaph, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10-12).

Scope of the book – In Deuteronomy, Moses refers to Israel's past, present and future. The first part of the book is historical; the second part is legislative, and the third part is prophetic. The opening and closing statements of the book give its scope and the key to its interpretation. Its opening words are: "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel in the wilderness." Its closing statement is the eulogy to the great prophet. The book contains the final words of Moses to the chosen people, and they were words resulting from his "face to face" friendship with Jehovah. Altogether God gave the Jews 613 commandments, 245 "thou shalts" and 368 "thou shalt nots" – laws pertaining to food, diseases, purification, places of sacrifice, worship, marriage, idolatry, vows, morality, penalties for disobedience, and other civil, social, national and personal duties.

The love of God – In Deuteronomy, God revealed a new dimension for law and obedience. It is the expression here of his divine love. In chapters 1-4, we learn of God's love in the past; in chapters 5-26, of His love in the present; and in chapters 27-34, of the assurance of His love for His people in the future, as they enter the promise land. God's laws are an expression of His love. He governs us because He loves us and wants to save us. Man's obedience is an expression of his love for God. We obey God because we love Him and want to please Him (John 14:15; I John 5:3).

Relation to other books – The relation of

Deuteronomy to the four preceding books is seen in the dominant note of each book. In Genesis, the chief thought is man's choice and his sin; in Exodus, God's deliverance of His people; in Leviticus, holiness; in Numbers, guidance; and in Deuteronomy, obedience. In this book there are at least 259 references to the preceding books – 30 to Genesis, 94 to Exodus, 61 to Leviticus, and 74 to Numbers. In other Old Testament books there are not fewer than 356 references to Deuteronomy, and in the New Testament not less than 96, found in 17 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Deuteronomy is one of the most spiritual books in the Bible. The three quotations of Jesus in the temptations are taken from Deuteronomy (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13). "Like David, He had five pebbles when He encountered Goliath, the Pentateuch, and like David, He brought the enemy down with one, Deuteronomy, and had four to spare." (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, 44).

Contents – The book consists chiefly of three discourses given by Moses at Moab at the close of Israel's wilderness journey, the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor, and the farewell song and blessing of Moses.

Analysis of Deuteronomy –

I. Review of the journey (Ch. 1-4) – Israel's history since leaving Egypt (Ch. 1-3); exhortation to obedience and three cities of refuge east of Jordan (Ch. 4).

II. Review of the law (Ch. 5-26) – Repetition of the 10 commandments (Ch. 5); exposition of the decalogue (Ch. 6-11), and laws of religion, civil life, social life, and domestic relations (Ch. 12-26).

III. Future of Israel foretold (Ch. 27-30) – the law to be written on memorial tablets of stone and set upon Mt. Ebal (Ch. 27); blessing and cursing (Ch. 28); life and death (Ch. 29-30).

IV. Moses' last days (Ch. 31-34) – His charge to Joshua (Ch. 31); Song of Moses (Ch. 32); his farewell blessing of Israel (Ch. 33), and his death (Ch. 34).

GREAT LESSONS FROM DEUTERONOMY

The law – The law given at Mt. Sinai was God's first written law to His people. In the patriarchal dispensation, He spoke to them through the fathers. The written law to the new nation came by Moses, and God spoke to the people through the law. It is called the law of Moses (Josh. 8:32) and the law of God (Neh. 10:28). It was given only to the Jews and was to last them down to the cross of Christ. There, "he took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

The law and love – The supreme message of Deuteronomy is love. First, that God's love of man is the motive of His government; and second, that man's love for God is the motive of his obedience. Throughout Moses' last discourses to his people runs a new note of love. "The former facts are repeated; the sovereignty of God is insisted upon; the obedience of man is called for; but these facts are now set in relation to love" (G. Campbell Morgan, **Living Messages of the Books of the Bible**, Bk. I, p. 87). The word love, as indicating the relationship of God and man is found only once in Exodus (Ch. 20:6). As indicating the relationship between man and man it occurs only once in Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18, 34).

In Deuteronomy, God's love for man and man's love for God are stated in several passages. God ruled Israel by a government of love. "And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them" (Deut. 4:37). The law was an outcome of His love, and He required them "to love him and serve the Lord with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (10:12-15). The first and greatest commandment is to love God "with all thine heart and with all thine soul, and with all thy might" (6:5). Therefore, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is repeated throughout the book (11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9). True love of God comes from a circumcised heart; that is, one from which all love of the world has been

cut off and cast aside (30:6, 15-16, 19-20; Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 3:8-9).

Law and grace – The unfolding of God’s love that began in His choosing of a people culminated in the gift of His Son for all men. Yet, one of the biggest blunders that we can make is to conclude that God’s grace rules out His use of law in His relationship with man today. In many passages in the New Testament, grace is contrasted to the law of Moses, as in John 1:17: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” But man cannot live physically or spiritual without law. God’s giving of His Son for our redemption, the providing of the gospel of salvation, and the complete revelation of His will for mankind are all the outcome of His great love for all men.

Therefore the new covenant is a law of love. It is “the law of Christ” (I Cor. 9:21), “the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27), and “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). The law principle is played down by many preachers today. But we must prove our love for God by our obedience to the law of Christ. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). One who loves his neighbor as himself has fulfilled “the royal law” (James 2:8). We must love and serve God with all of our heart. We are warned both in the Old and New Testaments, “Thou shalt not harden your hearts” (Deut. 10:16; Psalm 95:7-8; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). We agree with the words of Robert Browning, “I report, as a man may of God’s work – all’s love, yet all’s law.”

Obedience and disobedience – Obedience from a heart of love encompasses the whole duty of man. “Obedience is the call of the past, the duty of the present, and the guarantee of the future.” Deuteronomy gives one of the clearest statements in the Bible of the necessity and results of obedience, as well as the consequences of disobedience.

In no other book are the ways of obedience and disobedience more dramatically contrasted. Obedience is the way of “life and good;” disobedience is the way of “death and evil” (30:15). Moses charged the Jews to teach obedience of the laws of God “diligently to thy children” (6:4-9). When they entered Canaan, they were to set the blessing of obedience upon Mt. Gerazim and the curse of disobedience upon Mt. Ebal as a constant reminder for them to choose the way of obedience and good, of life and blessing (11:26-32; 27:11-26; Josh. 8:30-35; 24:14-15).

In Deuteronomy 28, the fearful consequences of disobedience are foretold, a remarkable prophecy of their future enslavement to other nations, their idolatry, the captivity of their children, their terrible distress, famine and tribulation, cannibalism, scattering among the nations, from whom they would receive no rest, but to whom they would become a proverb and a byword. The subsequent fulfillment of these predictions in the tragic history of the Jews is one proof of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Moses’ final charge was an appeal for them to choose obedience and life, “that thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is life, and the length of thy days” (30:15-20).

Their example is a lesson for men in the Christian dispensation to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). When He comes again, “the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (II Thess. 1:8-9).

Moses’ last words – The song of Moses (Deut. 32) and his final blessing of the people (Ch. 33) are sublime passages. God’s tender care for His people is, “as an eagle stirreth up

her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings" (32:11; 33:12). "For the Lord's portion is his people...he found him in a desert land...he kept him as the apple of his eye" (32:9-10). Yet, the people provoked God to jealousy and kindled his anger in a fire that "shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth" (32:21-22). Here God declares His right of divine retribution: "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense" (32:35; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30). In the promised land, Israel was to receive "the precious things of heaven...the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof...and the abundance of the sea, and the treasures hid in the sand" (33:13, 16, 19).

The majesty of God and the safety of His arms is extolled. "There is none like unto God...who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky" (33:26). "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (33:27; Psalm 90:1-2). God promised both Joshua and the people whom he was to lead into Canaan that God "will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (31:6-8; Josh. 1:5-7). Therefore, "happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency" (33:29). Christians have the same blessed assurance in Christ (Heb. 13:5). God's people should not be afraid, but "be strong and of good courage...for he it is that doth go with thee."

Moses' death – "Moses, my servant is dead" (Josh. 1:2). The last chapter of Deuteronomy gives the account of Moses viewing Canaan from the top of Pisgah. He then died and was buried by the Lord in a place known only by God (Deut. 34:6). Because of his sin, in smiting the rock (Num. 20), Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land. He "was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (34:7). "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face" (34:10).

Christ in Deuteronomy –

1. The coming prophet (18:15-18).
2. The curse of crucifixion (21:22-23; Gal. 3:13).
3. Spiritual bread (8:3; Matt. 4:4; John 6:31-35).
4. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord” (6:16).
5. Thou shalt serve God only (6:13).
6. The greatest commandment (6:5; Matt. 22:37).
7. The necessity of two or three witnesses (19:15; Matt. 18:15-16; I Tim. 5:19).

THE TWO COVENANTS

Meaning of covenant – The word means agreement or promise. It is also called law, commandment, and testament. God made a two-fold covenant with Abraham, both material and spiritual, when He promised to make a great nation of his descendants and to bless all nations in Abraham’s seed, the latter promise referring to Christ (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16).

Old and new covenants – The two principal covenants of the Bible are the law of Moses and the law of Christ. They are referred to as the “first” and the “new,” or “second,” covenants (Heb. 8:7, 13; 10:9). They correspond to the Old and New Testaments, the law of Moses being the chief system of commandments of the Old and the law of Christ the system of righteousness of the New Testament.

Purpose of the first covenant – It is called the law of Moses (Josh. 8:32) and the law of God (Neh. 10:28). In the New Testament, the law of Moses is usually designated simply as “the law.” It was not perfect (Heb. 8:7) because it provided no perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:1-4). “It was added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19). It enabled God’s people to know sin (Rom. 7:7) and served to restrain their sinfulness by making them to realize that sin is “exceedingly sinful” (Rom. 7:13) and that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). It was their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). Although it was a ministration of

death and condemnation (II Cor. 3:7, 9), “the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (I Tim. 1:8). When properly applied, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Christ abolished the law – To use the first covenant lawfully, we must realize that Christ fulfilled the law of Moses and took it out of the way, “nailing it to the cross” (Matt. 5:17; Col. 2:14). “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). He “abolished in his flesh...the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Eph. 2:15). “He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second (Heb. 10:9).

The new covenant – Jeremiah prophesied that God would make a new covenant with His people, which He would write on their hearts and by which He would forgive their sins (Jer. 31:31-34). This prophecy referred to the gospel of Christ and was fulfilled when He became “the mediator of a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6-13; 10:16-18). This is the New Testament, or last will of our Lord Jesus Christ, which became effective after His death and resurrection (Heb. 9:15-17; Rom. 7:1-5). It is the gospel of salvation (Rom. 1:16), the only gospel (Gal. 1:8-9), the law of faith (Rom. 3:27), the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21), the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), the one faith (Jude vs. 3; Eph. 4:4-6), the word of truth (Col. 1:5; I Peter 1:22, 25). These are not different messages, but different names of the same message, the good news of salvation through Christ. It is God’s complete and final system of grace and righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17; Titus 2:11-14). God speaks to us through His Son and by His gospel gives all things that pertain to life and godliness (Heb. 1:1-2; II Peter 1:3-4). On penalty of everlasting punishment, we dare not add to or take from the word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). The new covenant, the gospel, is for the whole world and will continue until the end of the world (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20).

For comparison of the two covenants, see the next page:

Old Covenant (The Law)	New Testament (The Gospel)
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|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. For Jews only (Deut. 5:2,3,15). | 1. For all nations (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 2:13). |
| 2. Moses the mediator (John 1:17). | 2. Christ the mediator (Heb. 9:15; I Tim. 2:5). |
| 3. Shadow of good things (Heb. 10:1). | 3. The substance (Heb. 8:5; 9:11). |
| 4. Animal sacrifices (Lev. 1-7). | 4. Christ's sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). |
| 5. Daily offerings (Heb. 10:11). | 5. One offering for all (Heb. 10:10-14). |
| 6. Could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4). | 6. Sins remitted by blood of Christ (Heb. 9:23; Rev. 1:5). |
| 7. Remembrance of sins (Heb. 10:3). | 7. Sins forgiven (Eph. 1:7). |
| 8. Temporary (until the seed came, Gal. 3:19). | 8. Permanent (unto end of world, Matt. 28:20). |
| 9. Aaron, high priest (Num. 17). | 9. Christ, high priest (Heb. 4:14; 7:12,26-28). |
| 10. Only Levites were priests (Num. 3:1-13; 18:21-24). | 10. All Christians are priests (I Peter 2:5,9). |
| 11. Imperfect law (Heb. 7:18-19; 8:7). | 11. Perfect law (James 1:25). |
| 12. Law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). | 12. Law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:1-2). |
| 13. Ministration of condemnation and death (II Cor. 3:7,9). | 13. Ministration of righteousness (II Cor. 3:9). |
| 14. Outward act (10 Commandments, etc.; Exod. 20; Deut. 5). | 14. Motive in heart (Matt. 5:21-22,27-28,33-36, 38-39, 43-48). |
| 15. No justification (Gal. 2:16,21; 3:11). | 15. Justification by obedient faith in Christ (Rom. 3:28; 1:5). |

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|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16. Bondage (Gal. 3:23; 4:3). | 16. Freedom (Gal. 5:1). |
| 17. Fleshly Israelites (Rom. 9:3-5). | 17. Spiritual Israelites (Gal. 3:9,29; 6:16). |
| 18. Jews by natural birth (Gen. 50:25; John 8:39). | 18. Christians by spiritual, new birth (John 3:3-5). |
| 19. Circumcision of the flesh (John 7:22; Lev. 12:3). | 19. Circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:28-29). |
| 20. Tabernacle (Heb. 8:5). | 20. Church (Matt. 16:18-19). |
| 21. Later, the temple (I Kings 8). | 21. The church is God's temple (I Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22). |
| 22. The tabernacle and temple passed away. | 22. The church cannot be moved (Heb. 12:27-28). |
| 23. Sabbath, the 7th day (Exod. 20:8-9). | 23. Lord's day, first day of the week (Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). |
| 24. Tithing (Lev. 27:30-33). | 24. Give as prospered (I Cor. 16:1-2). |
| 25. Rest in Canaan (Heb. 3:18-19). | 25. Rest in heaven (Heb. 4:9-11; Rev. 14:13). |
| 26. Gentiles were without hope (Eph. 2:11-13). | 26. Through Christ, now have hope in heaven (Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:13-14). |

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

Chapter 11

The Book Of Joshua

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

Key words – Conquest, and possess.

Key verses – Chapter 1:5-6; 22:5 –

1:5-6 – 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 unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

22:5 – But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Key phrase – “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (24:15).

Key chapters – Chapters 23-24 – Joshua’s charge to the people to be “very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses” (23:6), to “fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth” (24:14).

Subject – The primary message is the faithfulness of God in keeping His promises. This is seen in the fulfillment of the divine promise to Abraham that God would give possession of the land to his descendants (Gen. 12:7). The certainty of the fulfillment of the divine purposes is evident also in God’s judgments upon the Canaanites because of their awful sins. This book shows God’s hatred of sin in His punishing the Canaanites, His delight in those who do His

will (1:7), and the ground of true courage, “for the Lord is with thee” (1:9). The failure of the Israelites to expel or completely destroy the Canaanites as God had commanded led to their later downfall.

Appeal – Up to this time God had spoken in dreams and visions and by His angels. Now there is the book of law written by Moses, and the people are exhorted to hearken to God’s voice in and through this book. ***“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate 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” (1:8).*** In this same manner, Christ speaks to us today through His perfect word, His law of faith and righteousness, the new covenant of which He is the author and mediator (John 6:44-45, 63; Heb. 11:6; II Peter 1:3-4; John 16:13-15). “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...” (Heb. 1:1-2).

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

Books of history – The twelve books, Joshua through Esther, cover about 1,000 years, B. C. 1450-400. The first three (Joshua, Judges, and Ruth) contain the history of the independent tribes; I Samuel through II Chronicles record the history of the kingdom; and Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther give the account of the return from captivity. These divisions represent three forms of government – first, the theocracy, or rule of God; second, the monarchy, the rule of kings of their own; and third, the dependency, or rule of foreign kings.

The thousand years of history is a period of great civilizations, great characters, great cities, and great conflicts of Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, Phoenicia, Syria, Greece, and Persia. The account of these nations has no place in the

Bible record except as they came into contact with God's chosen people. The brief history both of the Jews and neighboring nations is given only as it relates to the unfolding of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. The fact that these twelve books, written by different persons, at different times, and in different places, yet present a coherent account of a thousand years of history, is evidence of Divine inspiration (II Peter 1:21).

The book – Joshua is so-called from its author and principal character, the courageous and faithful leader who succeeded Moses and led the Israelites into the promised land. Written possibly about 1,400 B. C., it is a record of the conquest and division of Canaan, a period of about 50 years. It is largely a story of military campaigns in which God fought for the Jews, one of the great wars of all time. The book goes on where Deuteronomy leaves off; Joshua completes what Moses commenced. The great event in Moses' life was the passage through the Red Sea, and the great event in Joshua's life was the passage through the Jordan. The one tells of deliverance from bondage, and the other of entrance into blessing. Moses' symbol was the rod, and Joshua's was the spear. In Deuteronomy there is a vision of faith, or faith in principle, and in Joshua the venture of faith, or faith in action.

Principal events – The spies sent to Jericho, received by Rahab; crossing the Jordan, invasion of the land, fall of Jericho, sin of Achan and defeat at Ai, Israel at Ebal and Gerazim, battle of Beth-heron when the sun stood still, division of the land, appointment of six cities of refuge, and Joshua's farewell address and death.

GREAT LESSONS FROM JOSHUA

God's book of law recorded and read – God instructed Joshua that both he and the people must observe to do according to all that was written in the book of law (1:8). Therefore, when they came to Mt. Ebal, Joshua obeyed

Moses' command to remind the people there of the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience (Josh. 8:30-35; Deut. 27:1-26). With half of the people at Mt. Gerazim and half of them on Mt. Ebal, Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal and they sacrificed peace offerings. He wrote the law upon the stones of the altar and "...he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law...before all the congregation of Israel" (8:34-35). This is an example for us of the necessity and blessing of obeying the law of Christ in the Christian dispensation (Heb. 5:8-9; 10:28-29).

God at war with sin – Joshua's war of conquest against the Canaanites was fought for a noble purpose. God fought for His people, destroyed the wicked nations of Canaan and established the nation of Israel, through which came the Messiah to bless all nations. God's primary purpose was to have a separate people, truly consecrated to Him and free from idolatry. Thus He would preserve Abraham's seed so that Christ could come (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16).

In Joshua we see God at war with sin in the overthrow of the physical enemies of Israel. After long probation, He punished and drove out the Canaanites because of their sins. The cup of their iniquity at last was full (Gen. 15:16). God allowed Israel to be defeated at Ai because there was sin among them (7:10-13). God is still the enemy of sin. Christ came "to destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). His kingdom, the church, is not of this world (John 18:36). His subjects do not engage in carnal welfare (II Cor. 10:4), but they wage a constant spiritual battle "against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-20).

Miracles in Joshua – God's remarkable works recorded in Joshua show both His righteous judgment upon the wicked nations of Canaan and His provident care for His chosen people.

(1) Upon Israel's entering Canaan, the waters of the river Jordan, at flood stage, "stood and rose up upon a heap"

when the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant “dipped in the brim of the water...and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground” (3:14-17). The purpose of this miracle was to cause the people to respect Joshua as they had Moses (4:14) and to bring all the people of the earth to fear God (4:23-24).

(2) The fall of Jericho (Ch. 6) was one of the most amazing victories that God gave to His people. As God had promised, after the Israelites marched around the city for seven days, the wall fell down flat. Dr. John Garstang, director of the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, excavated the ruins of Jericho (1929-1936). He discovered pottery and other evidence that the city had been destroyed about 1400 B. C., the time of Joshua’s conquest. He found that the wall did actually fall down flat. The wall was double, the two walls about 15 feet apart. The outer wall was six feet thick and the inner wall 12 feet thick, both about 30 feet high, linked together by houses built across the top, as Rahab’s house, “on the wall.” The walls fell outward and down the hillside as though shaken by an earthquake, a method which God could have used. “They burnt the city with fire” (6:24). Garstang found layers of charcoal and ashes and wall ruins reddened by fire. (Halley’s **Bible Handbook**, 159-160).

(3) At Gibeon, God destroyed the armies of the Amorites with hailstones that slew more than the Israelites slew with the sword (Josh. 10:11).

(4) In the same battle, Joshua prayed, and God caused the sun to stand still for a whole day, while “the Lord fought for Israel” and “delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel” (10:12-14). The main point of all of these miracles is that God was on the side of faithful Joshua and Israel. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

(5) Just as suddenly as it had begun 40 years before, the manna ceased (5:10-12). Now the Israelites ate of crops and vineyards that they had not planted in the good land

that God had given them.

God's key to success, spiritually (Josh. 22:5) – (1) Take diligent heed, (2) to do the commandments, (3) keep the law of the Lord, (4) love God, (5) walk in all His ways, (6) cleave unto Him, and (7) serve Him with all your heart and soul.

New Testament references to Joshua – (1) Faithful Rahab (2:1; 6:22; Heb. 11:31); (2) Fall of Jericho, an example of victory by faith after doing God's will (6:20; Heb. 11:30); (3) The penalty of sin (24:19-20; Acts 7:42); (4) Assurance of God's help (1:5-7; Heb. 13:5).

Joshua, Moses and Christ – “And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers” (Deut. 6:21-23). By Moses God brought them out, and by Joshua He brought them in. Moses means “drawn out.” Joshua means “savior.” Moses accomplished the exit from Egypt, and Joshua, the entrance into Canaan. Both are typical of the work of Christ. Moses represents our deliverer from Satan and Joshua our salvation in Christ. There is a parallel between the book of Joshua and the book of Acts. In the one, Jehovah established the nation of Israel with God as their king. In the other, He established His spiritual kingdom, the church, with Christ as its head. The cities of refuge (Josh. 20) are typical of our refuge in Christ (Heb. 6:13-20). Their sanctification (Josh. 3:5) typifies our cleansing from sin (II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:25-26). Israel's rest after the conquest (Josh. 11:23) is a type of the rest of the soul in heaven (Heb. 4:9).

Achan's sin typical of all sin (7:21) – “I saw,” lust of the eyes; “I coveted,” lust of the mind; “I took,” act of the will; “I hid,” act of the hand. “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (James 1:14-15).

No promise unfulfilled – Some who advocate a literal return and reign of Christ on earth contend that the Jews

never fully and permanently possessed all of Canaan, and therefore God will yet fulfill His promise to the patriarchs by means of a future return of all the Jews to Israel, at the coming of Christ. This idea is false, because God never failed to keep His promise. God fought for them (23:3), “so Joshua took the whole land” (11:23). The people said, “Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land” (2:24). “And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein (21:43-45; 23:14-16).

Joshua’s farewell address – (Ch. 23-24) – At the age of 110, Joshua gave his final charge to Israel in one of the greatest sermons recorded in the Bible. He reminded them that God had brought them into the land, had fought for them, and had kept every promise He made. They were not as grateful as they should have been for such blessings. Idolatry had corrupted their relationship with God, and their desire to be like the nations would corrupt them. Remember that God is a jealous God. All who serve Him must choose Him above all other gods (24:15). Joshua’s good influence lived on after his death (24:31). Israel’s later failure to heed the warnings given by God through Moses and Joshua led to their downfall. When they forsook God, married heathen women, and turned to idolatry, God destroyed them.

Joseph’s bones buried – The bones of Joseph, carried from Egypt to Canaan, were buried in the promised land, as he had requested (Gen. 50:25; Josh. 24:32).

Chapter 12

The Book Of Judges

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Key word – Confusion.

Key verses – Chapter 2:20-22; 17:6; 21:25 –

2:20-22 – And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

17:6; 21:25 –In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Key phrase – “Right in his own eyes.”

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – This chapter is a miniature of the book of Judges. It gives the reasons for God’s allowing heathen nations to remain in the land to punish Israel, when the godly generation died, “and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord” (v. 10).

An angel of the Lord appears and reproves their disobedience, with the sad proclamation from the Lord that because they had not driven out the inhabitants and destroyed their altars, “Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you: but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare unto you” (v. 1-5).

After the death of Joshua (v. 6-10), the people forsook

the Lord, and provoked the Lord to anger by bowing themselves down to the gods of the people that were round about them. "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about...the hand of the LORD was against them for evil...and they were greatly distressed" (v. 11-15).

Never the less, God did not utterly forsake Israel, but He raised up judges to deliver them out of the hand of the Canaanites, "for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them." But the people still did not learn their lesson. "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way" (v. 16-23).

Message – After the death of Joshua, Israel entered a 350-year Dark Age. The book of Judges is a sad story of decline, distress, and deliverance of the Jews. Their punishment is an example for us of divine judgment upon all who forsake God (2:11-15). In their repentance and God's raising judges to deliver them from their oppressors, we see His mercy upon those who repent and cry out unto God (2:16; 3:9; 4:3; 6:7). The living message of this book, for all men of every generation, is twofold: (1) The certainty of human failure and divine punishment when men disobey God and try to have their own way, and (2) the power of the effectual fervent prayer of the penitent in obtaining God's favor, forgiveness and blessings.

The book – The book of Judges, written probably by Samuel, is the history of the 13 judges who ruled and delivered Israel. It is an account covering about 300 years of 7 apostasies of Israel, 7 servitudes to 7 heathen nations, 7 cries unto God, and 7 deliverances under the judges. The book presents Israel on probation. God had promised the

patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, an abundant posterity and the land of Canaan in which to dwell. Exodus records the fulfillment of the first promise, and Joshua the fulfillment of the second promise. Their retaining of the land was on condition of Israel's faithfulness to God's covenant (Deut. 28-30). After Joshua's death, God proved His people, and they failed the test. There followed the oft repeated cycle of apostasy, chastisement and mercy. "Rebellion, retribution, repentance, and rest are the dominating notes in this minor music."

The sin of Israel – Contrary to God's commands (Deut. 7:2-4) and the warning both to Moses and Joshua, the Jews failed in three particulars: (1) They did not drive out the Canaanites; (2) they practiced idolatry, and (3) the men took pagan wives. These sins caused them much suffering and eventually resulted in the destruction of their nation.

The iron days – This sad period has been called, "the iron days of Israel's history." The Bible states that the iron chariots in the possession of Canaanites and Philistines were the reason that Israel could not drive them out (Judges 1:19; 4:3). Had the Jews been faithful to God, they would have prevailed over their enemies, in spite of their chariots of iron (Josh. 17:16-18). Only after Saul and David overthrew the Philistines did iron come into use in Israel (II Sam. 12:31; I Chron. 22:3; 29:7). Excavations by archeologists have revealed many iron relics of 1100 B. C. in Philistia, but none in the hill country of Palestine until the time of David, a hundred years later, confirming the account in Judges that the Philistines, but not the Israelites, had the use of iron weapons at that time (I Sam. 13:19-22).

The Canaanite tribes – Israel's oppressors in Canaan included the Moabites and Ammonites, both of whom were descendants of Lot. The god of the Moabites was Chemosh, whom they worshipped by human sacrifices. Moloch, the god of the Ammonites, was worshipped by the burning of

little children. The Philistines were descendants of Ham, and the word "Palestine" is derived from them. Amalekites were descendants of Esau. They were the first to attack Israel in their departure from Egypt, and they attacked the Jews in the time of Ehud and of Gideon. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah. They gradually were incorporated with the Arabians, the descendants of Ishmael. All of them were idolators, grossly immoral, and cruel oppressors of the Israelites.

The judges – They were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. The last two judges, Eli and Samuel, came later. There were three leading types: the warrior-judge, as Gideon and Samson; the priest-judge, as Eli, and the prophet-judge, as Samuel. The chief of the judges were Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson and Samuel. These were memorable for their faith and courage.

(1) Deborah, the only woman judge, accompanied her captain, Barak, and gained victory over Jabin, the Canaanite king. Sisera, captain of Jabin's host, was killed while sleeping by having a tent pin driven through his temple by Jael, wife of Heber, the Kenite (4:1-24).

(2) Gideon and his three hundred men defeated 135,000 Midianites and lifted the yoke of oppression from Israel's neck. This dramatic victory proved to the Israelites that it was God and not their own hand that had saved them (7:1-25). Gideon did a foolish thing in making a golden idol to Baal, which the children of Israel continued to worship after his death (8:26-27, 33-35). Thus, Gideon is called Jerubaal, meaning "referring to Baal."

(3) Jephthah, who is remembered for his rash vow, led a successful battle against the Ammonites and delivered Israel (11:1-40). Whether or not he kept his vow and sacrificed his daughter, the first to meet him upon his return (v. 30-31, 34), cannot be determined. More than likely, he gave her into full service to God, just as Hannah sacrificed

her son, Samuel, to the Lord's service (I Sam. 1:11-22). "Their virgins had no marriage song" (Psm. 78:63), may be applicable. Jesus spoke of men who "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matt. 19:12).

(4) Samson, a Nazarite who was strong physically but weak morally, engaged the Philistines in battle but never completely lifted the yoke from Israel (ch. 13-16). His exploits are some of the most remarkable feats recorded in the Bible. He slew a lion with his bare hands (14:5-6), destroyed the grain and orchards of the Philistines by tying burning brands to the tails of 300 foxes and letting them go into the standing grain and olive yards, killed 1000 men with the jawbone of an ass, and after tearing the gates of Gaza from their hinges carried the gates more than 30 miles to the top of a mountain in Hebron. The experience of this mighty man shows the truthfulness of I Corinthians 15:33, "evil companionships corrupt good morals." Samson fell in love with a Philistine maiden, whose father gave her to Samson's friend instead. Later his love for Delilah led to his downfall. The influence of the ungodly people weakened him so that, betrayed by Delilah, he was seized and blinded by the Philistines. As they celebrated their victory with a feast to Dagon, their god, Samson took hold of the two pillars of the house where they were, and brought it down upon them, dying with all the people therein. "So the dead he slew in his death were more than they that he slew in his life" (16:30). What a dramatic demonstration of the truthfulness of Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Miracles in the book of Judges – The appearances of an angel to Gideon, and to Samson's parents; dew on the fleece as a sign to Gideon; his defeat of the Midianites with only 300 men; Samson born of a barren mother, and his superhuman strength. These show that God still had His eye upon His people and His ear open to their supplication,

even though they had forsaken Him.

Three main divisions of the book – The dependence of Israel upon the Lord (1:1-25); forsaking the Lord and some of the results (2:6-16:31), and their anarchy and the final result (17:1-21:25).

GREAT LESSONS FROM JUDGES

Other dramatic events – In addition to the occurrences cited earlier, two other deeds of violence show the extent of sin when men do that which is right in their own eyes.

(1) Abimelech, the son of Jerubaal (Gideon), conspired with Shechem to become their ruler, slew 70 members of his father's family, all of the sons save Jotham, the youngest. Later he burned to death the elders of Shechem, who were among 1,000 who died in the stronghold. He in turn died after a woman cast a millstone from the tower of Thebez and broke his skull, and he commanded his armorbearer to kill him with his sword so that men could not say, "A woman killed him" (Ch. 9). He did the sin that his father refused to do when the Israelites sought to make Gideon their king (8:22-23).

(2) The men of Benjamin – The men of Benjamin sinned grievously with the concubine of the Levite. The vengeance taken on them by the other tribes of Israel left only 600 men of the tribe of Benjamin (Ch. 19-20).

Joshua and Judges – Joshua is a song of joy, telling of the victory of God's people during their days of faithfulness in Canaan. Judges is one of the saddest books in the Bible, telling of Israel's disobedience, departure from God, and defeat after the death of Joshua. In the first there is progress, and in the other, decline. In the one, there is possession of the land, and in the other, oppression in the land; in the one, faith, and in the other, unbelief; in the one, freedom, and in the other, bondage. In Joshua, we see the certainty of God's promises, and in Judges, the certainty

of His warnings.

New Testament references –

- (1) Judges raised up (2:16; Acts 13:20).
- (2) Barak's faith (4:6-16; Heb. 11:32).
- (3) Gideon's call (6:11; Heb. 11:32).
- (4) Jephthah (11:1; Heb. 11:32).
- (5) Samson (13:24; Heb. 11:32).

The folly of having one's own way – The cause of the Israelites tribulations during the period of the Judges was that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25). Moses had warned against repeating this mistake of their fathers (Deut. 12:8). Joshua, too, had predicted the calamity awaiting them if they disobeyed God (Josh. 23:12-16; 24:19-28). The folly of pleasing self instead of God is seen both in scripture and human experience. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "Every man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts" (Prov. 21:2). The prodigal is a sad example of what happens when one has his own way. We should rather pray in the words of David, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins" (Psm. 19:13). Our aim must be to please God in all things (II Cor. 5:9; I Thess. 4:1; Heb. 13:21; I John 3:22).

The wages of sin (Judges 2:1-23) – The sins that caused the Jews to suffer divine judgement and oppression from the Canaanites are described in this chapter. They were not grateful to God for fighting their battles and giving them the good land of promise, and they forsook Him. They practiced idolatry and refused to obey God's commands, which their fathers solemnly promised to obey (Josh. 24:16-23). They would not hearken to the voice of God's appointed messengers, but continued to obey their own stubborn will. In serving the gods of the Canaanites, they were guilty of spiritual adultery. The result was anarchy and confusion in

their religious life, home life and political life.

Therefore, “the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of their enemies” (Judges 2:14). Yet, God did not forsake them, but when they cried out to Him in their distress, He raised up judges to deliver them out of the hand of their enemies (v. 18). Their repentance was only temporary, “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (v. 19). The cycle of apostasy, oppression, repentance and deliverance was repeated seven times. “Now these were our examples” (I Cor. 10:6). Here we see what happens when a nation forsakes God, the danger of self-sufficiency after victory, the folly of mistaking numerical strength for spiritual approval, and that the depths of sin offer no real happiness. Here also is proof that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) and a warning against “falling away from the living God” (Heb. 3:12; I Tim. 4:1). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). Yet, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). Judges teaches us on the one hand not to presume, and on the other hand not to despair.

Other notable points in Judges

(1) The book of Judges has two beginnings (ch. 1:1; 2:6). The one tells of the brief period of faithfulness after Joshua died, and the other of the beginning of their backsliding.

(2) Judges contains the oldest known parable, or fable, in the world. Jotham’s story of the trees that accepted the bramble as their king, which he told to reprove Abimelech’s folly (ch. 9:7-21).

(3) It is the first record in history of the rise of a woman into prominence and leadership of a nation (ch. 4).

(4) It gives one of the grandest of all battle songs, that

king of Canaan, and his captain, Sisera (ch. 5).

(5) Moses' grandson, Jonathan, was the first idolatrous priest. The Danites settled in Laish, and changed the name of the city to Dan, where they set up the image that Micah had made. There Jonathan and his sons served as priests "until the day of the captivity of the land" (ch. 18:30). Later, when the kingdom divided and the ten northern tribes elected Jeroboam to be their king, he set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel, which the Israelites continued to worship (I Kings 12:29; II Kings 10:29).

Judges and Galatians – The backsliding of the Galatian church may be compared to the relapse of Israel into idolatry. Paul wrote to them, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7). They had turned from the true gospel to false teachers who taught a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). They were teaching justification by the law of Moses rather than by faith in Christ (3:16, 21). They had turned from true worship to Jewish ceremonialism (4:8-10). Therefore, Paul said, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (4:11). Their falling away had been so sudden that Paul exclaimed, "O foolish Gentiles, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (3:1).

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

Chapter 13

The Book Of Ruth

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF RUTH

Key words – Kinsman (redeemer), “one who redeems,” 13 times. Other key words: love, faith, rest, redemption.

Key verses – Chapter 1:16-17; 3:11 –

1:16-17 – And Ruth said, Entreat 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.

3:11 – And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

Its sublime passage (1:16-17) is one of the most eloquent expressions of love in all literature. It shows Ruth's great love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her great faith in Naomi's God. Boaz' blessing for Ruth also is beautiful (2:12).

Key phrase – “Entreat me not to leave thee.”

Key chapter – Chapter 4 – In chapters 1 and 2, we see Ruth's love for God and His people demonstrated. In chapters 3 and 4, Ruth's love is rewarded. God rewards Ruth's devotion by giving her Boaz as a husband and by providing her with a son, Obed, the grandfather of David. In exercising the law regulating the redemption of property (Lev. 25:25-34) and the law concerning a brother's duty to raise up children in the name of the husband who has died

childless, Boaz brings a Moabite woman into the family line of David and eventually of Christ. Ruth is a “virtuous woman,” who shows loyalty and love to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her near kinsman, Boaz. In chapter 4, Ruth’s devotion is blessed by her move from widowhood and poverty to marriage and wealth (2:1), from pagan heritage to the promises of God, and from obscurity to the honor of becoming an ancestor of Jesus.

Theme – The book of Ruth is a beautiful account in a pastoral setting of loyalty and love by which Ruth, a Moabitess became the great grandmother of David, and thus an ancestor of the royal family of Judah and in turn of Jesus (Ruth 4:18-22; Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32). The faith and devotion of this virtuous woman are rewarded with rest (1:9; 3:1) and redemption (4:4, 6). The story of Ruth belongs to the period of the judges, when Israel’s history “was generally a desert in rebellion and immorality, but the story of Ruth stands in contrast as an oasis of integrity and righteousness.” In her relationship to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her near kinsman, Boaz, she clearly manifested faith, goodness, and love.

Application – The primary message of Ruth is that of the rest that comes from genuine faith and trust in God. As she found rest through redemption and union with Boaz, her redeemer, so we find peace and rest in Christ, our redeemer (Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 1:3, 7; Phil. 4:6-7).

THE BOOK OF RUTH

The book – The books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth cover a period of about 350 years (1450-1100 B. C.). The story of Ruth belongs to the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1) and is an appendix to that book. It occurred about 1200 B. C. and covers about 10 years (1:4). It is the only book of the Bible devoted wholly to the history of a woman, although two books bear the names of women – Ruth, a Gentile who married a Hebrew, and Esther, a Hebrew who married a

Gentile king. It was probably written by Samuel after the birth of David (4:22).

Brief outline

(1) Sojourn in Moab (1:1-5); (2) sad return home (1:6-22); (3) Ruth gleanes in the fields of Boaz (ch. 2); (4) Ruth follows the counsel of Naomi (ch. 3); (5) marriage of Ruth to Boaz (4:13); (6) Birth of Obed, grandfather of David (4:13-16); (7) genealogy of David (4:18-22).

The narrative – The book of Ruth is a literary and spiritual gem, a story of romance and rewarded loyalty, which the Jews read at the feast of Pentecost. Because of a famine in Israel, Elimelech and Naomi, whose home was in Bethlehem, took their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and went into Moab, “and continued there.” There Elimelech died, and the two sons took wives of the Moabite women. After a time the sons died, and Naomi, having heard that the famine was ended in Israel, decided to return to Judah. At her suggestion, one of the daughters-in-law, Orpah, went back to her people, but Ruth pleaded to go with Naomi, saying, “Thy people will be my people, and thy God my God” (1:16). They received a warm welcome in Bethlehem, and Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy kinsman of Elimelech. Ruth found favor with Boaz, who treated her kindly, and exercising the kinsman’s right of redemption, bought the parcel of land belonging to Elimelech. This, according to Jewish law, bound Boaz to marry Ruth, “to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (4:10; Deut. 25:5-10). Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and to her God was thus rewarded with rest in the house of Boaz (3:1) and the honor of becoming an ancestor of Jesus.

Contrast to Judges – As we recall the idolatry, immorality, and violence of Israel in the period of anarchy recorded in Judges 17-21, we marvel that the idyllic story of Ruth should have happened during that time. In the place of the Israelites’ unfaithfulness, we have the loyalty of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz; instead of immorality, we find

purity and piety; instead of battlefields, we see harvest fields; in the place of the warrior's shout, the harvester's song, and instead of confusion and distress, we find peace and rest.

Purposes of the book –

(1) To show the place of Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus. She is one of five women in Matthew's list of the Lord's bloodline, two of whom were Gentiles, Rahab and Ruth.

(2) By relating one of the most beautiful of all love stories, it shows the power of pure love to overcome all difficulties.

(3) It gives the ideal of marriage by showing that married life is sacred (4:11-17).

(4) It shows also that God rewarded Naomi's faith with comfort and happiness (4:14-19). When Obed was born, Naomi's neighbors said, "There is a son born to Naomi" (v. 17). As with Job, God turned Naomi's sorrow into joy, and blessed her latter years more than her beginning (Job 42:12).

Meaning of names – The story of Ruth is reflected in the meaning of the names in the book. Bethlehem means, "house of bread;" Elimelech, "my God is king;" Naomi, "beautiful;" Mahlon, "song;" Chilion, "perfection;" Ruth, "friend" and "satisfied;" **Mara**, "bitter;" and Boaz, "strength."

Messages – The primary message of Ruth is that of rest. In the house of her husband, who had redeemed her (4:4, 6, 10), Ruth found respect, protection and rest. Boaz, as redeemer, is a type of Christ, and Ruth a type of Gentiles, strangers afar off (Eph. 2:11-12). As Ruth was related to Boaz by marriage, so Christians are related to Christ by spiritual marriage (II Cor. 11:2). As she found rest through redemption and union with her redeemer, so we find peace and rest in Christ, our redeemer (Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 1:3, 7).

Other points to remember:

(1) Boaz is a type of Christ, not only as redeemer, but as the Lord of harvest (2:3), dispenser of bread (3:15),

kinsman-redeemer (2:20), giver of rest (3:1), man of wealth (2:1), and our strength.

(2) Another lesson from Ruth is that circumstances neither make nor destroy believers. Neither Ruth's poverty nor Boaz's wealth turned them from God.

(3) In the example of humble submission to God's will, we see in Naomi, Ruth and Boaz that faith is the test of discipleship.

(4) We see also the great value of trusting God. He will reward the righteous (Matt. 25:46; II John 8).

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Chapter 14

The Book Of First Samuel

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF FIRST SAMUEL

Key words – Prayed, or prayer.

Key verses – 13:14; 15:22 –

13:14 – But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

15:22 – And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Key phrase – “Asked him of the Lord” (1:20).

Key chapter – Chapter 15 – First Samuel is a book of transition in Israel from the rule of God through the judges to his rule through the kings. And chapter 15 records the transition of the kingship from Saul to David. The book records three stages: Eli to Samuel, Samuel to Saul, and Saul to David. In all three changes God removes His blessing from one and gives it to another because of sin. “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (15:23).

Message – This book is largely the biography of three key men: Samuel, the last judge and first prophet; Saul, the first king in Israel, and David, the king-elect, chosen by God and anointed by Samuel, but not yet recognized as Saul’s successor. In their careers we see that God’s purpose is advanced in spite of the success or failure of men. God’s victories are accomplished through the obedient and

disobedient alike. Man's attitude determines human success or failure, but does not overrule God's purposes. God's will **will be done on earth**. Samuel and David were obedient and were used of God to aid in final victory, and they were saved. Saul was disobedient, yet was used of God, and then destroyed.

Appeal – The living message of this book is twofold: (1) To obey God and enjoy the blessings of victory over sin and evil; and (2) to recognize the place for and power of prayer in all experiences of life.

II. THE PURPOSE OF FIRST SAMUEL

Main theme of the book – Many people think only of God's goodness and mercy. They do not want to think of His justice and vengeance upon evil doers. This book clearly sets forth both sides of God's nature. God's will is to establish righteousness upon the earth (Jer. 23:5). "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him" (Acts 10:35). All who do God's will, will receive His blessings in this life and everlasting life with Christ when he ultimately triumphs over unrighteousness, sin and death. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). By the very nature of things, God's justice demands that he "render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing...eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:6-11). One of the main purposes of this, and all other Old Testament scriptures, is to serve as proof to us of the goodness and severity of God: "on them which

fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

Period covered by First Samuel – With this book we come to the end of the seventh period of Old Testament history. The first was the period before the flood, then the period after the flood to the time of Abraham, followed by the period of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis covers all of this history. Then came the Egyptian sojourn, deliverance from Egypt, and wilderness wanderings – Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Joshua records the conquest of Canaan. The period of the judges is recorded in the book of Judges, Ruth, and the first ten chapters of I Samuel. The eighth period – that of the united kingdom – is given in I and II Samuel, First Kings (chapters 1-11), and parts of I and II Chronicles. Four later periods complete the twelve periods of Old Testament history – the divided kingdom, Judah alone, the Babylonian exile, and the return of remnant from Babylon.

In recording the transition from the rule of judges to kings, I Samuel covers a part of the seventh and eighth periods, about 100 years, from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul (B. C. 1146-1056). It records the foundation of the Hebrew kingdom, a history of the last two judges, Eli and Samuel, anointing of David, David slaying Goliath, the friendship of David and Jonathan, Saul's sin and decline, and the death of Saul and Jonathan.

The book of First Samuel and its author – In the Hebrew Bible, I and II Samuel were originally one book, called "The book of Samuel," or simply "Samuel." In the Greek Septuagint they were designated with the two books that follow as "Books of Kingdoms." The books of Samuel were "I and II Kingdoms," and the books of Kings, "Third and Fourth Kingdoms." In the Hebrew canon, the books of Samuel were divided and were called First Kings. The two books of kings as we know them were combined and called Second Kings.

The book is named for Samuel, the prominent character in it, who was both judge and prophet. His name is variously translated “The name of God,” “His name is God,” “Heard of God,” and “Asked of God.” The book is anonymous, but probably it was written by Samuel, or at least the first twenty-four chapters. Since his death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1, most likely the remainder of the book and all of II Samuel were written by others. Samuel did write a book (10:25), and as head of a company of prophets (10:5; 19:20), he is the logical candidate for authorship of the first book of Samuel.

Three prophets are referred to in I Chronicles 29:29 who evidently contributed to both books of Samuel: “Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.”

III. PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN FIRST SAMUEL

Key men – In recording the transition from the judges to the kings of Israel, I Samuel is built around three key men: Samuel (ch. 1-7), Saul (ch. 8-31), and David (ch. 16-31).

From the birth of Samuel to the people’s demand for a king (Ch. 1-7) – While Eli was judge-priest in Israel, Samuel was born to Elkanah and Hannah, in answer to Hannah’s prayer. She “called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord” (1:20). Hannah kept her vow to God and gave her child to God all the days of his life. She brought him to Eli while Samuel was a very young child. He ministered unto the Lord before Eli, and his’ mother made him a little coat and brought it to him year by year, when she and Elkanah offered the yearly sacrifice.

As the child Samuel ministered, “the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision” (3:1). The Lord called to Samuel while he was asleep, and upon

Eli's instruction after the third call, the next time Samuel answered the Lord, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (3:10). God revealed to Samuel that he had judged Eli's house and would bring it to an end because his sons "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (3:13).

Leading events in First Samuel –

(1) The judges – The warrior-judges have passed, and now a priest-judge, Eli, has come; to be followed by a prophet-judge, Samuel, who was also a priest. With Samuel the period of the judges ends and the order of prophets begins (3:20; Acts 13:20; 3:24). "Give us a king" (8:5) denotes the transition from judgeship to monarchy.

(2) The birth, call and remarkable boyhood of Samuel (ch. 1-3).

(3) The people clamor for a king, Saul chosen and anointed, and Samuel's warning to them for their presumption in demanding a king (ch. 8-12).

(4) Saul's self-will, and Samuel's reproof and prophecy that God would seek "him a man after his own heart" (ch. 13).

(5) Jonathan's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines (ch. 14).

(6) Saul's disobedience respecting Amalek – "to obey is better than sacrifice" (ch. 15).

(7) David anointed king by Samuel (ch. 16).

(8) David slays the giant, Goliath (ch. 17).

(9) Friendship of David and Jonathan (ch. 18).

(10) Saul's persecution of David and attempts on his life (ch. 18:9-27:4).

(11) The last years of Saul's reign and his suicide (ch. 26-31).

Samuel – He was born to barren Hannah and Elkanah in answer to Hannah's prayer, in which she vowed that if God gave her a son, she would "give him unto the Lord all the days of his life," and that he would be a Nazarite (1:11). When Samuel was born, Eli was old and spiritually weak,

and his sons “were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord” (2:12). God destroyed the house of Eli “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (3:13). The spiritual decline of Israel and the need for God’s prophet is reflected in the verse, “And the word of the Lord was precious in those days” (3:1). Respect for God’s word was rare and Joshua’s warning unheeded: “If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good” (Josh. 24:20).

True to her promise, Hannah gave the boy Samuel into the service of God, and in the house of Eli, “the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men” (2:26). His trust in God is seen in his answer when God called to him, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth” (3:9-10). The spiritual qualities of his godly mother led him to become one of the greatest leaders of Israel, not because of military exploits, but by his unswerving integrity and loyalty to God. God assured Samuel that the people had not rejected him, but had rejected God, in demanding a king. He instructed Samuel to give them a king, but to warn them of the consequences of their unwise choice (8:1-22; 12:13-15). God “gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psm. 106:15). Later He said, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos. 13:11).

Samuel is the third of the great leaders whom God raised up for Israel – Abraham, Moses and Samuel. Probably his greatest work was the establishment of schools of prophets (I Sam. 19:20; II Kings 2:3,5; 4:38). After this time, the prophet and not the priest was God’s messenger to His people. These spokesmen functioned through a period of about 300 years and were known as “oral” prophets, to distinguish them from the “literary” prophets, who wrote the last 17 books of the Old Testament. The leading oral prophets were Samuel, organizer of the kingdom; Nathan,

adviser to David; Ahijah, adviser to Jeroboam; Elijah and Elisha, who led the fight against idolatry.

Saul – The rise, reign and ruin of the first king of Israel was a pathetic story. He began well but came to a sad and tragic end. He became presumptuous and the Spirit of God departed from him (16:14). He disobeyed God in offering priestly service at Gilgal (13:8-15), in sparing King Agag and the best of the flocks of the Amalekites (15:1-35), in being envious of David and trying to kill him (19:1-17), in seeking advice from the Witch of Endor (28:7-25), and finally in taking his own life (31:4).

David – To succeed Saul, God chose a man after His own heart, one of the greatest characters of all time. In this book we see David as shepherd boy, minstrel, giant killer, armor-bearer, captain, king's son-in-law, king designate, psalmist and fugitive. Three times he was anointed, and was the founder of the royal line of which came the King of kings. His great faith is seen in his slaying of the champion of the Philistines – Goliath (17:45). His love for Jonathan is a beautiful story of friendship.

Notable “firsts” in First Samuel – (1) First to use the majestic title, “Lord of Hosts” (1:3), and the name Messiah, the “anointed” (2:10); (2) the expressions, “Ichabod” (4:21), “Ebenezer” (7:12), and “God save the king” (10:24); (3) Samuel was the first in line of prophets, originally called “seers” (9:9), and for the first time a school of prophets is mentioned (10:5; 19:20).

The power of prayer – The place for, and power of, prayer in all experiences of life is seen in Samuel's life of prayer, (1) He was born in answer to prayer (1:10-28); (2) his name means “asked of God” (1:20); (3) his prayer brought deliverance from the Philistines at Mizpah (7:2-13); (4) his prayer when Israel insisted on having a king (8:6-9, 21-22); (5) his unceasing prayer for Israel (12:19-25).

Verses to remember – 7:3, 12; 12:14-15, 23-25; 15:23; 16:7; 17:45, 47; 18:7; 20:3; 26:21.

The influence of parents – In this book we have both the extremes, for evil through parental indulgence as in the case of Eli, and for good through the piety of a righteous mother as in the case of Hannah. Note also Samuel's failure with his sons (I Sam. 8:1-5), which was the immediate cause for the people's demand for a king.

Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart
from it (Proverbs 22:6).

Children, obey your parents in the Lord:
for this is right. Honour thy father and
mother; (which is the first commandment
with promise;) That it may be well with
thee, and thou mayest live long on the
earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your
children to wrath: but bring them up in
the nurture and admonition of the Lord
(Ephesians 6:1-4).

Chapter 15

The Second Book Of Samuel

I. KEYS TO THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

Key words – Before the Lord.

Key verses – Chapter 7:12-13; 22:21 –

7:12-13 – And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

22:21 – The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

Key phrase – “Thou art the man” (12:7). “Before the Lord” (6:5, 21; 7:18; 21:9). As in the case of the sin of Eli’s sons, David’s sin “was very great before the Lord” (I Sam. 2:17). The presence of God was very real in David’s life as a shepherd, fugitive, ruler, warrior, sinner, penitent, musician and poet. Another phrase, “David inquired of the Lord,” occurs a number of times (2:1; 5:19, 23; 21:1). The frequent references to David’s praying shows his dependence upon God and his desire to please God.

Key chapter – Chapter 11 – This chapter is a turning point in the life of David, when the man after God’s own heart sinned grievously. It records David’s adultery with Bathsheba, his conspiracy that resulted in the death of her husband, Uriah, and his taking Bathsheba to be his wife, who bore him a son. “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (11:27). God sent Nathan to reprove David and give him the sad message that God’s widespread blessings on his family and his kingdom would be removed.

To chastise David, God caused the death of the child “that Uriah’s wife bare unto David.” And according to Nathan’s pronouncement, because David had despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight, “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun” (II Sam. 12:10-12).

Two statements made by David on this occasion reveal the kind and repentant heart of David. He made no excuse, but said simply unto Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord” (12:13). And when his child died, David ended his fasting and weeping, and said, “Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (12:23).

In one of the Psalms, David further revealed his character as a man after God’s own heart. Psalm 51 records his confession and prayer. “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit...The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:3-4, 10-12, 17).

Message – The principal subject of II Samuel is the reign of David, first over Judah when he reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years, and then over all Israel when he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-three years. This book

records the highlights in the forty-year reign of the king who is the halfway point between Abraham and Christ.

Appeal – David’s sin and the far reaching consequences of it are examples of one’s “sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). The truthfulness of the warning, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23), is seen in the brave prophet Nathan’s rebuke of his king. David saw very few happy moments after that. The sword never departed from his house. The death of David’s infant son, the sins of his children, the rebellion of his son, Absalom, and Absalom’s ignoble death were tragic reminders of God’s retribution. There is no exception, even for a king, to God’s unerring law: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

II. BACKGROUND AND MESSAGES OF SECOND SAMUEL

The book – The author and date of writing are unknown. Tradition attributes it to Nathan and Gad (I Chron. 29:29). It bears the name of Samuel because of his place and influence during this period. It covers the time of David’s reign (1055-1015 B. C.). A parallel history is I Chronicles 11-29. The events recorded are “of profound and painful interest.” I and II Samuel are one book, and with I and II Kings, tell one story, the story of the monarchy from its rise to its fall. David’s history begins in I Samuel and ends in I Kings and has four parts – his testings, triumphs, troubles, and testimonies.

Principal events – One of the main events was David’s driving out the Jebusites and building a strong capital at Salem, thus ushering in the long and eventful history of Jerusalem, the center of the Hebrew nation, and the city around which most of the remainder of the Bible revolved. Other main points were his subduing of the Philistines, return of the ark of the covenant, David’s

kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son, David's great sin with Bathsheba, the brave prophet Nathan and the rebellion of Absalom.

Other notable points

(1) David was the first to describe a king as "the Lord's anointed" (I Sam. 24:6; II Sam. 1:14), the same term that designates the Messiah, or Christ.

(2) Here a ruler is first likened to a shepherd (5:2).

(3) In Uzzah's disobedience and instant death we see the necessity of obeying God's commands exactly (ch. 6).

(4) The book contains two parables – the selfish rich man and the little ewe lamb (12:1-7) and the banished son (14:1-20).

(5) David claimed that his words came from God (23:2), and his claim was verified by Christ (Matt. 22:43-44).

(6) David's godliness is seen in his enthusiasm for the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (ch. 6).

(7) He desired to build a temple for Jehovah and dedicated great treasures for its erection (ch. 7-8).

(8) God forbade him to build the temple because he was a man of war (I Chron. 28:3).

(9) David's sin with Bathsheba, his causing the death of her husband, Uriah, and Nathan's reproof of David (ch. 11-12).

(10) God's judgments upon David were quickly fulfilled in the denunciation of Nathan (12:1-14), in the death of the infant son born to Bathsheba and David (12:15-19).

(11) Later retribution came in the sin of David's son, Amnon, against his sister, Tamar, and Absalom's murder of Amnon for having defiled his sister (ch. 13); and further remorse to David in the rebellion and death of his son Absalom (ch. 15-18).

(12) David sinned, also, in numbering the people, which Satan "provoked David to do" (ch. 24; I Chron. 21:1).

David – "A man after God's own heart" (I Sam. 13:14). David was the greatest king of Israel, and one of the greatest

men who ever lived. We know more of the details of David's life than of any other Old Testament character – as Jesse's youngest son, shepherd boy, musician, soldier, king, poet, the writer of half of the psalms and the most famous ancestor of Jesus. He ranks with Abraham and Moses as one of the three “mountain peaks” of the Old Testament. He stands halfway between Abraham and Christ, about 1,000 years from each. Through his seed Christ came (Acts 13:32-33). In his reign God set in motion a kingdom that He promised would stand forever (II Sam. 7:16). This prophecy was fulfilled in regard to the Hebrew nation in that David's descendants in regular succession continued to reign until the captivity and then in the coming of Christ, when the eternal throne was established, and Christ now reigns over His everlasting kingdom, the church (Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:32-35).

David's two greatest accomplishments were the kingdom and the Psalms. Although he sinned, David served God “with all his heart” (I Kings 14:8). His attitude was one of reverence toward God and kindness toward men. This is seen in his consideration for his enemies, especially Saul, whose life David spared because he was God's anointed. Also for his love for Jonathan, whose love “was wonderful, passing the love of women” (II Sam. 1:26), and his kindness to Mephibosheth, for Jonathan's sake, reveal David's gentle nature.

Under David's rule the kingdom reached its highest development. He reigned for seven years over Judah alone and thirty-three years over all of Israel. “He executed justice and judgment unto all his people” (8:15) and conquered all of their enemies. “And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went” (8:6). Sad indeed is the story of his fall and its consequences, whereby he made “the enemies of the Lord blaspheme” (12:14). More far reaching is the influence of his repentance, as he expressed in Psalm 32 and 51, “The great shepherd became a great soldier, and

the great sinner became a great saint.” In David, as in the apostle Paul, we see that “the finest triumph of man is God’s triumph over him.”

God – no respecter of persons – (II Sam. 14:14; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11) – The Bible knows only one perfect man, Christ, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (I Peter 2:22). God’s word gives the weaknesses of Abraham, Jacob, David, Peter and all the other great men of faith. God could use them for His purposes and bless them because their heart was right before God and they genuinely repented when they sinned.

Other notable verses – David’s victories came from God (5:12, 20); his realization that death does not end our existence (12:23); his remorse and lament for Absalom (18:32-33).

Messages –

(1) “Be sure your sins will find you out,” or David’s “reaping the whirlwind.”

(2) David tempted in a time of ease and idleness (11:1-2).

(3) His penitence (Psalm 51).

(4) The remorse of sin – “My son, my son” (18:33).

(5) He followed God “with all his heart” (I Kings 14:8).

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile (Psalms 32:1-2).

Chapter 16

The First Book Of Kings

I. KEYS TO THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Key words – Glory and division.

Key verses – Chapter 2:2-3; 3:9; 9:4-5; 11:11 –

2:2-3 – David ‘charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.’

3:9 – Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

9:4-5 – God’s covenant with Solomon: ‘And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.’

11:11 – God’s reproof of Solomon’s apostasy: ‘Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.’

Key phrase – “As David his father.”

Key chapter – Chapter 12 – The critical turning point in Israel's history occurs in this chapter, when the united kingdom becomes the divided kingdom. Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king. He foolishly rejected the counsel of the older men and greatly increased the burdens upon the people. "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (v. 14). Ten tribes revolted and accepted Jeroboam, the son of Nebat as their king, who formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, with his capital at Shechem. The king made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 28). He set one in Bethel and the other in Dan. "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made" (v. 30-32).

Message – I Kings has two main divisions: (1) the reign of Solomon (ch. 1-11), and (2) the history of the divided kingdom (ch. 12-22). Probably written after the captivity, the purpose of the book was twofold: (1) to move the Jews to repentance by reminding them of God's promise to restore the nation if it repented, and (2) to trace God's providence in preserving David's seed, through whom God had promised Abraham that He would bless all nations in Christ (Gen. 22:18). God reaffirms His promise to Solomon. After warning him that He would rend his kingdom from him, God said, "Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and

for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen" (I Kings 11:13). "And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever" (v. 39). The spiritual significance of the promised seed is confirmed for all men in Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

Application – I Kings plays an important role in the development of the Bible's grand purpose: "the glorification of God and the salvation of man." Its appeal is to impress upon all men of every generation the importance of choosing God's word and wisdom (3:5-14). The book illustrates the necessity of faith in God and obedience of His word that He has always required for man's acceptance and salvation from God. Jehovah, the sovereign ruler of Israel and of all nations, blesses the obedient, punishes the disobedient, and forgives the penitent.

II. FACTS ABOUT THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Author and date of writing are unknown, probably written by Jeremiah or Ezra. Originally this and II Kings formed one book.

History covered – The reign of Solomon (ch. 1-11), and the history of the divided kingdom (ch. 12-22). After the death of Solomon, his son, Rehoboam, came to throne in 975 B. C. Because of his oppressive measures, the ten northern tribes formed the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. It is said of many kings later, "They walked in the way of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin." The book covers 119 years, from the death of David, 1015 B. C., to the death of Jehoshaphat, fourth king of Judah after the division, and the death of Ahab, the seventh king of Israel.

Continuous history – With I and II Samuel, the two books of Kings form a continuous history, which in old versions were called the four books of kings, from Saul to

the Babylonian captivity and the end of the kingdom. The parallel history of Solomon's reign is given in II Chronicles 1-9, and of the Divided Kingdom to the fall of Israel (I Kings 12 to II Kings 18:12), in II Chronicles 10-28. The Southern Kingdom, known as Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem consisted of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. They remained loyal to David's house in the succession of their rulers, fulfilling God's promise that the scepter would never depart from the house of David. Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 B. C. Judah continued alone for 135 years, until Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews captive in 586 B. C.

III. SOME OF THE MESSAGES OF THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

- (1) The important place of the prophets during the period of the Divided Kingdom.
- (2) The importance of choosing God's word and His wisdom, as did Solomon (3:5-14).
- (3) The importance of prayer in serving God (8:22-53).
- (4) The temple was built for "the name of the Lord" (5:5), but the Lord dwells not in houses made with hands (8:27; Acts 17:24).
- (5) God dwells even "in the thick darkness" (I Kings 8:12; Psm. 97:2; 139:11-12).
- (6) Elisha, when called, left everything to do God's will and follow Elijah (I Kings 19:19-21).
- (7) The frequently recurring phrase, "as did David his father," was the standard by which God judged subsequent rulers (3:3, 14; 9:4; 11:4, 33, 38; 14:8; 15:3, 11).
- (8) Power, wealth, and knowledge often corrupt and lead to destruction.

Solomon – Because of the great work of David in establishing the kingdom and subduing its enemies, Solomon came to the throne at the zenith of its power. The early

years of his reign were the Golden Age of Israel. The glory faded and the power declined with Solomon's apostasy and the division of the kingdom after his death. The first part of his reign was marked by his desire to please God and by his greatness. "Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly" (2:12). He prayed for God to give him an understanding heart. God's answer to his prayer is seen in his judgment concerning the two mother's dispute over who was the mother of the son of one of them. "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment" (3:28).

Solomon's sublime prayer at the dedication of the temple expresses his deep spirituality (8:22-53). He said, "LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart" (8:23). Solomon's wisdom, wealth, works and splendor elicited from the Queen of Sheba, when she came to see for herself, the appraisal, "the half was not told me" (10:7).

It is difficult to understand how a man so favored of God could have turned back from serving God in his later years. His decline is a sad story. His extravagant luxury and the bad influence of his foreign wives caused him to turn to idols, "and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God" (11:4). God in anger raised up adversaries against Solomon and Abijah prophesied the division of the kingdom (11:9-40).

Solomon's fame, wisdom, songs and proverbs are described in I Kings 4. Besides the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, he wrote Psalm 72 and perhaps Psalm 127.

Solomon's greatest work was the building of the temple. His greatest folly was his marriage to many foreign women, who "turned his heart away."

The temple – With the materials that David had collected and the cedars of Lebanon supplied by King Hiram, Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem that was one of the ancient wonders of the world. It required seven years, 185,000 workers, and millions of dollars worth of gold, ivory and other materials to complete it. But even Solomon realized that heaven is God's real dwelling place, as he said in his prayer of dedication: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (8:27). It is clear from I Corinthians 3 and 6 that faithful congregations and individual Christians make up God's temple in this New Testament age. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48; 17:24).

Other kings – All the kings of Judah were descendents of David, of whom the history of four is given in I Kings – Rehoboam, Abijam, Asa and Jehoshaphat. Two of them, Asa and Jehoshaphat, were good kings. Two of their successors, Hezekiah and Josiah, also were good rulers. The worst kings of Judah were Ahaz and Manasseh. All of the kings of Israel were bad. The history of eight such kings is recorded in this book, of whom Jeroboam and Ahab were the worst.

The prophets – The years of the divided kingdoms was a period of the prophets, messengers whom God sent to reprove the sins of the kings and the people to call them to repent. Elijah, the first of the great oral prophets and a fearless reformer, is the real hero of the book, whose deeds are given mainly in I Kings 17 to II Kings 2. Especially notable are his rebuke of Ahab and Jezebel and his contest with the prophets of Baal (18:17-40). God confirmed Elijah as His prophet by the miracles that he did, such as he drought and the rain that came after the space of three and a half years (17:1; James 5:17; I Kings 18:41); meal and oil multiplied (17:14); child restored to life (17:22); sacrifice consumed by fire from heaven (18:38); captains and men

slain by fire (II Kings 1:10), and waters of Jordan divided (II Kings 2:8).

Messages – (1) The importance of choosing God's word and wisdom (3:5-14); (2) the importance of prayer in serving God (8:22-53); (3) God dwells even in "the thick darkness" (8:12; Psm. 97:2; 139:11-12); (4) power, wealth, and knowledge often corrupt and lead to destruction; (5) we cannot serve two masters (18:21; Matt. 6:24); (6) God's covenant with Solomon (9:3-9); (7) the "still small voice" (19:11-12); (8) "I have found thee..." (21:20); (9) "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne" (22:19).

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psalms 139:1-6).

Chapter 17

The Second Book Of Kings

I. KEYS TO THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

Key words – Downfall and captivity.

Key verses – Chapter 12:2-3; 17:22-23; 21:13-15; 23:25-27; 24:1-3 –

12:2-3 – And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

17:22-23 – For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

21:13-15 – And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

23:25-27 – Praise of Josiah and peril of Judah: ‘And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the LORD

turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.'

24:1-3 – In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did.

Key phrases – “According to the word of the Lord” (1:17; 24:2). This expression and its equivalent are found 24 times. “Because they have done that which is evil in my sight” (21:15), occurs 21 times. Other key phrases are “The man of God,” 36 times, more than in any other book of the Bible; “right in the sight of God,” eight times; the Lord’s anger (13:3; 17:18; 23:26; 24:20), and the Lord’s wrath (22:13, 17; 23:26).

Key chapter – The last chapter of II Kings records the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken Jehoiachin to Babylon in the eighth year of his reign. In his stead, Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah. He carried away “...all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold...And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of

valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (24:13-14).

The king of Babylon besieged the city of Jerusalem "unto the eleventh year of Zedekiah" (25:2), and "the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land" (v. 3). All the men of war and the king fled. The Chaldean army pursued the king and took him and brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, who "gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon" (25:6-7). Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, came to Jerusalem, "and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away. But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen" (25:9-12). He took the priests to the king of Babylon, who slew them.

The remnant of the people who remained in Jerusalem fled to Egypt. However, hope was still alive in those who were carried to Babylon. God's messengers prophesied the return of a remnant of Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity. Their plight was improved in their thirty-seventh year in Babylon, when Evil-merodach, then king of Babylon, released Jehoiachin from prison, treated him kindly, and honored him by setting his throne above the other kings in Babylon, and gave him an allowance "for every day, all the days of his life" (v. 27-30).

Theme – Without interruption II Kings continues the history of the Jews begun in I Kings. The tragic story of the

continued decline and destruction of both of the divided kingdoms – the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This period may be described by the sad words corruption, disruption, decline, destruction, and desolation.

Appeal – The appeal of both I and II Kings is for faithful obedience to God. The chief aim of both books is to teach great moral lessons exemplified by events in the history of the Jewish nation and in the lives of its leaders and the people. Every king is judged by his obedience or disobedience of God's law. His success was measured by his adherence to the law and by his God-honoring testimony before the heathen. The good of the nation depended upon its faithfulness to God. Idolatry and compromise caused the decline and fall both of Israel and Judah. Idolatry and all sin inevitably bring defeat and punishment. Faith and righteousness bring victory and joy. Events in the Jewish history are lessons in the righteousness, justice and loving kindness of God. They serve as a warning of the consequences of disobedience (I Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4).

II. HISTORICAL SCOPE OF SECOND KINGS

Main divisions – (1) **Chapters 1-17** – In Israel, from Ahaziah to Hoshea, a period of 176 years (897-721 B. C.), largely the record of Elijah's last days and ascension (1:1-2:12), and the ministry of Elisha (ch. 2-13). (2) **Chapters 18-25** – In Judah, from Hezekiah to Zedekiah, a period of 155 years.

Historical events – II Kings gives the history of Israel from the death of the wicked King Ahab to the destruction of Israel in 721 B. C., and the history of Judah from the good king, Hezekiah, to the fall of Judah to Babylon in 586 B. C.

Relation to other books of history – It is a sequel to I Kings. It takes up where the former leaves off, in the

middle of the brief reign of Ahaziah, son of Ahab, continuing through the fall of Israel to the Assyrians and of Judah to the Babylonians. A parallel passage is II Chronicles 21-36. I and II Kings were originally one book, first divided in the Septuagint.

Period covered by both books – Altogether, about 430 years, from the death of David to the fall of Judah. After the division in 975 B. C., Judah had 19 kings, Rehoboam to Zedekiah, all descendants of David. Israel also had 19 kings, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, of seven dynasties or families. Judah had four good kings, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Judah's worst kings were Ahaz and Manasseh. All of Israel's kings were bad – with Ahab being the worst of all. The leading prophets were Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Historical scope of the period

(1) II Kings gives the history of Israel and Judah from the death of Ahab to the captivity in Babylon. A parallel passage is II Chronicles 21-36.

(2) The period covered by the two books of Kings begins “with King David, and ends with the king of Babylon; opens with the temple built and closes with the temple burnt; begins with David's successor on the throne of his kingdom, and ends with David's last successor, Jehoiachin, released from the house of captivity.”

(3) The first half of II Kings (ch. 1-13) is largely a record of Elisha's ministry of 66 years, following Elijah's last days and ascension (1:1-2:12).

(4) The second half of the book is an account of events leading up to the fall of Samaria and captivity of Israel (ch. 14-17), and Judah alone for 135 years, the decline of the nation, fall of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon (ch. 18-25).

Principal events –

(1) Elijah taken up into heaven, and Elisha receives a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2:9-12).

(2) Elisha rewards the hospitality of the Shunammite woman and her husband (4:8-37).

(3) Naaman's leprosy healed (ch. 5). Note Naaman's expression, "Behold I thought" (v. 11) and the simplicity in Christ (II Cor. 11:3).

(4) Jezebel's gruesome death, according to the word of God (9:30-37; Rev. 2:20).

(5) Jehu's execution of divine justice upon Joram, Ahaziah, 70 sons of Abab, and the worshippers of Baal (ch. 9-10).

(6) The evil reign and idolatry of Ahaz, king of Judah, who "walked in the way of the kings of Israel" (ch. 16).

(7) The fall of Israel, conquered by Assyria (ch. 17). Note that God used both the king of Assyria and king of Babylon as His "rod" to punish the divided nations.

(8) Hezekiah's good reign in Judah (ch. 18-20). He received higher praise than any of the kings of the Southern Kingdom. Great events of his reign were the deliverance of Judah from Assyria, when God slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night; his sickness and recovery, and the religious reformation that he led. Note that he destroyed the brazen serpent to which the Israelites had continued to offer incense since the time of Moses (18:4). This good king came between a wicked father, Ahaz, and a wicked son, Manasseh.

(9) Manasseh's wickedness and the evil ways of his son, Amon (ch. 21). Manasseh was the worst of Judah's kings. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen" (21:2). He built altars and erected images of pagan gods, caused the people to practice the vilest forms of idolatry, practiced wizardry, caused his son to pass through fire, and shed much innocent blood. Because Manasseh so sinned and caused Judah to sin, God declared that He would bring "such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle" (v. 12-15).

(10) Josiah's reforms following the discovery of the law

in the temple (ch. 22-23) – “And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him” (23:25).

(11) Judah begins its servitude to Babylon during the reign of Jehoiakim (24:1).

(12) Jehoiachin taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, who makes Zedekiah king (24:10-17).

(13) Nebuchadnezzar again enters Jerusalem, kills the sons of Zedekiah, puts out Zedekiah’s eyes, binds him in fetters, and carries him to Babylon (25:1-7).

(14) Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard of Babylon, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burnt the temple, the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem, despoiled the temple, and made Gedaliah governor. He took all but the poorest of the Jews captive, and this remnant murdered Gedaliah and fled to Egypt (25:8-26).

(15) After 37 years of captivity, Jehoiachin was released from prison and treated kindly by the king of Babylon (25:27-30).

Some spiritual lessons – The powerful influence of rulers upon a nation; God’s anger kindled against His unfaithful people; their punishment was according to the word of God (17:23; 24:2). (See also Num. 14:18). God is pleased with giving from the heart (II Kings 12:4; II Cor. 8:5; 9:6-7). God’s people should “take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (II Kings 19:30).

Elisha’s miracles – This book records 16 miracles by Elisha, whereas Elijah performed only eight. Note especially 4:1-7; 4:18-37; 5:5-15; 6:1-7; 13:20-21.

Chapter 18

The First Book Of Chronicles

I. KEYS TO THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

Key words – Worship, praise, prayer, and glory.

Key verses – Chapter 16:29; 17:11-14; 29:10-13; 29:18-

19.

16:29 – Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

17:11-14 – And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

29:10-13 – Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

29:18-19 – O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

Key phrase – “Thou reignest over all.”

Key chapter – Chapter 17 – God’s covenant with David is pivotal to Chronicles and to all the scriptures, as recorded in II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 17. Through his prophet, Nathan, God promised David that He would establish His throne forever. This was ultimately fulfilled in the reign of Christ over His spiritual kingdom, the church of the Lord. “I will be his father, and he shall be my son...I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore” (v. 13-14). David prophesied further of the reign of Christ in Psalm 110:1 – “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” On Pentecost, the inspired apostle Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of these prophecies in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ at God’s right hand (Acts 2:29-36). This marked the beginning of Christ’s reign upon His everlasting throne, in heaven and in earth.

Topic – I Chronicles is a condensed Hebrew history from Adam to Solomon. It is primarily a supplement to II Samuel. Its chief topic is the reign of David. The book of I Chronicles begins with the royal line of David and then traces the spiritual significance of David’s righteous reign. The central thought of this book is twofold: (1) the sovereignty of God, and (2) the importance of worshipping and serving Him according to His word. The book relates many answers to prayer, divine help in giving victory to David and his mighty men, and God’s establishing David’s throne forever.

Message – The permanent message of I Chronicles is for all men to learn from the history and examples recorded there the blessings and necessity of giving unto the Lord the glory due His name and of worshipping Him “in the beauty of holiness.” “God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

II. THE PURPOSE OF FIRST CHRONICLES

The scope of I and II Chronicles – Like the books of Samuel and Kings, to which they form a supplement, I and II Chronicles were originally one book. They are not a mere repetition of the same material. They “rather form a divine editorial on the history of God’s people. While II Samuel and I and II Kings give a political history of Israel and Judah, I and II Chronicles present a religious history of the Davidic dynasty of Judah. The former were written from a prophetic and moral viewpoint, and the latter from a priestly and spiritual perspective” (**The Open Bible, The New King James Version**, Nelson, 1983, p. 393). The books of Chronicles cover more than 3,500 years, from Adam to the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, the whole sweep of Old Testament history in epitomized form.

Name, author, and date of writing – The name, “Chronicles,” given by Jerome in the 4th century A. D., means diaries or annals. The Hebrew title is “Words of the Days,” or “Journals,” or today one might say, “The events of the Times.” They were first divided in the Septuagint, Greek translation, in the third century B. C., and given the name, “Omissions,” or, “The Things Omitted.” Jerome meant the title, “Chronicles,” in the sense of “The Chronicles of the Whole of Sacred History.”

Author – The text does not identify the author. According to the Jewish Talmud, Ezra the priest was the author. Chronicles is similar to Ezra. They are written from

a priestly viewpoint: genealogies, temple worship, ministry of the priesthood, and obedience to the law of God. Also, the closing verses of II Chronicles (36:22-23) are repeated with minor changes as the opening verses of Ezra (1:1-3). Chronicles and Ezra may have been one continuous history as were Luke and Acts.

Time of writing – This, too, is uncertain. The genealogies (ch. 1-9) cover the time from Adam to David, and chapters 10-29 related the thirty-three years of David's rule over the united kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The genealogies extend to about 500 B. C., with the mention of Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jeconiah, who led the first return of Jews from Babylonian captivity in 436 B. C. Ezra probably wrote or compiled Chronicles soon after this, from several sources – the books of the kings and the writings of Samuel, Gad, Isaiah, and other prophets (9:1; 29:29; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 32:32; 33:19).

Twofold purpose of I Chronicles – The book is divided into two main parts: Part I – The genealogies (1:1-9:44), and Part II – The death of Saul and the reign of David (10:1-29:30). The lists of genealogies begin with Adam and trace the royal line of David. They continue with the family line of the remnant who returned from exile. These genealogies assisted the returning Jews in claiming and settling upon their family lands (9:1). A greater purpose was to confirm God's covenant with David that his reign and that of his descendants would be everlasting. For this reason there is little mention of the northern kingdom. The permanent message is to show that God reigns, and only as the people obeyed Him could the nation prosper and fulfill its destiny as the kingdom through whom the Messiah would come. Therefore, the annals of Judah only are given from the time of the division, because Judah was the royal tribe, of which Christ was to come. The history of the northern kingdom is omitted by the chronicler.

THE BOOK OF FIRST CHRONICLES

Main divisions of I Chronicles –

Part I – Chapter 1-9 – Genealogies – lists of landowners that were useful after Babylonian captivity in restoring tribal territories (ch. 1-9).

Part II – Chapters 10-29 –

- (1) Overthrow and death of Saul (ch. 10).
- (2) The reign of David. More is said about the temple than his wars (11-29).

Distinctive features – As a supplement to the four former books, the Chronicles give much additional information, especially that concerning the royal tribe of Judah. Many of the same events are recorded, but they are presented from a different viewpoint. Samuel and Kings present the facts of history; Chronicles, the divine thoughts about the facts. In the former books, the events are seen from man's standpoint; here they are viewed from the divine standpoint. The four are political; Chronicles are religious. Throughout Chronicles, Jacob is called Israel, the name given him by the Lord (1:34; 2:1, etc.).

Points emphasized in I Chronicles –

(1) ***The things pertaining to worship*** – David's zeal for the house of God and for the ark of the covenant, his psalm of thanksgiving upon the return of the ark, his preparation for the temple, call for the people to praise God, his singers, and his assignment of duties to the priests and Levites.

(2) ***God is glorified in all His ways and works***, as seen in His activities on behalf of His people: In answering the prayer of Jabez and honoring him (4:9-10), in giving victory to valiant men who put their trust in God (5:20), saving David from the Philistines (11:14), David's captains acknowledging, "thy God helpeth thee" (12:18), the Lord confirming David as king (14:2), delivering the Philistines into his hand and causing all the nations to fear him (14:10, 14-17), and preserving David "whithersoever he went" (18:13).

(3) ***Who slew Saul and why*** (I Sam. 31; I Chron. 10:1-14) – Samuel says that the Philistines slew Saul. Here we read that the Lord slew him. “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not... (v. 13-14).

(4) ***Removal of the ark and why God slew Uzzah*** (II Sam. 6; I Chron., ch. 13, 15, 16) – Here David confessed that they were wrong in transporting the ark as they did. “Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites...the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order” (15:2, 13).

(5) ***David’s desire to build the temple*** – God denied him this wish because David was a man of war, who had shed much blood (22:8; 28:3). His son, Solomon, was to have the honor of building the temple. David wanted to build a house for the Lord, but instead, God said to him, “The Lord will build thee a house” that would last forever (17:10), a prophecy that was fulfilled when Christ, the seed of David, established His everlasting kingdom, the church (Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30-33, 47; I Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 5:10-13).

(6) ***God’s throne, David’s throne, Solomon’s throne, and Christ’s throne*** – all are the same. The prophecies of the everlasting throne of David were fulfilled in Christ’s reign over His spiritual kingdom (I Chron. 29:23; I Kings 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 22:1; John 18:36; Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13).

New Testament references to I Chronicles:

(1) God’s promise to David to establish his throne forever (17:13; Luke 1:33).

(2) God’s promise to Solomon of an everlasting kingdom (22:10; Heb. 1:8).

(3) God’s promise to the faithful never to forsake them (28:20; Heb. 13:5).

(4) We are pilgrims and sojourners (29:15; Heb. 11:13; I Peter 1:17; 2:11-12).

(5) David’s death (29:28; Acts 2:29; 13:36).

Other notable points from I Chronicles:

(1) The justice of the Lord's judgments (5:25-26; 6:15; 9:1; 10:13-14; 15:2, 13; 21:14-30).

(2) David pours out unto God water from the well of Bethlehem, for which his brave men had risked their lives (11:17-19).

(3) David erects a temporary house for the ark (15:1; 16:1).

(4) David's psalm of thanksgiving for the return of the ark (16:7-36; v. 29).

(5) This book makes no mention of David's first great sin, but gives his sin of numbering the people in showing how it led up to the purchase of the temple site (21:1-22:1).

(6) David's charge to Solomon to build God's house (22:11-16).

(7) His charge to Solomon to love and serve the Lord even as David did (28:9-10, 20; I Kings 14:8; 15:5).

(8) Both David and the people rejoiced in bringing gifts for the temple, "because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord" (29:9).

(9) David's great prayer (17:16-27). Note David's humility, God's greatness and fairness, what an honor to be God's servant, "there is none like thee," God's protection of His children, magnify the name of the Lord forever, God is the source of all blessings.

(10) David's last blessing and prayer (29:10-19). Note especially verses 11, 16-17.

(11) The great question (29:5) – "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

Chapter 19

The Second Book Of Chronicles

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF SECOND CHRONICLES

Key words – Restoration and worship.

Key verses – Chapter 1:10-13; 7:14; 16:9 –

1:10-13 – Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like. Then Solomon came from his journey to the high place that was at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel.

7:14 – If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

16:9 – For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Key phrase – “Prepareth his heart.”

Key chapter – Chapter 34 – II Chronicles records the reforms under the good kings, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Chapter 34 relates the dramatic revival that took place under Josiah when, during the repairs to the temple, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. Shaphan the scribe read the book to the king, “And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes,” and commanded the priests to inquire of the Lord concerning the words of the book. He then gathered all the priests and the people together and read the book to them and made a covenant before the Lord “to walk after the Lord, and so keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in the book...And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.”

Subject – I Chronicles is a supplement to II Samuel, and is largely a record of the reign of David. II Chronicles parallels I and II Kings. The first nine chapters trace the reign of Solomon. The remainder is devoted to the kings of Judah, following the division of the kingdom. It deals mainly with the events during the reigns of the zealous reformers mentioned above. The northern kingdom of Israel is virtually ignored.

Message – The story of II Chronicles may be called “The road to captivity.” The central message is the tragic consequences of spiritual decline and departure from God. The experience of the Israelites is a warning to Christians of the danger and terrible results of falling away from the way of righteousness. Its appeal is for all people to “Seek

ye the Lord" (7:14; 15:2, 4, 12-13, 15, etc.). "Seeking, believing, obeying, serving, and loving the Lord are absolutely requisite to the possession of vital religion and a spiritual and victorious life."

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

Main theme – When the Israelites lost their sense of the Lord, the result was devotion to idols, degraded ideals, deadened consciences, and defeated purposes. They were conquered, captured, and cast away. Here we see that "the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15). Their experience is a warning to Christians of the danger and terrible results of falling away from the way of righteousness (I Tim. 4:1-2; II Peter 2:20-22; Rev. 2:4-5).

Reformation and restoration – In Babylonian captivity, the Israelites remembered the Lord, repented, and returned to God. He kept His promise and after the 70 years of captivity, as foretold by the prophets, God restored the remnant to their homeland, where they rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem and were forever purged of idolatry. The chastening of the Lord, though grievous, "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

The book of II Chronicles – A sequel to I Chronicles and a supplement to I and II Kings, this book is largely an account of the instability and unfaithfulness of Judah, interspersed with periods of religious reformation. It follows the road to captivity, from the accession of Solomon to Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, taking of the Jews to Babylon (36:14-21), and the later granting of their freedom by Cyrus. History of the Northern Kingdom is omitted. It covers about 430 years, relating to the reign of Solomon, building of the temple, the history of Judah after the kingdom was divided, finding the book of law during the reign of Josiah, religious reforms, destruction of Jerusalem, and Babylonian captivity. Spiritual conditions

are emphasized rather than political and military history.

Main divisions of the book

I. ***The reign of Solomon*** (ch. 1-9) – his good beginning, choice of wisdom, his riches, great works, building and dedication of the temple, prayer, divine promises and warnings, and visit of the Queen of Sheba.

II. ***The folly of Rehoboam***, leading to the division of the kingdom (ch. 10).

III. ***The reigns of the kings of Judah*** (ch. 11-36) – 19 kings, all descendants of David, and one queen, the usurper Athaliah, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah.

Solomon's prophetic prayer (6:14-42) – Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple epitomized the decline, fall, and restoration of Judah. He prayed for God to remember his people if they sinned against God, and He was angry with them and delivered them over to their enemies, and they carried "them away captives unto a land far off or near." If the people then should repent, confess their sins, and return to the Lord "with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity," and pray to God for forgiveness, Solomon prayed that God would hear them, "and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" (v. 38-39).

Some differences between Kings and II Chronicles

(1) Solomon built a house for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, but not in Jerusalem because she was an idolatress (I Kings 7:8; II Chron. 8:11).

(2) Jeroboam worshipped not only golden calves, but also devils (ch. 11:15).

(3) Kings records no redeeming act in Abijah's reign, but his devout address and cry to God are given in II Chronicles 13:5-18.

(4) In his last illness, good king Asa neglected the Lord (II Chron. 16:12).

(5) Good king Jehoshaphat entered into a threefold sinful alliance with the house of Ahab: (a) military (18:3),

(b) matrimonial, marriage of his son, Jehoram to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (21:6), and (c) commercial (20:35-37).

(6) The wickedness and sacrilege of Athaliah, wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who slew all of the royal seed, with the exception of Josiah, and usurped the throne of Judah (22:10-12; 24:7).

(7) Why God smote Uzziah with leprosy (26:16-21).

(8) II Kings takes only three verses to tell of Hezekiah's reformation (18:4-6), whereas II Chronicles devotes three chapters to it (ch. 29-31). With regard to Hezekiah's military affairs, it is just the reverse. Three chapters of II Kings are taken up with the secular history and only three verses with the religious reformation.

(9) King Manasseh's wickedness is related in II Kings 21, but only II Chronicles (33:11-13) tells of his captivity in Babylon and his restoration. For this reason, he is called "the prodigal of the Old Testament."

The kings – The best kings of Judah were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, all of whom initiated great reforms, yet all made serious mistakes. The worst kings were Ahaz and Manasseh. The latter repented, but too late to undo his evil influence, especially in regard to causing people to practice idolatry. During the reign of Asa (ch. 14), altars to strange gods were removed and Judah trusted to God and prospered. Asa erred in forming an alliance with Syria against Israel and in his last illness, he neglected the Lord (16:7, 12). During the reign of Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, men of good conduct went out to all the cities "teaching the people the book of the law of God" (17:9), as Ezra did following the return from captivity (Neh. 8:8; Ezra 7:10). The blemish against Jehoshaphat was his sinful alliance with the house of Ahab, as given above. Otherwise Jehoshaphat did "right in the sight of the Lord" (20:32; 22:9). Hezekiah sought the Lord with all his heart (31:21) and charged the people to yield themselves to God and worship Him sincerely, and then His blessings would

follow. Hezekiah acted foolishly in showing his treasures to the messengers from Babylon (II Kings 20:16-17). Josiah was probably the best of the kings, but his son, Jehoahaz, who succeeded him, was evil. Josiah's reforms were not permanent enough to save Judah. He disobeyed God in fighting against the king of Egypt and was slain in the ensuing battle (II Chron. 35:20-27).

Prophets and chief priests – The Divided Kingdom period was the time of prophetic ministry, by oral prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, and the written prophets such as Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah. Prophets in captivity were Daniel and Ezekiel, and after the captivity, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. God provided the prophets to instruct the kings as well as the people in the paths of righteousness, such as Nathan, advisor to both David and Solomon, Azariah to Asa, Micaiah to Jehu and Jehoshaphat, Isaiah to Hezekiah and Uzziah, and Jeremiah to Josiah. Chief priests also had a prominent role in influencing the rulers, as in the case of Hilkiah and Josiah (ch. 34).

The power of prayer – The place of prayer and reliance upon God in giving success and victory is one of the central messages of Chronicles. For the first three years after the division, Judah prospered because the priests and Levites “such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon” (11:16-17). When the men of Judah “cried unto the Lord” in the midst of the battle with Jeroboam, God gave them victory (13:13-18). God smote the Ethiopians, who came against Asa with “a host of a thousand thousand,” when Asa cried unto the Lord, “Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee” (14:11). God answered Hezekiah's prayer and cleansed the people for the passover, when they abolished their

idolatry and Hezekiah prayed, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God" (30:18-19). "And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (31:20-21).

Archeological testimony – The great rulers of the heathen nations were Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Pharaoh-Necho, and Nebuchadnezzar, records of whom were preserved on stone tablets and other annals that have been discovered by archeologists. These historical records, many of which are in the British Museum, confirm the authenticity of many of the rulers and events mentioned in Kings and Chronicles.

Five periods of reformation in II Chronicles:

- (1) Under King Asa (ch. 15).
- (2) Under King Jehoshaphat (17:6-10).
- (3) Under the priest, Jehoida, and King Joash (23:16-24:14).
- (4) Under King Hezekiah (ch. 29-31).
- (5) Under King Josiah (ch. 34-35).

Some other spiritual lessons from the book –

(1) ***The temple.*** Although built at tremendous cost and labor and elaborate beyond description, even then Solomon realized that God cannot be contained in a material building. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" (6:18). "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48).

(2) ***God's use of nations.*** God used even the wicked nations to accomplish His purposes, especially in punishing His people and bringing them to repentance, although He later destroyed the nations because of their cruelty and

wickedness. Thus He used Assyria to destroy the Northern Kingdom and to fight against both Ahaz and Manasseh. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, fought against three kings of Judah, and finally took Judah away into Babylonian captivity. The Lord brought the Chaldeans against Judah, and “he gave them all into his hand” (36:17).

(3) The preeminence of wisdom (1:7-12).

(4) The glory of the Lord fills the temple (5:13-14).

(5) The power of genuine faith, Jehoshaphat’s victory over Moab and Ammon (ch. 20).

(6) Seeking other gods v. seeking the Lord (25:15; 26:5; 26:16-21).

(7) Visit of the Queen of Sheba – “the half...was not told” (9:6).

(8) “For thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men” (6:30).

(9) “The battle is not yours, but God’s” (20:15).

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (I Corinthians 1:21).

Chapter 20

The Book Of Ezra

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF EZRA

Key words – Restoration and “the house of the Lord” (restoration of the temple).

Key verses – Chapter 1:1-3; 7:9-10 –

1:1-3 – Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

7:9-10 – For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Key phrase – “The word of the Lord” (1:1; 9:4).

Key chapter – Chapter 6 – This chapter records the completion and dedication of the temple, under the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, “...according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and...of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia” (v. 14). Darius ordered Tatnai, the governor to cease his

opposition and to assist the Jews in every way in the work of rebuilding the house of God, whom Darius recognized as “the God of heaven” (v. 9-10). Darius commanded Tatnai that the work not be hindered, but that the builders be supplied with whatever materials and expenses they needed for the work and for offering sacrifices “unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.” The priests and the children of Israel “kept the dedication of the house of God with joy” (v. 16). “And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month” (v. 19). “For the priests and Levites were purified together, all of them were pure” (v. 20). “And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat, And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (v. 21-22).

Message – Ezra continues the story of the Jews where II Chronicles ends. The message is to show how God fulfilled His promise in the return of His people to Jerusalem after the seventy years of captivity in Babylon. The basic theme of Ezra is the restoration of the temple and the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the remnant that returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. God always keeps His promises, as He did in this case (Jer. 29:14). The everlasting message and timeless appeal of Ezra is for all men always to recognize the power of the word of God in the lives of men and of nations, as seen in the place of God’s word in the religious, social, and civil life of His people who returned from exile. The story of the captivity and restoration may be written in ten words, all beginning with the letter “R” –retribution, remembrance, repentance, return,

resettlement, rebuilding, regression, revival, reformation, and relief.

II. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF EZRA

Purpose – The purpose of this book is to show that God fulfilled His promise to restore His exiled people to their land, and to show how He did it. He did so through three great heathen monarchs – King Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes – and through chosen men from among the Israelites – Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra and others. The remnant was restored so that through them God might bring forth the Christ “in due time” (Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4).

The book – Originally Ezra and Nehemiah were one book, soon called I and II Ezra, and first given their present names in the Geneva Bible (1560). Ezra is so called from the principal character, whose name means “help.” Nehemiah is called for its principal character whose name means “Jehovah comforts.” Ezra tells of the return of two groups of Israelites from Babylonian captivity, and Nehemiah tells of his return later with an army escort. The first group of nearly 50,000 (Ezra 2:64-65) was led by Zerubbabel, the governor, and Jeshua, the priest, in 536 B. C. In the second group, men only are mentioned (ch. 8). There were 1,754 males who returned with Ezra in 458 B. C. The book tells of the rebuilding of the temple, reestablishment of observance of the law, and Ezra’s reforms. It covers 78 years, from the first year of Cyrus’ reign over Persia to the eighth year of Artaxerxes (536-458 B. C.). Two sections of the book were written in Aramaic (ch. 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26).

Two main divisions of the book

Part I – ***Zerubbabel’s work*** (Ch. 1-6) – The return of the first group with Zerubbabel, authorized by King Cyrus; altar rebuilt and worship established; the foundation of the temple laid; the work suspended because of their enemies,

resumed by edict of King Darius and ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, and the temple completed and dedicated 20 years after it was begun.

Part II – **Ezra's work** (Ch. 7-10) – Return of the second group with Ezra, authorized by Artaxerxes, 58 years after the completion of the temple; Ezra's prayer and confession for the people, and his reforms, including his separating of the Jews from foreign wives.

Ezra's work and character – Ezra is one of the great unsung heroes of the Bible. He was both scribe and priest (Neh. 12:26, 36), a descendant of Hilkiah, high priest in the reign of Josiah, who found a copy of the law and assisted Josiah with his reforms (Ezra 7:1; II Chron. 34:14). Ezra wrote the book that bears his name and may have written Nehemiah and Psalm 119, the great tribute to the word of God. He probably compiled the Chronicles. Tradition says that he was the organizer of the synagogue and president of the Great Synagogue, which compiled the Old Testament canon. While still in Babylon Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it," and to teach it (7:10).

Ezra was a man of faith, who did not ask the king for soldiers, but trusted wholly in the power of God to protect him and his band on the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (8:21-23). He was a prayerful man, who confessed the sin of the people and sought God's help and forgiveness (9:5; 10:1). His trustworthiness is shown by the confidence, favors, and great treasure that Artaxerxes granted to him (7:13-26). He demonstrated his moral courage in counselling with the priests, Levites and heads of families to make an end of the marriages of men with foreign wives (10:5, 16). We see Ezra's zeal for God's law in his grief over the trespasses of the people (10:1), his self-denial (10:6), and his reforms that all might "be done according to the law" (10:3-4, 17).

Ezra and God's word – Ezra honored God's word by study and obedience (7:10), by public reading and teaching

(7:10; Neh. 8:2-8), and by transcribing it (Ezra 7:11). His greatest work was to restore the word of God to the hearts and lives of the people. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls with perishable materials to protect the people from the heathen. Ezra built them up spiritually from within, with the eternal word of God, to protect them from sin (Psm. 119:11). Because the people had neglected God's word for such a long time, Ezra's teaching came with the force of a new revelation and wrought wonders in Israel. Mainly through his ministry, the word of God gained for the first time in the nation's history its rightful place. The people genuinely were committed to observance of the law, and never again were guilty of idolatry. Captivity purged them of worshipping other gods.

Five great lessons from Ezra:

(1) ***Results of neglecting to study and obey God's word.*** The failure of the Jews to heed God's word caused their captivity (Isa. 5:13). God's people are still being destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6; Heb. 5:12). Bondage to sin results from neglect of the truth that makes men free (John 8:32, 34). Because the Israelites forgot the law, they drifted into apostasy. We too may fall away because of our unbelief and neglect of the great salvation (Heb. 2:3; 3:12). Diligent study is essential to our spiritual growth and gaining the approval of God (II Tim. 2:15; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18).

(2) ***The sin of marrying outside of God's family*** (Ezra 10). Their disobedience brought much grief and took much deliberation and discipline to correct (10:16-17). Writing in this same period, Malachi also condemned marriages with foreigners (Mal. 2:10-16). Solomon's strange wives turned him away from God (I Kings 11:1, 4). We must walk in the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19). One should realize that "evil companionships corrupt good morals (I Cor. 15:33), and marry only in the Lord (I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14).

(3) ***The power of preaching and penitence.*** Three

great preachers that helped to preserve a faithful remnant among God's people through whom Christ was born were Jeremiah before the captivity, Ezekiel during the bondage in Babylon, and Ezra after the return. Their restoration was the result of getting the law back into the hearts and lives of the people (Neh. 8:8-10). All of those who returned did so of their own freewill (Ezra 7:13). Ezra knew that the Lord strengthened him and the people because the hand of the Lord was upon him (7:6, 28; 8:31). Only by preaching and heeding God's word can preachers fulfill their ministry and save both themselves and them that hear them (I Tim. 4:16; II Tim. 4:1-5).

(4) *The sorrow that sin always brings* (Ezra 9:13-14). Ezra confessed, "and after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this" (v. 13). Ezra wept and rent his garments and said, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (9:6). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10). Ezra encouraged them to obey God although it meant sorrow and the separation of families. He said, "yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing...and let it be done according to the law...be of good courage, and do it" (10:2-4). God will always be with those who seek to do His will and He will enable us to do it (Rom. 8:31; Phil. 4:13; I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 13:5-6).

(5) *Divine providence in the book of Ezra*. Jeremiah had foretold the return of a remnant after 70 years of captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:12; 29:10). Isaiah named Cyrus nearly 200 years before the ruler was born as the king whom God would use to bring about the return (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Ezra begins with the fulfillment of these prophecies (1:1).

The rulers of Persia were more humane than those of Assyria and Babylon. God put it in their hearts to extend kindness to the Jews (7:27; 9:8-9). He used the testimony of His prophets and the loyal service of such men as Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and of Esther to incline the hearts of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes to favor and protect His people and to aid them in the work of rebuilding their city and the temple (Ezra 1, 4, 6, 7).

Other notable passages in Ezra

(1) The people returned to Jerusalem with mixed emotions, some with joy and some with weeping (3:11-13). The “ancient men” among them wept when they remembered the splendor of Solomon’s temple.

(2) Cyrus’ faith in “the Lord God of heaven” (1:2).

(3) Darius called the temple “the house of God” (6:5, 7) and acknowledged the God of Israel as the God of heaven (6:9, 12).

(4) Darius requested that the elders of the Jews “pray for the life of the king, and of his sons” (6:10).

(5) The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra (7:6, 9, 28; 8:31).

(6) Artaxerxes’ faith in “the God of heaven” (7:23, 25).

(7) Ezra’s faith that “the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him” (8:22).

(8) God showed His grace by giving His people “a little reviving in our bondage,” a reference to the relief or new life that God had granted to the returning remnant (9:8-9).

Chapter 21

The Book Of Nehemiah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Key words – Rebuilding, prayer, and work, in regard to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Key verses – Chapter 4:6, 9, 17, 20; 6:15-16; 8:8 –

4:6 – So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

4:9 – Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

4:17 – They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

4:20 – In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

6:15-16 – So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

8:8 – So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

Key phrase – “For the people had a mind to work.”

Key chapter – Chapter 9 – Here Ezra confesses Israel’s sins and the people covenant to keep the law.

Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God (1-3).

The author reviews the history of Israel: the deliverance from Egypt, giving of the law at Sinai, provision for them in the wilderness.

But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not (16-17).

God's mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. He continued to lead them with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them" (v. 20). God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by driving out their enemies and giving them the land of Canaan, by multiplying their children as the stars of heaven, and making of them a great nation. They continued to sin and hearken not to the commandments of God. They rejected the Spirit of God in the prophets and continued to "harden their necks."

The speaker acknowledges that their sin and trouble was not a little thing, and that God was just in all that He brought upon them. "For thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly" (v. 33). They are now servants in the land that God had given unto their fathers, and other kings have

dominion over them and their cattle, "...and we are in great distress. And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it" (9:37-38).

Message – Nehemiah's work is closely associated with that of his contemporary, Ezra. Ezra is a priest who brings about spiritual revival; Nehemiah, cup-bearer to the king in the Persian palace, returns to Judah as governor. He brings physical and political reconstruction and leads the people in moral reform. Ezra deals with the religious restoration of Judah. Nehemiah is concerned mainly with material restoration, especially in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The purpose and appeal of Nehemiah goes beyond the restoration of Jerusalem as a fortified city. Its message is that work, prayer, reverence for God, humble obedience and vigilance are essential to success in our service to God and to our salvation and everlasting happiness in Christ.

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

The book – It is named for its principal character, who may have written the book. Some say Ezra compiled it, giving many first person quotations from Nehemiah's official reports as governor. Thus, it is largely autobiographical. It is the last historical book of the Old Testament. Nehemiah gives the history of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem against the opposition of the heathen and the Samaritans. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem in 444 B. C., 92 years after Zerubbabel's return and 14 years after Ezra's return. The book covers 13 years, from the 20th year of Artaxerxes, for whom Nehemiah was cupbearer, to the close of the Old Testament period (432 B. C.). Principally, Zerubbabel brought about religious reforms; Ezra, ethical reforms, and Nehemiah, civil reforms. The purpose of Nehemiah goes beyond the restoration of Jerusalem as a fortified city. It was to be a safe city and a holy city. The

walls would protect the faithful remnant inside and keep the heathen outside the city. Nehemiah's work was important in God's plan to preserve a faithful people through whom the redeemer would come as the promised seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16).

Three main divisions of the book

Part I – *The rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem* (Ch. 1-7). Artaxerxes authorizes Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem as governor with permission to requisition materials and rebuild the wall; opposition to the work, and completion of the project.

Part II – *The consecration of the people* (Ch. 8-10). Reading of the law, religious revival, confession of the people, renewal of the covenant.

Part III – *Consolidation of the work* (Ch. 11-13). The rulers and one-tenth of the people remained in Jerusalem; the rest settled in other cities; dedication of the wall, and Nehemiah's reforms.

Nehemiah's character – "Nehemiah was a man of prayer, patriotism, action, courage, and perseverance" (H. H. Halley). He is without blemish. His character is seen in his attitude toward God's cause in restoring the holy city and the holy commandments. He had a deep concern for god's cause, as seen in his sorrow for Jerusalem. He had confidence in God, and cooperated in the cause. He was cautious, courageous, and uncompromising.

Nehemiah's principle traits were:

(1) His sympathy for God's people in Jerusalem (1:1-11). When he heard Hanani's report that the remnant were "in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem...broken down, and the gates...burned with fire," Nehemiah "wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (1:3-4).

(2) Prayerfulness. Nehemiah was a man of prayer. He prayed for four months concerning Jerusalem before presenting his request to the king (1:1; 2:1). He confessed

the sins of children of Israel (1:6-7), prayed before answering the king (2:4), asked God to punish the adversaries (4:4; 6:14); he and the people prayed for God's help (4:9); he asked God to strengthen his hands (6:9), and to remember him "according to all that I have done for this people" (5:19; 13:14), "according to the greatness of thy mercy" (13:22), and closed with, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (13:31).

(3) Nehemiah lived a life of faith. He had great confidence in God and enthusiasm for his cause because it was God's work and only God's power could bring success. As in Ezra, "the God of heaven" appears throughout this book. Nehemiah acknowledged that God put it into his heart to accomplish his work in Jerusalem (2:12; 7:5), that the hand of God was upon him (2:18), and "our God will fight for us" (4:20). His confidence inspired the Israelites to respond, "Let us rise up and build" (2:18).

(4) He had great leadership and organizational ability. Under his careful oversight, with half of the people working while the other half stood guard, they built the wall in only 52 days. His success was a tribute also to the people, because they had a mind to work. The work succeeded because the people saw the need for the work, there was work for all, their work was voluntary, and they were united. When Christians work for love, they work hard, knowing their work is by the grace of God and for His glory. We are "workers together with him" (II Cor. 6:1).

(5) Nehemiah was upright and courageous. He withstood the enemies of God, friend and foe alike, and refused to compromise.

Overcoming opposition – The same methods may be used in overcoming hindrances to our spiritual work.

(1) The Israelites overcame the scorn and ridicule of their enemies (2:19; 4:3) through confidence in God (2:20).

(2) Wrath and contempt (4:1) were overcome by prayer and hard work (4:4-6).

(3) Conspiracy and conflict (4:7-8) were overcome by

prayer and watchfulness (4:9).

(4) Discouragement of friends (4:10, 12) was overcome by faith and steadfast courage (4:13-14).

(5) Selfish greed (5:1-5) was overcome by rebuke and self-sacrificial example (5:6-17).

(6) Attempts at distraction and compromise were overcome by stern refusal – by a firm, “No!” (6:1-14).

The power of God’s word – Nehemiah tells of Ezra’s reading the book of law to the people from early morning to midday for seven days, during the feast of tabernacles (ch. 8). Ezra and fellow priests “read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (8:8). The people had asked for the reading (v. 1). They stood up when the book was opened and were attentive to the reading (v. 3, 5). They bowed their heads and worshipped God, and wept “when they heard the words of the law” (v. 6, 9). There followed a great revival. The people made public confession of sin (ch. 9), renewed their covenant with God (9:38; 10:29), restored proper temple service (12:44-47), and respected Nehemiah’s commands concerning cleansing the temple, tithes, sabbath-breaking, mixed marriages, and other reforms (ch. 13).

The word of God is His power at work in the world to bring about great changes and accomplish His purpose in our lives (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12; Psm. 19:7). Josiah’s reforms came as a result of finding a copy of the law in the temple (II Kings 22). Martin Luther’s finding a Bible led to the Protestant Reformation. The determination of Thomas Campbell and others of his day to “speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent” initiated the Restoration Movement. The greatest weakness of the church is the neglect of Bible teaching and its greatest need is for preachers to “preach the word,” and the word only (II Tim. 4:1-4).

Chapter 22

The Book Of Esther

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Key words – Providence and protection.

Key verses – Chapter 4:14, 16; 8:17 –

4:14 – For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

4:16 – Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

8:17 – And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Key phrase – “For such a time as this.”

Key chapter – Chapter 8 – According to the book of Esther, the Jews were saved from Haman's evil plot to destroy them, by Esther's appeal on their behalf to King Ahasuerus and his decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies. Chapter 8 records this event, following Haman's death, “hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai,” and the king's honoring of Mordecai. “And the Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor” (8:16).

Message – The book of Esther provides the only biblical portrait of the many Jews who chose to remain in Persia rather than return to Palestine. God’s guiding hand of providence and protection on behalf of His people is evident throughout the book, although His name does not appear in it. There is mention of fasting, but no reference to prayer. Yet, the reality of God’s providence is the central message of this book. The presence of God permeates the text. Matthew Henry wrote, “If the name of God is not here, his finger is.”

Appeal – All of us should respect the sovereignty of God, both His supreme rule over the nations and over our own lives. Respect the virtues exemplified by the “heroes” of the book. The modesty of Queen Vashti is an example for all women (I Tim. 2:9-12; I Peter 3:1-4). We should be ready always for service, as were both Mordecai and Esther. Christians must “be ready unto every good work” (Titus 3:1).

II. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER

(1) ***Historical books*** – The twelve books, Joshua through Esther, cover a period of about 1,000 years, from Israel’s entrance into the promised land in 1450 B. C., to the end of the Old Testament period about 432 B. C. The last three books, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, cover the last of the twelve divisions of the Old Testament history, “The Post Exile,” or return of a remnant of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. The story of Esther fits between chapter 6 and 7 of Ezra, between the first return led by Zerubbabel in 536 B. C., and the second group led by Ezra in 458 B. C.

(2) *Periods of Jewish history covered in Joshua through Esther.*

Period of Conquest (1450-1400 B. C. – Joshua, 50 years.

Period of the Judges (1400-1095) – 300 years.

The Monarchy (1095-975), Undivided Kingdom, 120 years–
King Saul, David, and Solomon.

The Divided Kingdom (975-606) – Southern Kingdom
(Judah, 975-606); Northern Kingdom (Israel,
975-721).

Babylonian Captivity (606-536), 70 years.

Post-Exile (536-400) – Return to Jerusalem, Restoration
of Judah, Rebuilding the temple and the City, to
end of Old Testament.

(3) *Main events relating to Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.*

975 B. C. – Division of the kingdom into Northern
Kingdom (Israel), and Southern Kingdom
(Judah).

721 B. C. – Fall of Israel, taken captive by Assyria.

721 B. C. (cir.) – Isaiah names Cyrus, the ruler who
would authorize the return, giving his name
nearly 200 years before the event (Isa. 44:28;
45:1).

620 B. C. (cir.) – Jeremiah prophesied the return following
70 years of captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:12;
29:10).

606 B. C. – First group from Judah taken captive to Babylon,
including Daniel and his three companions, “the
Hebrew children.”

596 B. C. – Second invasion of Jerusalem.

586 B. C. – Third attack from Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon
and fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the
temple. Many Jews taken captive.

536 B. C. – First remnant, of about 50,000 return from
captivity, led by Zerubbabel. Restoration of temple
begun and discontinued after two years.

- 520-516 B. C. – Prophecy of Haggai and Zechariah encouraging the completion of the temple.
- 516 B. C. – Rebuilding of the temple completed.
- 478 B. C. – Esther becomes Queen of Persia.
- 458 B. C. – Ezra leads second group of less than 2,000 from Babylon to Jerusalem. Spiritual and moral reforms.
- 444 B. C. – Nehemiah, cupbearer to Artaxerxes, ruler of Persia, authorized by the king to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city.
- 431 B. C. – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem again from Babylon.
- 450-400 B. C. – Malachi prophecies, close of the Old Testament.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The book – The author and date of writing are unknown. Possibly Mordecai or Ezra wrote it during the exile, in part at least from official documents of the Persian king (2:23). It is named for the principal character, a lovely Jewish maiden, who became queen of Persia. Because of her bravery and obedience to God, through the counsel of her courageous kinsman, Mordecai, she was able to save her people from death. Only a remnant of the Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity, about 50,000, while the majority, most of whom were born in captivity, remained in Babylonia and there became the objects of Haman's malice. The main topic of the book is the preservation of the Jewish nation, so that God's promise of the Messiah to Abraham (Gen. 22:18) might not be thwarted. These events in Persia probably occurred between the time of Zerubbabel's return and the return of Ezra, between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, and covered about 20 years (484-465 B. C.). Esther and Ruth are the only books in the Bible which bear the name of a woman. Esther means "a star," and her Hebrew name, Hadassah, means "myrtle."

Principal characters –

(1) Ahasuerus, the Persian king, is identified as Xerxes the Great, of historical fame, who with an army of five millions, defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae in 481 B. C., only to suffer defeat from the Greeks the following year. He lost to the Greeks also at sea in the battle of Salamis. Likely, it was on his return from these defeats that he married Esther.

(2) Ahasuerus' modest queen, Vashti, whom he dethroned when she refused his order to appear before the princes at the drunken feast of the king (1:10-22).

(3) Mordecai, the courageous and godly Jew, who brought up his orphaned cousin, Esther, and remained her counsellor after she became queen (2:7).

(4) Esther, the beautiful young Jewess, whom Ahasuerus chose above all the maidens as successor to Vashti, the king not knowing at the time that she was a Hebrew (2:8-10).

(5) Haman, the wicked enemy of the Jews, who plotted to destroy all of them after Ahasuerus set him above all the princes and Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman (3:1-6).

Main divisions of the book – All events of the book center around three feasts, as follows:

Part I – ***The feast of Ahasuerus***; events connected with it (ch. 1 and 2). (1) A feast of 180 days for all the princes (1:1-4); (2) a seven day feast for all the people in Shushan, the palace (1:5-8); (3) Queen Vashti's noble refusal and deposition (1:9-22); (4) Selection and enthronement of Esther (2:1-20); (5) Mordecai saved the life of the king (2:21-23).

Part II – ***The feast of Esther***, with events leading up to the feast and its outcome (ch. 3-7). (1) The king's promotion of Haman and Mordecai's refusal to reverence him (3:1-4). (2) Haman, enraged, determines to destroy the Jews and obtains the king's order authorizing the Persians

to despoil and slay the Jews in one day, the 13th day of the 12th month (3:5-15). (3) The mourning of the Jews upon hearing of Haman's plot (4:1-4). (4) Mordecai's message to Esther and her heroic determination to appear before the king to plead for her people (4:5-17). (5) Esther is received by the king and she invites him and Haman to attend her feast (5:1-8). (6) Haman plots to kill Mordecai and erects a gallows on which to hang him (5:9-14). (7) The king's sleepless night results in his discovering that Mordecai has not been rewarded for saving the king's life (6:1-3). (8) Haman's vanity results in his own humiliation and great honor for Mordecai (6:4-11). (9) At Esther's banquet, she reveals to the king Haman's plot to kill her people (7:1-5). (10) The king has Haman hanged on his own gallows, that he had built for Mordecai (7:6-10).

Part III – ***The feast of Purim*** – (ch. 8-10) (1) The king further honors Esther and Mordecai (8:1-2). (2) At Esther's intercession the king authorizes the Jews to defend themselves upon the day the Persians were to destroy them (8:3-17). (3) Upon the day of vengeance, the Jews slew of their enemies more than 75,000, including the 10 sons of Haman (9:1-19). (4) The feast of Purim instituted (9:20-32). (5) The exaltation of Mordecai (10:1-3).

Question – Why in this book alone does the name of God not appear? This is a problem, especially when the heathen king is mentioned 187 times. Also, the book of Esther is not quoted in the New Testament. The Talmud gives Deuteronomy 31:18 as a reason for God's name being omitted. Because of their sin, God had hidden His face from Israel, but He had not forgotten them. The book may have been an extract from the official documents of the Persian Court (2:23), which, if true, could account for the omission of the name of God. Some details given in the book are evidence of this source, such as the names of Haman's sons, Esther being called, "the queen," and Mordecai, "the Jew," and particulars about Ahasuerus. Scroggie observes that

the Divine name (Y. H. V. H.) which stands in Hebrew for Yahweh (Jehovah), occurs four times in acrostic form at critical points in the story (1:20; 5:4, 13; 7:7). The absence of God may help us to understand the reality and nature of divine providence. In all the events and affairs of human life, individual and national, God has a part, but His control is a secret and hidden one. "Only the eye of faith sees the Divine Factor in human history; but to the attentive observer all history is a Burnish Bush aflame with the mysterious Presence."

LESSONS FROM ESTHER

(1) The modesty of Vashti is an example for all women. At the risk of losing everything, including her life, she refused the king's order to parade herself before the lustful eyes of the drunken princes. Women today need to learn the beauty of holiness and the challenge of shamefastness (I Tim. 2:9-12; I Peter 3:1-3).

(2) Be ready always for service. Mordecai's unwavering dedication to God and his prayerful spirituality were not wasted on Esther. She was prepared "for such a time as this," and at the risk of her life, went in unto the king, saying, "And if I perish, I perish" (4:16). Christians must "be ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:1).

(3) The sovereignty of God. Babylon's ruler acknowledged that "there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Dan. 3:29). "He ruleth by his power forever" (Psm. 66:7). God's will shall ultimately be done, as seen in His use of Esther and Mordecai to deliver His people and in the punishment of Haman and in Mordecai's charge to Esther (4:14).

Chapter 23

The Book Of Job

I. KEYS TO JOB

Key words – Suffering, trials, tested, patience, trust, and the sovereignty of God.

Key verses – Chapter 13:15; 23:10; 28:28; 37:23-24 –

13:15 – Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

23:10 – But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

28:28 – And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

37:23-24 – Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Key phrase – “For I know that my redeemer liveth” (19:25).

Key chapter – Chapter 42 – The last chapter of the book records Job’s acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty and of his own lack of wisdom in uttering words that he did not understand.

Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore

I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (v. 1-6).

The book closes with God's acceptance of Job, reproof of his three friends, and God's blessing of Job with twofold more possessions than he had before.

So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters...After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days (v. 12-17).

Subject – Men see the basic question of Job as, “Why do the righteous suffer if God is loving and all-powerful?” In his acceptance of his suffering, although he did not understand the reason for it, Job became the outstanding example of patience of the Old Testament. Therefore James wrote, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11). The focus of the book is not suffering, but what Job learned from his suffering, that is, the true nature of God and His right to deal with men and nations according to His will and not theirs. Satan implied that God is not worthy of man's loyalty without material reward: Such trust and devotion must be bought. “Doth Job fear God for nought?” (1:9). Job's friends said that Job's suffering was punishment from God for Job's sins. And that Job must be the greatest of sinners because his suffering was the greatest ever known. The conclusion, when God appeared to Job out of the whirlwind, is that God is righteous, supreme, and worthy of worship in whatever He chooses to do. His judgments are not to be questioned by men.

Appeal – The story of the trials, patience and triumph of Job justifies the wisdom and goodness of God, especially

in regard to human suffering, and shows that suffering is not always the result of sin. Even the blameless man (1:1), needs to repent when he becomes proud and self-righteous. Only by coming to know what God is like can we know what we are, for we are made in the likeness of God.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The poetical or devotional books – These five books consist of poetry, drama, wise sayings, songs, praises of God and His word, prayers, rules of life, and other divinely inspired thoughts. They treat five great problems: Job, the problem of suffering; Psalms, the problem of prayer; Proverbs, the problem of conduct; Ecclesiastes, the problem of the highest good; and Song of Solomon, the problem of love. “The solution of all these problems is found in Christ. He suffered, He prayed, He behaved perfectly, He revealed God, and He is love” (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, p. 134).

The wisdom writings – Three of the devotional books comprise the Hebrew wisdom literature – Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. They deal with the fundamental principles of the Bible. Proverbs declares that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” and “of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). In Job we see a man who was perfect and upright, and yet he suffered great adversity. He, too, concluded “the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28). In Ecclesiastes, the wealthiest and wisest of men became the worst because he did not fear God. He concluded that in the life of folly and sin, “all is vanity.”

What is wisdom? In the Bible, wisdom is always ascribed to God or to good men. It is “the wisdom that is from above...pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). It is in contrast to the “wisdom of the world” (I Cor. 1:20; 2:6; II Cor. 1:12), which is “not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (James

3:15). Wisdom is the way of the righteous, but ungodly men “professing themselves wise, became fools” (Rom. 1:22).

Alongside the priests, prophets, and poets were the wise men, chief of whom was Solomon, who composed 1005 songs and 3000 proverbs (I Kings 4:29-34). References to Israel’s sages are found in Isaiah 29:14, Jeremiah 18:18, Proverbs 22:17, Ecclesiastes 12:11, and Daniel 1:4. Each order approached the same subject from different angles. “Of righteousness, the prophet would say, ‘It is just;’ the priest would say, ‘It is commanded;’ and the wise man would say, ‘It is prudent.’ Of sin, the prophet would say, ‘It is disobedience;’ the priest, ‘It is defilement;’ and the wise man, ‘It is folly.’

The ultimate blessing of the righteous, who walk in the fear of the Lord, in contrast to the fate of the wicked, is described in such “wisdom” passages as Psalms 1, 37, 50, 73, and 112; Job 28; Proverbs 8; I Corinthians 1:18-2:17, and James 3:13-18. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). Wisdom says, “Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death” (Prov. 8:35-36).

In his familiar parable of the wise and foolish builders, Jesus showed clearly that wisdom is obedience to the word of God (Matt. 7:24-27).

Main theme of the book of Job – We must patiently endure the trials of life, with unswerving trust in God. Instead of our suffering being evidence of God’s wrath, it may be proof of His love and for our good (II Cor. 12:9-10).

Author and date – Named for the chief character, whose name means “persecuted,” the author and date of writing are unknown. Possibly it was written by Job, who was a real person (Ezek. 14:14, 20; James 5:11), who lived in the land of Uz, which lay along the border between Palestine and Arabia. Job may have lived in Abraham’s

time. There is no allusion to the Mosaic law or to the history of Israel. This fact and the reference to Job's offering sacrifices for his family indicate that the events occurred during the patriarchal age. Therefore, Job probably was the first book ever written, of the Bible and of all literature. Its message, however, belongs to all ages. It is timeless.

The book – Job is a poetical drama based on historical facts. Chapters one and two and parts of chapter forty-two are prose. All the rest is poetry. The theme of the drama is “The mystery of suffering,” and those discussing it are God, Satan, Job, his three friends, and Elihu. The prose prologue begins with God and Job, and the prose epilogue ends with them. In between is the drama, containing the three cycles of speeches of Job and his friends, the speech of Elihu, and God's appearance to Job. The problem of pain is not solved in the book, but the nature of God is revealed. We see what kind of a God Jehovah is. God shows His power in creation in contrast to man's weakness and His wisdom in contrast to man's ignorance. At the end of the drama Satan is routed, the friends rebuked and Job is rewarded. Chapter 28 is a great passage on wisdom, and in chapters 38-41, we have one of the most profound passages in all literature, setting forth the wisdom, power, and omnipresence of God as seen in His sovereign rule over the universe, all nature, and every creature upon the earth.

Main divisions of the book –

(1) **The prologue** (Ch. 1-2, prose) – Job's circumstances before his trials and Satan's first assault (ch. 1); the second assault and the coming of Job's friends (ch. 2).

(2) **The drama** (Ch. 3-42:6, poetry) – Job's lamentation (ch. 3); the first cycle of speaking by Job and his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (ch. 4-14); the second cycle (ch. 15-21); the third cycle (ch. 22-31); the intervention of Elihu (ch. 32-37); God's appearance and addresses to Job (ch. 38:1-42:6).

(3) **The epilogue** (ch. 42:7-17) – God's wrath and reproof

(ch. 42:7-9); Job's repentance, prayer and prosperity (42:10-17).

Job's temptations and sins – Satan tempted Job by a series of losses—his prosperity, his children, his health, his wife's confidence, who would have him curse God and die, his friends, who think he is a great sinner, the joy of life, and his confidence in the goodness of God. He endured his personal losses with great trust in God, saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). But Job was presumptuous in affirming his righteousness before God. He needed to learn humility and therefore, God humbled him. His sins were his cursing the day of his birth (3:1-3), doubting the justice of God (7:20; 16:11), and especially his becoming self-righteous in answer to his friends' false accusations (31:35; 33:8-12).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF JOB

Eternal truths from Job –

(1) Satan's power is inferior to God's power and his knowledge less than God's knowledge.

(2) Suffering is not necessarily the result of sin.

(3) The righteous can and do suffer.

(4) The ones who are really poor and wretched are they who reject God and trust in self and things (Luke 12:15; Rev. 3:17-18).

(5) Momentary problems must not turn us from eternal values (II Cor. 4:16-18).

(6) Material possessions and earthly ties do not endure.

Literary merit of the book – Victor Hugo said, "The book of Job is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind." Tennyson called it "the greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature." Thomas Carlyle wrote, "I call this book...one of the grandest things ever written...There

is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit.” Philip Schaff said, “The book of Job rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without a predecessor and without a rival.”

Values of the book – In addition to its literary excellence, Job has many other values. There is an instructive value in its discussion of the meaning of life, man’s destiny and God’s ways with him; a scientific value in its great questions concerning creation and its observation of nature; a prophetic value in its authoritative divine message; a biographical value in its description of Job’s character; a historical value in its references to places, people and customs; a spiritual value in its account of Job’s faithfulness and its revelation of God’s provision for victory over every affliction; and a practical value in its teaching of fearing and trusting God.

Key to the Bible – The book of Job “has been called a key to the whole Bible, and to man’s history from creation to completed redemption. (1) Man unfallen and tried; (2) sinning and suffering; (3) seeking human help in legality, morality, and philosophy; (4) needing and receiving a revelation from God; (5) humbled, penitent, believing; and (6) restored to a better estate than at first” (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, p. 133).

Job’s needs – In the things that Job longed for we see the needs of all mankind:

(1) The need for an “umpire (daysman)” or mediator between man and God (9:33).

(2) The longing for light on the future: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (14:14).

(3) The need for one to plead his cause before God, “for he is not a man as I am” (9:32).

(4) The need of a redeemer, or vindicator. “I know that my redeemer liveth” (19:25).

(5) The need for a judge before whom our advocate or vindicator can go. God’s appearance to Job shows Jehovah

in the role of Judge (38:1-3).

(6) The need for a book of indictment to show the charges against us (31:35). The Bible is that book (John 16:7-11; II Tim. 3:16-17).

(7) The need of a vision of God to give us a sense of God's righteousness and of man's worth and to lead us to repentance. Again, the Bible supplies that need, once for all, especially in the gospel message of salvation.

(8) The need to come before the throne of God (23:3). Christians have access through Christ to the throne of grace, by the avenue of prayer (Heb. 4:16).

Christ and Job – Christ is the key to our understanding the problem of suffering, the great question of Job. Through His gospel and His intercession for us Christ supplies all of the needs of mankind, as set forth in Job. In the person of Jesus, God became a partaker with us in our suffering (Isa. 53:4-6; Heb. 2:9-10; I Peter 2:21; 3:18). Through Christ, the world's most righteous man, yet the world's greatest sufferer, God suffers with His creation. God's greatest pain is His grief for man's sin, and His greatest joy, man's repentance (Luke 15:7). Christ is our redeemer, mediator, and advocate (Eph. 1:7; I Peter 1:18-19; I Tim. 2:5; I John 2:1). Christ is our ever present help in every trial (I Peter 5:7). He assures us of eternal life. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26).

Problems in the book of Job

(1) Why would a "perfect and upright" man need to be perfected through suffering?

(2) Is there any goodness without reward? (1:9).

(3) Why do the righteous suffer? Job never did get an answer to the question, "Why?" But he did learn who is in control and that we must not question the judgments of God.

(4) Why do the wicked go unpunished in this world?

(5) Does God really care for and protect His people who fear Him?

(6) Are adversity and affliction a sign that the sufferer is wicked?

(7) Is God a God of pity?

Solutions to these problems

(1) Christ is the supreme example of a perfect man being “perfected” (made complete) through suffering (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9).

(2) The devil said that there is no good without reward. This is an insult to God, who according to this view, must buy man’s allegiance.

(3) Job’s friends said that suffering is always punishment for sins. In this, they were wrong, as both Elihu and God pointed out.

(4) Elihu showed that suffering is clearly connected with sin, and is sent as the voice of God to instruct us in righteousness, to call us back to God, and to keep us from sinning. Job had accused God wrongly while vindicating himself. Man is presumptuous to claim to be innocent before God.

(5) Job’s explanation – He maintains that he is innocent, pleads for a chance to present his case to God, and looks to a future life for a solution (9:32-35; 19:25-27; 31:35-40).

(6) God’s solution – There is mystery both in good and evil. It is folly for man to challenge God. Our attitude should be one of submission and faith (38:1-3; 40:1-9; 42:1-6, 7-9).

(7) Christ gives the answer. Only in the example of Christ’s suffering for all men can we understand the value of human suffering. The ancients asked, “How can a man be godly if he suffers?” The Christian says, “How can a man be Godlike if he knows nothing of suffering?”

IV. ENDURING MESSAGES FROM JOB

What we learn:

(1) Even when left to Satan, children of God are not forsaken. They are surrounded by God’s love.

(2) Human philosophy falls short, “The way of man is

not in himself" (Jer. 10:23).

(3) If God made the world, and He rules the universe, surely He will guide our lives.

Job's ideal character – Job was perfect and upright, one who remained faithful to God both in times of prosperity and of adversity (Job 1:1, 8). Ezekiel notes the righteousness of Job, with that of Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14, 20). James refers to Job's patience and the mercy of God in dealing with him (James 5:11). Job's life before he was afflicted was one of purity, piety, prosperity and popularity. After Satan smote him, Job's life was one of poverty, pain, proving, and patience. "In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (1:22; 2:10). Job's character was strengthened through his suffering. Although he defended his innocence to the point of self-righteousness, Job had to yield his will to the will of God before he could cope with the problems of life. If we would please God and have the hope of heaven, we must learn to say, "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10; James 4:15). Without questioning God's justice, we must let Him have His way with us.

Trust in God, not men – Job learned that the solution to our spiritual problems does not come from men, not even our family and friends. Job's wife taunted him to "curse God, and die" (2:9). Job's friends urged him to repent and confess his sins so that God would remove his affliction and restore his prosperity. The three said that all suffering is the result of personal sin. Therefore, Job's great suffering proved that he was a great sinner and a great hypocrite for maintaining his innocence. Let us note to their credit the friends did come to Job, sitting quietly with him until he broke the silence, and spoke to his face, not behind his back.

The character of Job's friends –

(1) **Eliphaz**, the oldest, spoke largely from experience (ch. 4, 5, 15, 22), backed up by arguments he supposedly received from a vision (4:12-21). Experience had taught

Eliphaz that the innocent do not suffer as Job did (4:7-8). He would have robbed Job of his good name (Prov. 22:1), something that even the Sabeans had not taken away.

(2) **Bildad**, the traditionalist, appealed to the past, to what their fathers had searched out (ch. 8, 18, 25). He was more direct than Eliphaz in his accusations of Job, saying that Job's words were "like a strong wind," and that if he were pure and upright, God would increase his prosperity instead of taking it away (8:1-3, 6-7).

(3) **Zophar**, the dogmatist, spoke with a more positive tone than the others, although he spoke only twice, while they spoke three times each (ch. 11, 20). He accused Job of lying and mocking and that "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (11:1-6). Zophar's finest question was, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (11:7; Psm. 139; I Chron. 28:9).

Elihu's response – Elihu was younger than the others, and out of respect for their age, he held his tongue until they had finished speaking. Then he could keep silent no longer. He had to speak or burst (32:18-19). He seems to speak for God (ch. 32-37). Elihu first reproved Job's friends for their lack of wisdom (32:12-14). He said that Job's sin was his self-righteousness (33:8-12). His pride has caused him to question God's goodness (34:9-10). God would have already removed his afflictions if it had not been for Job's pride, presumption, and wrath (36:16-18).

Job's reaction to his friends – God appeared before Job could reply to Elihu, but in the three cycles of speeches with his friends, Job protested their lack of understanding and their false accusations. "To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend;...My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook" (6:14-15). Job called them "miserable comforters" and their words vain (16:1-3). In his defense against their accusations, Job affirmed his innocence to the point of becoming self-righteous (9:21; 13:18; 27:5; 31:1-40).

God's appearance to Job – As Elihu ended his

dissertation, it seems that a storm was gathering (37:21-22). "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" (38:1-3). This is the most dramatic scene in the book and God's questions to Job the most profound in the Bible and in all literature. They were designed to humble Job and to show the folly of his boastfulness. God is all powerful to accomplish that which is according to His will. But He will do nothing against His own nature (Heb. 6:18; James 1:13). In His address to Job (ch. 38-41), we find a contrast of God's eternity with man's time; of God's omniscience with man's ignorance, and of God's omnipotence with man's weakness. Job was humbled (40:1-5; 42:1-6). He learned that God does not have to give an account. Instead of challenging God's justice, we need to plead His mercy (Luke 18:13-14).

The value of suffering – Sometimes sin brings suffering (I Cor. 11:30; James 5:15), but it is not always so. It is possible for the wicked to prosper for a time (Psm. 73:3-5, 17-19). Christ, the only perfect man, was the world's greatest sufferer. He was made perfect (complete) through suffering (Heb. 2:10). Stephen, Paul, and all the apostles suffered greatly because they were godly. Adversity can draw us nearer to heaven, as we seek the Lord out of the depths of godly sorrow (Psm. 130:1; II Cor. 7:10).

The psalmist says that affliction turned him to God and His word (Psm. 119:67, 71). Like Job, the faithful servant of Christ comes out of the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10) and the crucible of suffering as gold refined by fire (Job 23:10; I Peter 1:7-8). "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed" (Rom. 8:18).

God's arrows are for a purpose (Psm. 38:2; Lam. 3:12). Thus, suffering may be proof of one's godliness rather than his sinfulness (II Tim. 3:12; I Peter 4:12-16; Matt. 5:10-12).

Worldliness can be punishment; suffering can be kindness, and life can be worse than death. In affliction we learn that God's grace is sufficient for us (II Cor. 12:9).

Our suffering is a means of God's chastening. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). Job stresses that God is our teacher, preparing us for a better life through the discipline of suffering and correction (Heb. 12:5-11). "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity" (Psm. 94:12-13). "God's corrections are our instructions; his lashes our lessons, and his scourges our schoolmasters. He brings men into deep water, not to drown them, but to cleanse them." When the three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace, there was a fourth man, an angel, with them in the fire. "As sure as God puts His children into the furnace, He will be in the furnace with them" (Charles H. Spurgeon).

It is not what we meet in life but how we meet it that counts eternally (James 1:2-4, 12). Suffering keeps us from becoming satisfied with this world and causes us to long for a better home, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (Heb. 11:10; Phil. 3:20; II Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1; Rev. 21:4).

The brevity of life and certainty of affliction – Job found that "man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (14:1). He says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (7:6); "my days...flee away" (9:25); man "cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (14:2); "no man is sure of life" (24:22). Truly, "there is but a step between me and death" (I Sam. 20:3). Job looked forward to a place where "the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest" (Job 3:17).

Chapter 24

The Book Of Psalms

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Key words – Worship, praise, and prayer.

Key verses – Psalms 1:1-2; 8:1, 3-4; 19:1, 14; 90:1-2; 119:105 –

1:1-2 – Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

8:1, 3-4 – O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens...When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

19:1, 14 – The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork...Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

90:1-2 – 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.

119:105 – Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Key phrase – “For the Lord is good” (100:5).

Key psalm – The longest and greatest is Psalm 119, in which the word of God is praised in almost every line.

There are many other notable Psalms – 1, 19, 22, 23, 24, 37, 90, 100, 121, 139, 148, etc.

Message – The sublime theme of the Psalms is the majesty of God, the grandeur of His works, and the greatness of His word, as described especially in Psalms 19, 33, and 119. The God of the Psalms is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent (Psm. 139). He is also holy and righteous. At the same time He is near and dear to His people. He is their friend and guide, the one who hears and answers their prayers, their protector and deliverer, as the twenty-third Psalm expresses so tenderly. God is “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (46:1). The Psalms produce faith in the hearts and lives of those who read them. They inspire confidence in the power, wisdom, and love of God, and adoration for the living and true God. This call to worship was given by David: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psm. 29:2; 96:9; I Chron. 16:29).

Main theme – Worship God in prayer and praise, the keynote of the Psalms, reveals man’s deep need of and reliance upon God. The great need for adoration in our hearts and praise in our lives to God is the message of the Psalms. The soul cries out for God, and this longing is expressed throughout the Psalms (66:8; 103:1). The Great Shepherd is the source of our strength, our comfort, and our lives.

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The book – The Hebrew title meant “praises.” The name, Psalms, is from the Septuagint, the Greek title meaning songs of praise. It was the Jewish hymnal, a collection of 150 sacred songs and poems, also used by the early church (Eph. 5:19). It is the longest book in the Bible and contains both the longest chapter (Psm. 119) and the shortest (Psm. 117). Many prophecies are given, some

concerning Christ, as Psalms 16 and 22. It is the most comprehensive book, extending historically from the time of Moses to the Babylonian captivity. It is an epitome of the Bible, containing something of all the great topics of the Bible, such as God, man, creation, sin, sacrifice, forgiveness, life, redemption, Messiah, worship, affliction, faith and other subjects. The message of the first Psalm recurs throughout the book – the blessings of the righteous and the unhappy end of the wicked. Psalm 23, the shepherd Psalm, is one of the best known and most beloved passages in the Bible. God's word is praised in almost every line of Psalm 119.

Authors – The Psalms were written mostly during the 300 years from David to Hezekiah. David wrote 73; the Sons of Korah, 11; Asaph, 12; Hezekiah, possibly 10; Solomon, 2; Moses, Ethan, Heman, Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra, one each. The Septuagint mentions Jeremiah as the author of Psalm 137. The rest are anonymous.

Hebrew poetry – Parallelism, the chief form of Hebrew poetry, appears in three principal kinds:

(1) Synonymous parallelism, in which the thought of two members, or lines, is the same, expressed in different words, as in Psalm 21:1-2 and 24:1-3.

(2) Antithetic parallelism, in which the basic thought is made more clear or forceful by expressing a contrasting thought in the second line, as in Psalm 1:6; 37:9.

(3) Synthetic parallelism, in which the second line explains or adds something to the first, as in Psalm 19:7-9.

Division of Psalms into five books – From ancient times, Psalms was divided into five sections, each ending with a doxology, as Psalm 41:13. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen and Amen." They are not arranged in chronological order, or else the oldest, Psalm 90, written by Moses would be first. There are differences of opinion as to the time and significance of the divisions. They may correspond to the

time of their compilation. In all likelihood, the first book, Psalms of David, was compiled by Solomon, and it belongs to the early period of the Jewish monarchy. Books II and III, historical and devotional Psalms, belong to the middle period (the divided kingdom) and were compiled by “the men of Hezekiah” (Prov. 25:1; II Chron. 29:30). Books IV and V would belong to the period of the captivity and return from Babylon, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The “Pentateuch of the Psalms” – A very old Jewish statement explains: “Moses gave the Israelites the five books of Law; and corresponding with these David gave them five books of Psalms.” Based on this arrangement, Robert Lee, in **The Outlined Bible**, gives the following analysis, and cites “The Companion Bible” as the source.

Book I (Psalms 1-41) – Corresponds with Genesis. With the exception of four, all were written by David. Subject: Man, his state of blessedness, fall and recovery (8:4; 10:18).

Book II (Psalms 42-72) – Corresponds with Exodus. Includes 18 written by David. Subject: The nation of Israel, her ruin (42-49); redeemer (50-60), and redemption (61-72). Note Solomon’s description of the reign of the righteous king in Psalm 72.

Book III (Psalms 73-89) – Corresponds with Leviticus. It centers in time of Hezekiah. Subject: The Sanctuary, referred to in nearly every psalm of this book.

Book IV (Psalms 90-106) – Corresponds with Numbers. Contains two psalms of David (101-103) and other psalms in the time of the exile. Subject: The earth, Psalm 90 was written by Moses during the wilderness wanderings.

Book V (Psalms 107-150) – Corresponds with Deuteronomy. Contains 15 of David’s psalms. This section may have been compiled in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. Subject: The word of God (107:20). This is the theme of Psalm 119, the greatest Psalm.

Relationship of Psalms to the New Testament – Many passages from Psalms are quoted in the New

Testament. Out of 283 direct citations for the Old Testament in the New, 116 are from the Psalms. Some are cited many times, such as Psalm 110:1, which is given in Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; I Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13 and Hebrews 10:12-13. Christ referred to the Psalms more often than to any other book of the Old Testament.

Authority of the Psalms – Christ spoke of the Psalms as law (82:6, in John 10:34; 35:19, in John 15:25; etc.) He fulfilled all things that were written in the law, the prophets and the Psalms concerning Him (Luke 24:44).

Value of the Psalms – The Psalms are a storehouse of literary, moral, prophetic, religious and devotional values. C. H. Spurgeon said, “The book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words.” No part of inspired scripture has more universal appeal or inspirational excellence. “Here, as John Calvin has said, ‘The Holy Spirit had represented to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties, in short, all the stormy emotions by which human minds are wont to be agitated.’ Other parts of the Divine revelation represent God as speaking to man, but here, man is represented as speaking to God. As a devotional handbook there is nothing like it, or better, in the world.” (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, p. 114).

Messianic Psalms – There are many references to Christ in the Psalms, especially in Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, and 110. These and others tell of His person, as both God and man; of His character, righteous and holy; of His work, death and resurrection; and of His offices, priest, judge, and king. Peter, inspired of the Holy Spirit, quoted Psalm 16:8-11 as a key point in his sermon on Pentecost as proof of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-36).

III. THE PSALMS – TOPICAL CLASSIFICATION

The attributes of God – In no other book are the qualities of God's nature more fully set forth. There are nine names for God and various combinations of these names in the Psalms that represent the divine traits, attributes, and attitudes. The two names that occur most often are **Jehovah**, "He Who Is," the covenant God of Israel, and **Elohim**, the all-powerful one, the sublime God who created all things. The Psalms reveal the personality, unity and eternity of God – the foundation on which Bible revelation rests.

The Lord is our judge and defence (7:8-10); the refuge of the poor (14:6); rock, fortress, strength and high tower (18:2); redeemer (19:14); the King of Glory (24:10); "my light and my salvation" (27:1); shield (28:7); "my hiding place" (32:7); "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (46:1); "a God full of compassion" (86:15); and "our dwelling place in all generations" (90:1).

Psalms that praise God

(1) Extolling the goodness of God (Psalms 85, 95, 100, 136).

(2) Praising God's glory, wisdom, power and majesty (Psalms 18, 19, 29, 62, 66, 93, 97, 99, 118, 147).

(3) God as creator and preserver of all His works (Psalms 33, 89, 104).

(4) His infinite knowledge (Psalm 139).

(5) God's eternity contrasted with man's temporal nature (Psalm 90).

(6) Divine providence seen in God's wonderful works in behalf of His chosen people, Israel (Psalm 105).

(7) The source of all help, who keeps His people (Psalm 121).

(8) The whole creation praises Him (Psalm 148).

Christ in the Psalms – Christ said that "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses,

and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). Psalm 2 is the “coronation hymn,” Psalm 22, the crucifixion psalm, and Psalm 16, the resurrection psalm. The reign of the righteous king, of the seed of David, is the theme of Psalms 45, 72, 110 and 132:11. He was the stone rejected by the builders, which was made the chief corner stone (118:22; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; I Peter 2:7), “marvelous in our eyes” (118:32; Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11); to whom the multitudes cried, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (118:26; Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13). His exaltation at the right hand of God is acknowledged many times in the New Testament (110:1; Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:34-35; I Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:3,13).

In summary, the Psalms tell of the Messiah’s manhood (8:4-5; Heb. 2:6-8); His Sonship (2:7; Heb. 1:5); His Deity (45:6, 11; Heb. 1:8); His holiness (45:7; 89:18-19; Heb. 1:9); His priesthood (110:4; Heb. 5:6); His kingship (2:6; 89:18-19, 27; Acts 5:31; Rev. 19:6); His eternity (61:6-7; 45:17; 102:25-27; Heb. 1:10-11); His universal sovereignty (72:8; 103:19; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 19:16); His obedience (40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-7); His zeal (69:9; John 2:17); His sufferings (69:4, 9); His betrayal (41:9; Luke 22:48; John 13:18); His death (22:1-21; Matt. 27:41-43; John 19:24; Psm. 69:20-21; John 19:28-30); His resurrection (16:10; Acts 2:25-31; 13:33-36); His ascension (68:18; Eph. 4:8); His coming again to judge (Psm. 96-98; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Some historical Psalms

- (1) The Exodus and crossing the Red Sea (136:10-15).
- (2) The period of wandering (Psm. 114).
- (3) The period of judges (106:34-46).
- (4) David’s early period, when he was fleeing from Saul (Psm. 7, 11, 34).
- (5) David’s reign (Psm. 24, 30, 51) (David’s sin with Bathsheba).
- (6) Absalom’s rebellion (Psm. 3, 55).

(7) The glory of Solomon's reign (Psm. 72).

(8) The fall of Jerusalem (Psm. 74, 79).

(9) The Jews in Babylon (Psm. 80, 137).

(10) The restoration (85:1-6; 126).

Psalms concerning man

(1) Exaltation of man (Psm. 8) (fulfilled in the perfect man, Heb. 2:5-9).

(2) Man's sinfulness (Psm. 10, 14, 36, 55, 59).

(3) The wicked contrasted with the godly (Psm. 1, 4, 5).

(4) The folly of the wicked and of those who trust in riches (Psm. 37, 49, 53).

(5) The fate of the ungodly (Psm. 9, 11, 73).

Psalms of trust and thanksgiving

(1) Trust (Psm. 3, 16, 20, 27, 31, 34, 42, 61, 62, 91).

(2) The Shepherd Psalm (Psm. 23).

(3) God our refuge (Psm. 46).

(4) "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving" (Psm. 100).

(5) "Pay thy vows unto the Most High" (Psm. 50).

(6) "My help cometh from the Lord" (Psm. 121).

Prayer Psalms

(1) For mercy in time of trouble (Psm. 6).

(2) Prayers of assurance – "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psm. 27); "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" (Psm. 116).

(3) Penitence, seeking forgiveness (Psm. 51).

(4) For destruction of the deceitful (Psm. 55).

(5) For deliverance (Psm. 70).

(6) For mercy (Psm. 86).

(7) For help in trouble (Psm. 142).

(8) For guidance (Psm. 143).

The Lord's church (typical)

(1) Safety of "the city of God" (Psm. 46).

(2) The beauty and glory of Zion (Psm. 48, 87).

(3) Love for the house of God (Psm. 84, 122).

(4) Unity among brethren (Psm. 133).

Psalms concerning experiences in religion and in life

- (1) Magnifying the word of God (Psm. 19, 119).
- (2) Praise (Psm. 96, 98, 100, 103, 107, 136, 145, 148, 149, 150).
- (3) Worship (Psm. 43, 84, 100, 122, 132).
- (4) The vanity of life (Psm. 39, 49, 90).
- (5) The home (Psm. 127).

IV. GREAT LESSONS FROM THE PSALMS

Why study the Psalms? No other portion of the Bible so splendidly portrays the majesty and glory of God or so clearly expresses the power and excellence of His word as do the Psalms. Their poetic beauty, sublime language, and awesome messages both thrill and inspire our hearts. We should cultivate the habit of regularly turning to the Psalms for reading and meditation, for the following reasons: (1) Psalms is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. (2) A thorough knowledge of this book will help us to understand the great doctrines of God's mercy and justice, the terrible nature of sin, redemption, forgiveness, worship and hope. (3) Psalms must have been Christ's favorite book because He quoted from it more than any other book, even while on the cross (Matt. 27:46). (4) The early church used the psalms in singing praise to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). (5) The Psalms continually take the reader into the presence of God and give him a magnificent view of God's character. The Psalms are so eloquent and soul searching, yet so simple and practical, that as we read them, we are made to stand in awe before God (33:8; 119:161).

Adoration of God – No other book is as rich in expressing admiration for God and the longing of the soul to be near to God. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (8:1). "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (103:1-5). "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his

glory is above the earth and heaven" (148:13). "Praise ye the Lord," is the theme of Psalms 146-150. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (22:22). "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (95:6). The three-point lesson of Psalm 62:8 is that we must trust in God at all times, pour out our hearts before Him, and make Him our refuge. This means that we need to commit ourselves wholly unto God in love, faithful obedience, prayer, praise and hope. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (19:14).

The Sanctuary – The psalmist had in mind the tabernacle, or temple, when he said, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary" (77:13); and, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (122:1). Christ, as our high priest, is now "minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle" (Heb. 8:2) in contrast to the former sanctuary of this world (Heb. 9:1). God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48-49). Christ dwells in our hearts (I Peter 3:15). The church is the temple of God (I Cor. 3:16-17), and the Lord dwells in the Christian's heart and life (I Cor. 6:19-20). The heart yearns for the divine presence (Psm. 42:1), and rejoices that God is accessible in His holy sanctuary, the church. "The Lord is in his holy temple" (Hab. 2:20); yet He is "not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28). We see things differently in the sanctuary of God, as did the psalmist, who said, "I was envious...when I saw the prosperity of the wicked...until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (73:3, 17). There, in the church, through His word and the encouragement of fellow Christians, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (73:24).

Blessings in the Psalms – The splendor of happiness and contentment shines with the luster of diamonds in the Psalms.

"Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord" (1:1-2).

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (2:12; 34:8; 40:4; 84:12).

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord: that walketh in his ways...happy shalt thou be" (128:1-2; 112:1-2).

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (32:1).

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house" (84:4).

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee" (84:5).

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (119:1).

"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart" (119:2).

"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy law" (94:12).

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (41:1).

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (33:12; "Happy is that people..." (144:15).

The Lord our help – "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men" (14:2). He looks, He sees, He cares, He provides, and He is "a very present help in trouble" (46:1). Out of the depths we cry unto Him (130:1), and He hears our voice (116:1). He knows our every word, our every thought, and we cannot flee from His presence (139:1-7). "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved...The Lord is thy keeper" (121:2-5). "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...I will fear no evil" (23:1, 4). "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (50:15). "God is our refuge and strength...therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed" (46:1-2).

Forgiveness of sins – David acknowledged the universality of sin. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable

iniquity: there is none that doeth good" (53:1-3). The psalmist laments his own sin and makes confession unto God as he seeks the Lord's mercy. With pathetic pleading David poured out his heart to God. "My sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (51:3-4). "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness...wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (v. 1-2). "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (v. 7). "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (v. 10). David knew that the Lord will forgive only those who offer to God the sacrifices of a "broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart" (v. 17). We who can now experience the cleansing power of the blood of Christ should say, with even greater joy than David, "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise" (v. 15). We will share with others the great joy of our salvation (v. 12; Acts 16:34). "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (107:2). His word will we hide in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (119:11).

Seven main subjects in the Psalms – The Psalms may be grouped according to the seven most prominent religious themes of the Bible. These are the seven chief topics of the Psalms:

(1) Psalms that recognize the everlasting, all-powerful, all wise, ever present, all righteous nature of God (19, 46, 47, 77:13-14, 89:5-9, 90:1-2, 102, 139, etc.).

(2) Psalms that praise God's infinite love, providence and goodness (103, 136).

(3) Psalms that rebuke all forms of idolatry (96:4-5; 97:7; 106:36-38; 115, etc.).

(4) Psalms giving prophetic glimpses of Christ and His redeeming work on earth (16, 22, 110:1, etc.).

(5) Psalms showing the terrible nature of sin, God's hatred of sin, and His judgment upon sinners (5:38; 14; 102; 143, etc.).

(6) Psalms teaching divine mercy and forgiveness (32,

130, etc.).

(7) Psalms emphasizing the duty of repentance and obedience (29:1-2; 51, 96, etc.).

V. ENDURING MESSAGES FROM THE PSALMS

The Temple of the Psalms – The abiding value of the Psalms is their spiritual benefit, as the Psalmists speak to our souls. The book may be viewed as a beautiful temple filled with the glory of God. In it are three rooms corresponding to the three great lodgings of the human soul – righteousness, revelation, and reverence – the three “R’s” of the Psalms.

In the room of righteousness we find inscribed on the walls the lesson that God is pleased only when we do what is right toward Him and our fellow man. “All thy commandments are righteousness” (119:172), and the righteous man is one who obeys the commandments of God (119:1-8). In the first psalm, the righteous man is contrasted to the ungodly. He “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...but his delight is in the law of the Lord...The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (1:1-2, 6). Sinners shall not stand “in the congregation of the righteous.” Who shall abide in God’s tabernacle? “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart...nor doeth evil to his neighbor” (15:1-3).

On display in the room of revelation are many proofs that the Psalms and all other scriptures are inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16-17). “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (119:89). “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...the judgments of the Lord are true...More to be desired are they than gold” (19:7-10). “In God will I praise his word, in God I have put my trust” (56:4). The most significant proof in the Psalms that the Bible is God’s word is the remarkable group of Messianic

prophecies, all fulfilled by Christ, as described in our previous lesson, that all things might be fulfilled which were written in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning him (Luke 24:44). "The Lord hath performed his word that he spake" (I Kings 8:20).

The room of reverence is the largest room in the temple of the Psalms. In this chamber we hear the songs of the psalmists as they lift up their voices in adoration of God and express the longing of their souls to draw near to God. They sing of the goodness of God and of His provision and unceasing care for all His creation, especially of His lovingkindness to those who fear Him. This is the theme of Psalm 117, the shortest chapter in the Bible. "O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (89:7). "Holy and reverend is his name" (111:9). Therefore, we should "stand in awe, and sin not" (4:4). "Be still and know that I am God" (46:10). "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (116:12). "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever" (107:1). Meditation on His law day and night (1:2) will help us to keep the Lord always before us (16:8) as we seek to satisfy the longing of our souls for God (42:1). In the Psalms, we can "taste and see that the Lord is good" (34:8).

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his
presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD
he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we
ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto
him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good;
his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth
to all generations" (Psalm 100).

The word of God – The greatest of the Psalms is the 119th, the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 19 is an epitome of the 119th. There are 22 stanzas, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and in each stanza there are eight verses, making 176 in all. The word of God is referred to in at least 173 verses and the Lord is mentioned in every verse. Thus, the title is, “the law of the Lord, and the Lord of the law.” At least ten words are used in this psalm to describe God’s law. These are commandment (22 times), judgments (19), law (25), precepts (24), saying (19), statutes (22), testimonies (9), way (13), word (24), and attributes of the law – righteous (12 times), faithful (5), and true or truth (4 times).

The psalmist is conscious of the need to keep God’s law. The word keep occurs 22 times. That which the Lord does for His people, we must do for His law. The word kept occurs seven times. These 29 occurrences all refer to keeping the law by obeying it. One must serve the Lord with all of his heart. Wholeheartedness for God is the secret of the blessed life. The word of God must be hid in our hearts that we sin not against Him (v. 11). We must “seek him with the whole heart” (v. 2) and obey His commandment with the whole heart (v. 34, 69). The upright heart will praise God (v. 7), stand in awe of His word (v. 161), and rejoice in it (v. 111).

The leading thoughts of the 22 stanzas of Psalm 119 are:

1. Seek the Lord with all your heart (v. 2).
2. I will delight myself in the law (v. 16).
3. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (v. 18).
4. “I have chosen the way of truth” (v. 30).
5. “Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes” (v. 33).
6. I will keep thy law for ever (v. 44).
7. “I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night” (v. 55).

8. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee" (v. 63).

9. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (v. 71).

10. "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes" (v. 80).

11. "All thy commandments are faithful" (v. 86).

12. "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (v. 89).

13. "O how I love thy law...How sweet are thy words" (v. 97, 103).

14. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (v. 105).

15. "Thou art my hiding place and my shield" (v. 114).

16. "I esteem all thy precepts...and I hate every false way" (v. 128).

17. "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (v. 130).

18. "Thy word is very pure" (v. 140).

19. "I hoped in thy word...Thou art near, O Lord" (v. 147, 151).

(20) "Thy word is true from the beginning" (v. 160).

(21) "Great peace have they which love thy law" (v. 165).

(22) "All thy commandments are righteousness...I do not forget thy commandments" (v. 172, 176).

Psalm 19 praises both the works and word of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (v. 1). The law of the Lord is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true and righteous (v. 7-9). It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, and endures forever. It is more to be desired than gold, "yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (v. 10). In the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward (v. 11). "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (v. 14).

Chapter 25

The Book Of Proverbs

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Key word – Wisdom.

Key verses – Chapter 1:5-7 and 3:5-6 –

1:5-7 – A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

3:5-6 – 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.

Key phrase – “The fear of the Lord,” occurs 14 times (1:7; 9:10; 15:33, etc.), as in 9:10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” To fear God means to hold God in reverence, and respect Him and His word. It appears also in other scriptures, as in Psalm 111:10, and Job 28:28 – “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

Key chapters – Chapters 3, 4, and 31 –

Chapter 3 – “My son, forget not my law” (v. 1); “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart” (v. 5); “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord” (v. 11); “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom” (v. 13), and other exhortations to obedience are given.

Chapter 4 – “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall

keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (v. 5-7). These and other expressions of the blessings of wisdom are given in this chapter.

Chapter 31 – In the words of King Lemuel, “the prophecy that his mother taught him,” we have one of the greatest tributes in all literature to the virtuous or worthy woman. In this high and noble view, she is a good woman (31:13, 15-16, 19, 25); a good wife (31:11-12, 23-24); a good mother (31:14-15, 18, 21, 27), and a good neighbor (31:20-26). Her character and life stand in sharp contrast to the woman pictured in Proverbs 7. Both the children and husband of the virtuous woman praise her. “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (v. 29-30).

Subject – Practical principles for daily living are given in the wise sayings, maxims, and rules of life set forth in the book of Proverbs. These are only a part of the 3,000 proverbs that Solomon spoke (I Kings 4:32). They cover a wide range of subjects, as do the Psalms. Some of the topics treated in this great collection are wisdom, sin, goodness, wealth, the tongue, strife, temptation, prudence, justice, friendship, human freedom, idleness, poverty, benevolence, education, forgiveness, folly, marriage, family life, pleasure, diligence, dishonesty, revenge, gluttony, and success. Proverbs teaches us that godliness is always the happiest and best way of life, “that faithful obedience to God and the right relationship with man are the only ways to true wisdom, and wickedness and impiety are the sheerest folly” (Guy N. Woods, **The Book of Proverbs**, S. W. Lectures, p. 14).

Message – The book of Proverbs has universal appeal, and is similar to Christ’s parables, the Sermon on the Mount, and the book of James, which may be called, “the Christian book of proverbs.” Thus, the message of Proverbs is found

also in these writings. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). And James enjoins, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (1:22). The essence of Proverbs is stated in chapter 3:5-6: "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." Godliness is truly the happiest and best way of life.

II. BACKGROUND OF PROVERBS

Authorship – Solomon wrote most of them (1:1; 25:1); others were written by "the wise" (22:17; 24:23); the men of King Hezekiah (25:1); Agur, the oracle (30:1), and King Lemuel and his mother (31:1). These are only a part of the 3,000 proverbs that Solomon wrote (I Kings 4:32).

Purpose – The purpose of the book is to give moral instruction, especially to the young (1:4), to whom God says, "My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not" (1:10). Solomon gives as his purpose, "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity...to give...to the young man knowledge and discretion" (1:2-4). "The principle object he (Solomon) has in view is, to inspire a deep reverence for God, fear of His judgments and an ardent love for wisdom and virtue" (Adam Clarke, **Commentary**, Vol. III).

Value of Proverbs – Speaking of the Bible as a whole, Napoleon said, "The Bible is not merely a book, it is a living power, a book surpassing all others. I never omit to read it, and everyday with the same pleasure. Nowhere is to be found such a series of beautiful ideas and admirable moral maxims, which pass before us like battalions of a celestial army. The soul never gets astray with this book for its guide." The last two sentences might have been spoken with

special reference to the book of Proverbs, chapter 3:1-6, in particular.

A spiritual lesson – Solomon was a good teacher but a poor example. In his latter years he did not walk in the way of wisdom. His son, Rehoboam, followed his example rather than his counsels, and became a foolish and evil ruler.

Contents – The book of Proverbs covers a wide range of subjects. It deals with attitudes and motives such as envy, anger, pride, self-control, love, humility, and showing respect of persons. A sharp contrast is drawn between wisdom and folly, righteousness and sin, vice and virtue. Social problems, such as the relations of husband and wife, of master and servant, of parents and children, of rich and poor, and of rulers and subjects, are dealt with. Many human experiences are reflected in these proverbs, such as care, joy, feebleness, sorrow and so on.

Main divisions of the book of Proverbs –

Introduction (1:1-6) – The practical purpose of Proverbs.

Part I (ch. 1:7-9:18) – Proverbs of Solomon concerning the value and attainment of wisdom.

Part II (ch. 10:1-22:16) – Proverbs of Solomon on practical morality.

Part III (ch. 22:17-24:34) – Proverbs of the wise, admonitions to get wisdom and follow it.

Part IV (ch. 25-29) – Proverbs of Solomon selected by men of Hezekiah. The practice of wisdom, contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

Part V (ch. 30-31) – Words of Agur and King Lemuel. Lessons concerning God, men, and nature (ch. 30), and praise of a virtuous woman (31:10-31).

Personal duties in Proverbs – We have these same duties taught in the New Testament as parts of our Christian manner of life.

(1) **Duty to God.** “The fear of the Lord” (1:7) is man’s

first duty. It "is the beginning of knowledge." The fear of the Lord is respect and reverence that leads to trust and obedience. "...He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). "...Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

(2) ***Duty to self.*** We must resist those things that would deprive us of salvation. One must avoid pride and develop humility. "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility" (15:33). "Pride goeth before instruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (16:18). Other pitfalls are trust in riches (11:28), envy, which is "the rottenness of the bones" (14:30), luxury, intemperance, anger, idleness, and misuse of our tongues. Man has a duty to himself "to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. 22:1).

(3) ***Duty to our neighbors.*** According to Proverbs, one's duty to his neighbor includes expressing sympathy and cheer (12:25; 16:24); helping him in times of need (3:27-29; 14:21, 31); being fair and honest with him (17:13; 24:23); and living peaceably with him (3:29).

(4) ***Family duties.*** A child's first impression comes from his parents. These impressions are vital to the child's development and his future. "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (20:7). "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (22:6). The importance of correction is stressed (23:13-14); also, the duty of children to their parents (23:22). The contentious wife is described (19:13; 25:24); yet, "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing" (18:22). The model of virtue for every woman is the worthy woman, who is the crown of her husband and keeper of her home (31:10-31; Titus 2:4-5). This shows the high position of wife and mother. "She shall be saved in childbearing" (I Tim. 2:15).

Choice selections concerning wisdom

(1) The call of wisdom (1:20-23).

(2) The source of wisdom (2:6; James 3:17).

(3) The preciousness of wisdom (3:13-26).

(4) Wisdom is the principal thing (4:5-13).

(5) The personification of wisdom (8:12-36). Here, wisdom, the richest treasure, may refer to Christ, who was the Word become flesh.

(6) The feast of wisdom (9:1-6).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The wise man and the fool – One of the main subjects in Proverbs is the contrast between the wise and the foolish. The thought is carried further in the contrast between the righteous and unrighteous. The wise man is the righteous man, who fears God and obeys His commandments. The foolish man is the unrighteous, who trusts in himself and is disobedient and wicked. This is an important lesson, as Jesus taught in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, in the parable of the two builders, to show the necessity of hearing and obeying His words (Matt. 7:24-27). He also told of the rich fool, “who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21). David speaks of the biggest fool of all. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psm. 14:1). Those who refused to have God in their knowledge were “filled with all unrighteousness” and “God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28-32).

The contrast in Proverbs

1. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (1:7; 9:10).

2. “The way of the fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” (12:15).

3. The fool trusts in his own heart (28:26), but one who is wise will trust in the Lord with all of his heart (3:5-8).

4. The fool lacks self-control, but the wise man rules

his own spirit (12:16; 16:32).

5. In the heart of the wise is knowledge; “the heart of fools proclaim foolishness” (12:23).

6. The fool detests departing from evil (13:19).

7. One’s choice of companions reveals his wisdom or folly (13:20).

8. “Fools make a mock of sin” (14:9).

9. “A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother” (15:5, 20).

10. “A foolish son is a grief to his father” (17:25).

11. The wise can understand; the fool’s mind is far away (17:24).

12. The wise seek knowledge; the fool feeds on foolishness (15:14).

13. The fool has no delight in understanding; no heart for wisdom (18:2; 17:16).

14. One’s words show his wisdom or his folly; the fool’s mouth gets him into trouble (18:4-7).

15. “The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools” (3:35).

16. The fool shall be servant to the wise of heart (11:29).

17. Do not waste words on a fool, “for he will despise the wisdom of thy words” (23:9).

18. How to answer a fool (26:4-5).

19. “Hear instruction, and be wise” (8:33; 23:19).

20. “Get wisdom” (4:5-7); “buy the truth” (23:23); “better is it to get wisdom than gold” (16:16).

The way of righteousness – Righteousness means to obey God’s commandments (Deut. 6:25). In the present age the way of righteousness is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Divine wisdom says, “I lead in the way of righteousness” (Prov. 8:20). This is the way of complete obedience to God, rather than following our own ideas. “Every way of man is right in his own eyes” (21:2). And, “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death” (14:12). Jeremiah adds,

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). We must walk in the “old paths,” being careful not to remove the landmarks that God set for us (Jer. 6:16; Prov. 22:28). A rebellious attitude toward God’s word hinders one’s prayers (28:9). “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (30:5-6). When the prophet’s message was spurned, the people perished (29:18). But in keeping God’s commandments there is great reward (Psm. 19:11). “To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward” (Prov. 11:18-19). “In the way of righteousness is life” (12:28). “He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor” (21:21). “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness” (16:31).

The wicked and the righteous – The upright and the wicked are contrasted throughout Proverbs, especially in chapters 10-15. The righteous trust in the Lord and in all their ways acknowledge him (3:5-7). Trust and obedience must be from the heart, with all of our heart. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (23:7). “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (4:23). We must depart from iniquity, and “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (II Tim. 2:19; Titus 2:12).

The purpose of Proverbs is that “thou shalt understand righteousness...yea, and every good path...and mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous” (2:9, 20). We must “turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” (4:27). “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (1:10). “The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness” (11:5). “Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner” (13:6). “Good understanding giveth favor: but the way of transgressors is hard” (13:15). “He that walketh in

his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him" (14:2). "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (14:27). "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (15:32-33). These principles are true for nations as well as individuals. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (14:34). "The throne is established by righteousness" (16:12). "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye" (7:2).

The rewards of righteousness – As in Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish builders, so Solomon observes that "the house of the righteous shall stand" (12:7), but that "the house of the wicked shall be overthrown" (14:11). Other promises of blessings to the righteous are listed.

(1) "Better is little with righteousness, than great revenues without right" (16:8).

(2) "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot" (10:7).

(3) "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (15:3).

(4) "The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness" (15:9).

(5) "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (10:24).

(6) "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous" (15:29).

(7) "A good man obtaineth favor of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn" (12:2).

IV. ENDURING MESSAGES FROM PROVERBS

Attitudes – God is supremely interested in our thoughts and attitudes. Much that Jesus taught had to do with

disposition of heart and life, as in the beatitudes which show the blessedness of the humble, the meek, the sorrowful, those who hunger for righteousness, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who rejoice in persecution (Matt. 5:3-12). One's attitude of heart is an important topic in the Proverbs, where envy, jealousy, hypocrisy, greed, hatred, and self-conceit are noted. As one "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (23:7). Therefore, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (4:23). "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (3:7). "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (26:12). "The thoughts of the righteous are right" (12:5). "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (17:15). "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (14:30). "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long" (23:17). "It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment" (24:23). "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (10:12; I Peter 4:8).

The fear of the Lord – The importance of fearing God is the central message and most valuable lesson of the Proverbs. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1:7), "the beginning of wisdom" (9:10), "the instruction of wisdom" (15:33), and it "prolongeth days" (10:27). "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence" (14:26). It is "a fountain of life" (14:27), and "tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied" (19:23). "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith" (15:16). From our fear of God we learn respect for authority in the home and in the nation. Therefore, "fear thou the Lord and the king" (24:21). "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (3:7; 16:6). "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge" (23:12). "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (23:17).

Speech – *The use of the tongue* is a prominent theme of Proverbs, as it is in the teaching of Jesus and of James and Paul. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” Jesus said, and added, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:34-37). The power of the tongue is strikingly described by James (3:1-12), who says, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (v. 2). Paul admonishes, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). Solomon describes the beauty of graceful speech. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (25:11). “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it” (15:23). “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (15:1). “Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (16:24). “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright...A wholesome tongue is a tree of life...The lips of the wise disperse knowledge” (15:2-7). “Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right...The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips” (16:13, 23). “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (18:21). “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (13:3). “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles” (21:23). “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked” (10:11).

The speech of wise men and fools is contrasted in chapter 10:11-32, where Solomon says, “Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction” (v. 14). The words of the wicked and the upright are contrasted. “He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness...Lying lips are abomination to the Lord” (12:6, 17-22). “An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips

there is a burning fire” (16:27). “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (26:28). Of the seven things that God hates, five are associated with misuse of the tongue (6:16-19). “The words of a man’s mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook” (18:4). But, “a fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul” (18:6-7). Therefore, “put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee” (4:24). The whisperer and talebearer also are condemned. “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends” (16:28). “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (18:8). “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips” (20:19). “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (26:20).

James cautions, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (1:19-20). And Paul warns, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). We should set a pattern of good works, with sound speech, sound in faith and doctrine, speaking as the oracles of God (Titus 2:1-2, 8; I Peter 4:11). We must “speak evil of no man,” but be “gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2).

The following poem, “Three Golden Gates,” stresses the care we should take before telling anything we may have heard.

If you are tempted to reveal a tale
To you some one has told about another...
Make it pass, before you speak,
Three narrow gates of gold.

First, is it TRUE? Then is it NEEDFUL?
In your mind give truthful answer.

And the next is last and narrowest...
Is it KIND?

And if to reach your lips at last
It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be.

Richard Armour's poem, "Gossip's Way," observes the common human weakness of talebearing.

Gossip should, as I was told
By father and mother
When I was very young, go in
One ear and out the other

And so perhaps it should: but I
Who've listened throughout the years
With studied concentration and
Alert, attentive ears,

Have learned that gossip mostly takes
A detour to the south,
By which I mean that it goes in
One ear and out the mouth.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for
out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs
4:23).

Chapter 26

The Book Of Ecclesiastes

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Key words – “Vanity,” occurs 37 times; “under the sun,” 29 times.

Key verses – Chapter 2:24 and 12:13-14 –

2:24 – There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

12:13-14 – The ‘good life’ is attained only by revering God: ‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.’

Key phrase – “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (1:2; 12:8).

Key chapter – Chapter 12 – At the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, the “Preacher” looks at life from God’s perspective, “above the sun,” and expresses the real meaning and purpose of life in his conclusion, “Fear God and keep his commandments.” This is the true purpose of life for the Christian, as well, as expressed by Paul: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

This chapter also gives advice to youth: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1). It gives a beautiful, poetic description of old age and death, when even “...the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire

shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (v. 5-7).

Here the preacher gives a final caution for the reader to beware of the naturalistic outlook in the many writings of uninspired men. All expressions of human thought should be received and interpreted in the light of "the words of truth" from the "one shepherd" (v. 10-11).

Theme – Ecclesiastes shows Solomon's search for the greatest good. The question, "What is the good in life," is stated at the outset. "What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" (1:3). He finds that genuine happiness is not found in human wisdom, wealth, power, and pleasure. All earthly efforts, worldly pursuits, and temporal pleasures without God are vanity and "vexation of spirit," or "a striving after wind," (1:17, ASV). Earthly wisdom is only "madness and folly." Apart from God, life is futile, empty, and without meaning. The supreme good is to "fear God and keep his commandments" (12:13).

Appeal – Since all worldly power, popularity, prestige, possessions, and pleasure only lead to emptiness of heart and soul, we must search for the meaning and satisfaction of life on earth by looking beyond this world. Time is short and there is no eternity on earth. In view of the brevity of life and universality of death (2:12-17), one should look for the contentment and joy that are found only in God, and are attained only by doing His will.

II. THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES AND ITS MESSAGES

The book – The name means "The Preacher" (1:1-2, 12), who sought out proverbs and acceptable words in order to teach the people knowledge, that which "was upright,

even words of truth” (12:9-10). It is one of the Hebrew wisdom books in which the excellence of divine wisdom is contrasted with the worthlessness of man’s foolishness. It shows the futility of earthly things – wisdom, pleasure, wealth, power, fame, great works, and unrestrained indulgence – all of which are found to be vanity and vexation of spirit. Solomon is the author, who refers to himself as “king over Israel in Jerusalem” (1:12), one who had “gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem” (1:16; I Kings 4:29-34). The phrase, “under the sun,” suggests that Ecclesiastes is the experience of the natural man, an account of Solomon’s life when he went away from God and tried various methods of finding happiness. Such expressions as “I saw,” and “I communed with mine own heart,” and “vanity of vanities,” indicate that it is not the will of God that is developed, but Solomon telling of his own ventures and utter failure to find lasting satisfaction apart from God, a life he found to be full of weariness and disappointment. After vainly seeking the highest good in worldly pursuits, he directs the reader to the fountain of good, from which all may freely drink who fear God and keep His commandments. Solomon’s experience shows the folly of a life of earthly wisdom and worldliness in contrast to the lasting happiness of following the higher wisdom of the godly life.

Main divisions of the book – The following analysis is suggested by Guy N. Woods – Introduction (1:1-11), Solomon seeking happiness in (1) wisdom (1:12-18), (2) in wealth (2:1-26), (3) in prominence, power, prestige (3:1-5:20), and (4) in pleasure (6:1-8:17). Solomon discovers that genuine happiness is not in wisdom, wealth, prominence and pleasure, but through devotion to duty here, and preparation for the life to come (9:1-12:7). Conclusion (12:8-13).

Solomon’s experiment (Chapter 1:4-11:10) – Solomon sought satisfaction in the following earthly pursuits:

(1) In natural science, and he found nothing new under the sun (1:4-11).

(2) In wisdom and philosophy, but all to no purpose (1:12-18).

(3) In pleasure in all forms of mirth, drinking, great works, building, agriculture, great possessions, wealth and music, but found all to be empty (2:1-11).

(4) Materialism, living merely for the present, in “wisdom, and madness, and folly” (2:12); all is “vanity and vexation of spirit” (2:12-26).

(5) In fatalism, and found life to be a weary round of monotonous repetition (3:1-22).

(6) In observation of social evils, and found all wanting (4:1-16).

(7) In religion without God, and was convinced that enjoyment of life was his portion (5:1-20).

(8) In wealth, honor and long life, and found that these cannot satisfy (6:1-12).

(9) Morality and civil duties, and even these, if done for their own sake, cannot give satisfaction (7:1-8).

(10) In observing the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, he concludes that the grave is the goal of all (9:1-10:20).

(11) In benevolence and seed-sowing, and a future harvest will result. “God will bring thee to judgment” (11:1-10).

Conclusion – Chapter 12.

(1) The best advice – “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (v. 1).

(2) Poetical description of old age (v. 1-7).

(3) Words of truth and wisdom from the preacher (v. 8-12).

(4) The whole duty of man (v. 13).

(5) God will bring every work into judgment (v. 14).

(6) The godly life alone can satisfy.

(7) Comment – in verse 13, “duty” is italicized, signifying

that the word was supplied by the translators. "To fear God and keep his commandments," is "the whole" of man – not merely his duty, but his life, his happiness and his hope.

The great lesson – "True religion – a holy and reverent fear of God, and humble and unquestioning obedience to His will – affords the only genuine happiness here, and salvation hereafter...In (Ecclesiastes) is revealed the emptiness of a life apart from God in order that we might learn how rich and full is life with Him," (Guy N. Woods, **Fort Worth Christian College Lectures**, 1961, p. 273).

New Testament references – As in Proverbs, many truths in Ecclesiastes have corresponding scriptures in the New Testament.

1. A time for all to die (3:2; Heb. 9:27).
2. A time for judgment (3:17; II Thess. 1:6-7).
3. Leave this world empty (5:15; I Tim. 6:7).
4. All men are sinners (7:20; Rom. 3:23).
5. "Cast thy bread upon the waters" (do good to all men) (11:1; Gal. 6:9-10).
6. "Sorrow is better than laughter" (7:2-3; Matt. 5:3-4).
7. "Be not rash with thy mouth" (5:2; Matt. 6:7; James 1:19).
8. The vanity of earthly possessions (6:2; Luke 12:15-20).
9. How the child is formed in the womb (11:5; John 3:8).
10. "God will bring every work into judgment" (12:14; II Cor. 5:10; I Cor. 4:5).
11. Proper behavior in the house of God (5:1; I Tim. 3:15).
12. Folly of self-indulgence (2:10; I Cor. 9:27; II Cor. 7:1).
13. Need for humility (4:13; Matt. 20:25-26; Luke 14:11).
14. No profit in wealth and works used for self, but only when used for the glory of God (2:11; I Tim. 6:6-10; Eph. 4:28).

Contrasts in Ecclesiastes – Man's folly vs. God's wisdom; Man's fatalism vs. God's providence; man's frailty vs. God's

power; man's today vs. God's tomorrow.

Science – Note the scientific foreknowledge concerning evaporation of water from the ocean and the prevailing storm currents (1:6-7), unknown to men of that day.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Chapter 27

The Song Of Solomon

I. KEYS TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Key word – Love, or beloved.

Key verses – Chapter 2:16; 7:10; 8:6-7 –

2:16 – My beloved is mine, and I am his.

7:10 – I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

8:6-7 – Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (despised).

Key phrase – “His banner over me was love” (2:4).

Key chapter – Chapter 7:10-8:14 – Here true love grows and becomes as strong as death.

Message – The message of this book is the beauty, happiness, and power of faithful love. It is a love song written by Solomon and abounding in beautiful imagery. Literally it depicts the wooing and wedding of a shepherdess by King Solomon, and the joys and heartaches of wedded love. Figuratively, it teaches the need for faithfulness to God on the part of those who are espoused to Him. In the Old Testament, Israel is regarded as the bride of Jehovah (Isa. 54:5-6; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8-14; Hosea 2:16-20). In the New Testament, the church is seen as the bride of Christ. The spiritual lesson of Song of Solomon is that happiness comes only through genuine love for God and faithfulness to Him.

Meaning – On the physical side, the book gives a beautifully frank description of marital love. It lifts the marriage relation to the high plain of sacred duty and spiritual experience, as God ordained in Genesis 2:24. It also emphasizes the importance of delaying such intimacy, “nor awake my love” (8:4), until the day of marriage. On the spiritual side, the book appeals to the church to love Christ in deed and in truth and to be faithful to Him in all things, even unto death.

II. INTERPRETATION OF SONG OF SOLOMON

The book – The Song of Solomon, also called “Song of Songs,” or “Canticles,” is an oriental poem. It is probably the choicest of all the 1005 songs that Solomon wrote (I Kings 4:32). The time of writing is uncertain. “It is a common saying that the Song belongs to the period of Solomon’s youth, the Proverbs represent the wisdom of his mature manhood, and Ecclesiastes the sentiments of his old age as he looked back at life from the standpoint of his finished course.” It is the story of a country maiden who resists the wooing of a king and remains faithful to her shepherd lover, to whom she is betrothed. She refuses all the attractions of worldly advantage and the allurements of courtly grandeur to return to her village with her lover. The poem may be a historical account of King Solomon’s attempt to win the girl, whose home was in Shulam, a town in northern Palestine. The Jews have ever held this song in highest esteem. They compared Proverbs to the outer court of the temple, Ecclesiastes to the Holy Place, and the Song of Solomon to the Holiest of all. However, as in Esther, the name of God does not appear in this book. It is not referred to in any other book of the Old Testament. Neither is there a reference to it in the New Testament.

Divisions of the book – The two main divisions are the days of love (1:2-5:1), and love’s deep abiding joys (5:2-

8:14). A brief outline is: (1) The king's first attempt to win the virgin's love (1:1-2:7); (2) the king's second attempt to win her love (2:8-5:8); (3) the king's third attempt to win her (5:9-8:4), and (4) the triumph of the maiden (8:5-14).

Interpretation – The Song is one of the most difficult books in the Bible to interpret. One interpretation is that the poem is a spiritual allegory. This is the dominant Jewish view, the lovers representing God and Israel. Later, Christian writers held that the story refers to Christ and the church. Many eminent Bible scholars say that the theme is human love, moral in purpose, to remind us of the dignity and purity of the love of husband and wife.

Which is it? Does the Song describe figuratively the mutual love of Christ and the church? Is it an allegory showing that God's true bride, Israel, chose a faithful prophet of God over the king? The key thought, "my beloved," may be the believer's title for Christ, the bridegroom representing Christ and the bride, the church. This view accounts for the application of figurative expressions in the book to Christ, such as, "Jesus, Rose of Sharon," and "The Lily of the Valley" (2:1). Regardless of the interpretation, the poem without doubt has a spiritual meaning. The happiness of genuine love may be experienced in every true relationship, both human and divine. In the purity and constancy of the maiden's love and devotion to her ideals may be seen the fidelity and fullness of love which unites the Christian with the Savior.

Lesson on human love – If the theme is conjugal love, pure and simple, as some say, the Song shows physical love in the proper sphere (2:2-3), far above the lust of the flesh. The basis of love is the satisfaction of the mutual needs of husband and wife (I Cor. 7:1-5), both spiritually and physically. Thus, God saw that it is not good for man to dwell alone, and He therefore made the woman to be a help meet for the man (Gen. 2:18) and ordained marriage for the good of mankind (Gen. 2:24). "Whoso findeth a wife

findeth a good thing” (Prov. 18:22). “A prudent wife is from the Lord” (Prov. 19:14). “Marriage is honorable in all” (Heb. 13:4). “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies...Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:10, 28-30).

Greatness of love – Christianity is a religion of love. The gift of God’s only begotten Son for the sins of the world is the greatest expression of love. Love never fails (I Cor. 13:8). It is the greatest of all virtues (v. 13). The strength and blessings of love are seen in the Song (8:6-7). Love is as strong as death; jealousy is as cruel as the grave, and nothing is as powerful as genuine love. Love moves us to obey God and serve Him. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). Let us prove our love to Him as we “attend upon the Lord without distraction” (I Cor. 7:35).

Christ and the church – References in Song of Solomon and other scriptures may be applied figuratively to Christ and the church. In the fidelity of the country girl to her lover is set forth the fullness of love which unites the church (the bride) and the Savior (the bridegroom).

I. ***The heavenly bridegroom*** – (1) His love covers all defects of the bride (4:7; Eph. 5:26-27; I Peter 4:8); (2) He gave His life for her (Eph. 5:25); (3) He will claim her as His own (Matt. 25:6).

II. ***The bride*** – (1) Loves the bridegroom (2:16); (2) is espoused to one husband (II Cor. 11:2); (3) has been purified and dressed in spotless robes (Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:25-26).

III. ***The marriage supper*** – (1) The invitation to the supper a great honor (Rev. 19:7-9); (2) invitation scorned by many (Matt. 22:5); (3) neglect of wedding garment leads to exclusion from the supper (Matt. 22:11-13).

Other notable points in Song of Solomon –

(1) “The voice of the turtle” (2:12) – This is a reference to spring, when the flowers appear and the time of the singing of birds is come. The turtle here is the turtledove, as in Genesis 15:9, Leviticus 1:14; 5:7, Jeremiah 8:7, Luke 2:24, etc.

(2) “I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys” (2:1).

(3) “His banner over me was love” (2:4).

(4) “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes” (2:15). Subtle sins can hinder spiritual harvest. “Little sins,” added one by one, weaken our lives and destroy our souls.

(5) Psalm 45, a song celebrating the king’s marriage, is a companion passage to Song of Solomon.

(6) Many times in Israel’s history the king was the enemy to the divine marriage between God and His people (Hosea 13:11).

(7) Solomon learned there are some things that money and power cannot buy, such as honor, affection, love, and happiness.

The song of songs, which is Solomon's.
Let him kiss me with the kisses of his
mouth: for thy love is better than wine
(Song of Solomon 1:1-2).

Chapter 28

Introduction To The Books Of Prophecy

I. THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The period – The time of the prophets covered about 400 years, from 800 to 400 B. C. The central event was the destruction of Jerusalem, near the middle of the period. This was the occasion of the greatest prophetic activity.

The seventeen books – There are 17 books, Isaiah to Malachi, but only 16 writing prophets, since Jeremiah wrote two, the book called by his name and Lamentations. The distinction, “Major Prophets,” and “Minor Prophets,” does not necessarily indicate the importance of their messages. But with some exceptions, the twelve minor books are smaller than the four great books – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Relationship to other books – The 17 books of prophecy complement the 17 historic books in many ways. In regard to history of the chosen people, the narrative books, Genesis to Esther, tell the story of the rise and fall of the Hebrew nation. The emphasis in the prophetic books is not so much on history as on proclaiming and interpreting God’s word for His backsliding people. They belong to the days of the decline and fall of the nation and to the period of captivity. The five poetical books – Job to Song of Solomon – belong chiefly to the Golden Age of the monarchy, the united kingdom.

II. THE MAIN THEME OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The justice, sovereignty, and mercy of God – The prophets speak of the justice and sovereignty of God, yet His matchless mercy and everlasting love for Israel. They

depict God's overruling providence in the affairs of the divided kingdoms and of all nations. The prophets weave an exquisite tapestry of contemporary and future events. Interlocking the dark background of righteous judgment is the bright cord of divine love even in the punishment of sin, the great destroyer of human happiness, and the promise and realization of the restoration of a remnant of God's people in Jerusalem. Throughout are gold and silver threads of shining hope embroidered in the expectancy of the coming Redeemer.

Relevant Message – The message of the prophets was first of all relevant to the moral and religious conditions of their own day, as God said to Jeremiah: "I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:9-10).

Their message is relevant to our day, as well. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Main message – The most important message of the prophets was their good news of the coming of Christ, His work of redemption, and the establishment of His kingdom, the church of our Lord. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43; 3:24; Luke 24:27).

III. THE OFFICE OF PROPHET

The primary work of the prophets – The prophets were chiefly God's spokesmen, called by Him to warn the people in times of great national crisis and distress. They rebuked the Israelites for their past sins, warned them of present dangers, and foretold future events.

Special service – The prophets of Israel were individually called by God for special service, in contrast to

the regular service of priests, elders, and kings. The noun, “prophet” (Hebrew, **nabi**), occurs about 400 times in the Old Testament, and as a verb, 110 times. They were also called seers, watchmen, and shepherds. These terms signified their roles of being called of God to interpret and announce His word to the people.

Primarily preachers – As God’s messengers, the prophets were first of all, preachers of righteousness and teachers of the law. They were called and sent by God at times of crisis in Israel’s history, when there was widespread moral and spiritual decay. The prophets often stood alone, as did Jeremiah, when he denounced the sins of Judah and the doom of Jerusalem. “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear the rule by their means: and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jer. 5:30-31). The prophets were champions of righteousness. Their calling combined the office of teacher, statesman, and seer.

Inspired of God – “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Tim. 3:16). “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). The prophets were conscious of their gift of inspiration, for one of their most common expressions is, “Thus saith the Lord.” Their earliest work was oral, as in the case of Elijah and Elisha. Their later work was to preserve records of their preaching and the history of their nation. The prophet was God’s mouthpiece (Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1).

The prophets were reformers – The priests and Levites were normally the teachers in Israel. Prophets were called when the law was neglected by the leaders and the people, as noted in Ezekiel 22:26. As God’s special spokesmen, the prophets warned God’s people of the certainty of God’s judgment and wrath if they persisted in their sinful ways and did not repent. As preachers, they were teachers, revivalists and reformers. As scribes they

recorded the history, biography, and annals of their nation. They wrote and compiled large portions of the books of the Old Testament. As seers, or foretellers, they forecast future events, including many prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Proof of their word – The sure sign of a true prophet of God was his ability to reveal the future without error or exception (Deut. 18:20-22). In the New Testament, Paul gives a similar test for those who claimed to have the gift of prophecy, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37). Jesus gave as a principal proof of His being the Christ, His fulfillment of the many prophecies concerning the Messiah. “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). Christians are enjoined to prove all who claim to be prophets. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1). The message of the apostles and prophets has already been proved, “confirmed unto us by them that heard...God also bearing them witness, both with signs and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will” (Heb. 2:3-4).

IV. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE PROPHETS AND THE PRIESTS

Some contrasts – **As to their call**, the prophets were individually called by God. The priests were appointed by virtue of their descendancy from Aaron. **As to their office**, the prophets were representatives of God before the people, the bearer of messages from God to man. The priests were representatives of the people before God, the bearer of sacrifices from man to God. **As to place of ministry**, the

priests ministered in the sanctuary. The prophets went to the country- side and cities of the people.

Similarities – Both priest and prophet were teachers of God's law to the people, a regular duty of the priests, and a special duty of the prophets. "The priests were the 'informers,' the prophets were the 'reformers.'" (Stanley A. Ellisen, **Knowing God's Word**, 171). The prophet usually appeared when the princes, priests, and people had forsaken God and the law. They were sent by God to pronounce His judgment upon His rebellious people. Jeremiah condemned Judah because, "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jer. 6:13). Isaiah stated that God's anger was kindled against His people, and, "Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24).

Great examples of courage – It takes great courage and love for God to obey Him in all things and to preach His word without compromise. Priests were to be "holy, even as God is holy." And most of the prophets died as martyrs because of their unwavering loyalty to God. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, reminded his attackers, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53).

God's purpose in calling the prophets –

1. The prophet was primarily a spokesman for God, divinely called to instruct and exhort the people in the law

(Jer. 1:4-10).

2. Through the prophets God revealed His will in the Old Testament period, mainly upon occasions of a great moment (Heb. 1:1).

3. The prophets had a message first of all relevant to the moral and religious conditions of their own day.

4. They forewarned and admonished rulers, often face to face.

5. They preserved in written form the messages they received direct from God.

6. They recorded a history of their times.

7. The prophets counteracted all idolatrous tendencies.

8. They were examples of great faith and courage, for most of them suffered persecution and death because of their preaching (Acts 7:52).

9. The message of the prophets is relevant also to our day because the basic issues do not change (Rom. 15:4).

10. Their writings were inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21).

11. Christ's first coming and the beginning of the church are important subjects of Old Testament prophecy (Rom. 1:2; Acts 3:24-26; I Peter 1:10-11).

12. God's final revelation, the New Testament, was made through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 17:5). He is the greatest of all the prophets (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22; 7:37).

The authority of the prophets – The fact of divine inspiration is claimed in more than a thousand references in the Old Testament. God testified by all the prophets (II Kings 17:13). He spoke by the prophets (Heb. 1:1). They spoke and wrote by the Spirit of Christ (I Peter 1:11) and by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21). A few of the many examples of men inspired by God are Moses (Exod. 4:12; Num. 16:23), David (II Sam. 23:2), Isaiah (Isa. 48:16; 50:4; 51:16), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9-10; 5:14; 25:4; 36:17-18, 27-28), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:17). The voice of the prophets was respected by Christ and the apostles (Luke 1:70; 24:44; Acts

3:21).

Israel's fall – Israel fell because the nations did not heed the prophets' messages from God, as we see in the challenge to Israel (II Kings 18:21-22). In His commission of Isaiah, God told him to warn the people that their ears were heavy and their eyes closed, "lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed" (Isa. 6:10). Jeremiah foretold Jerusalem's ruinous fall because the people had denied Him and rejected His prophets (Jer. 5:10-15; 6:11-15). God's people were destroyed for lack of knowledge (Prov. 29:18; Hosea 4:6).

The dates of the prophets – The early prophets were Moses, Deborah, Samuel, Nathan and Gad. In the period of the divided kingdom, there were several oral prophets, some of whom recorded events of their day, whose writings probably assisted Ezra and other scribes in writing the Chronicles.

In Israel, the oral prophets included Ahijah, who addressed Jeroboam, the first ruler of the Northern Kingdom (I Kings 11:30-39; 14:6-16); Iddo, a "seer" whose visions were against Jeroboam (II Chron. 9:29; 13:22), and Jehu, a prophet of Judah, who ministered in Israel against Baasha (I Kings 16:1, 7) and denounced Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (II Chron. 19:2-3; 20:34). The greatest of the oral prophets were Elijah and Elisha, whose feats of faith and courage in Israel against Ahab, Jezebel and other rulers and false prophets are unexcelled.

In Judah, the oral prophets were Shemaiah, sent to Rehoboam (I Kings 12:22; II Chron. 11:2; 12:5, 15); Azariah, son of Obed, prophet in the days of King Asa (II Chron. 15:1), and Hanani, a contemporary of Azariah, who rebuked Asa and was imprisoned for it (II Chron. 16:7-10). Either he or another Hanani was the father of Jehu the seer. Another was Jahaziel, son of Zechariah, a Levite, in the reign of Jehoshaphat who predicted deliverance from Moab

and Ammon (II Chron. 20:14).

The writing prophets of the divided kingdom, before the exile in Babylon, were Israel, Jonah, Amos and Hosea. Prophets of Judah were Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah. Prophets during the captivity were Ezekiel and Daniel. After the exile were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Whom they addressed – Classified as to message, the prophetic books were addressed mainly as follows:

- (1) To Israel – Amos and Hosea.
- (2) To Nineveh – Jonah and Nahum.
- (3) To Babylon – Daniel.
- (4) To captives in Babylon – Ezekiel.
- (5) To Edom – Obadiah.
- (6) To Judah – Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The mission and message of the prophets – Their primary concern was the moral and religious condition of the people.

(1) Thus, their first and chief work was to save the nation from its wickedness and idolatry by bringing them back to God and observance of the law.

(2) Failing in this, they had the sad duty of announcing that the nation would be destroyed.

(3) They encouraged the people, even in the face of captivity, that God would save a remnant and return them to Jerusalem.

(4) Out of the remnant would come a person and a kingdom that would spread over the earth and bring all nations to God.

(5) That person, who is called “The Branch,” would arise in the family of David and would reign over an everlasting kingdom.

Brief theme of each book

Isaiah – The Evangelical, or Messianic Prophet, writes of the glory of God, His judgment against evil, and the

salvation of man through Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah – The Weeping Prophet, foretold and witnessed the fall of Jerusalem, warned of God's judgment of His backsliding people, yet His eternal love that provided salvation from sin through the gift of His Son.

Lamentations – Sequel to Jeremiah, speaks of the sorrow, misery and judgment that sin brings, and the assurance that God will show compassion upon all who repent.

Ezekiel – In symbols like Revelation, Ezekiel describes the goodness and severity of God as seen in His dealing with sin. Sin must be punished, but God's mercy is great in His forgiveness of those who do His will.

Daniel – The sovereignty of God over the affairs of men and of nations in all ages. Foretold the four great world empires and the everlasting kingdom of God.

Hosea – Israel is pictured as God's adulterous bride; terrible idolatry denounced. God's persistent love for His people, in contrast to their unfaithfulness to Him.

Joel – Spoke of "the day of the Lord" and foretold the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:28-32), which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (2:16-21). God's chastening love for His people.

Amos – Great, fervent preacher (4:12), pronounced "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (6:1). God's righteous and holy love for His people.

Obadiah – Foretold the overthrow of Edom, Esau's descendants, for their violence to Israel. God's delivering, vengeful love for His people.

Jonah – The story of God's sparing Nineveh, Assyria's capital. God's universal, forgiving love, for Gentiles, as well as Jews.

Micah – God's controversy with His people, showing God's hatred of evil and His delight in pardoning the penitent. Foretold the birthplace of Jesus (5:2). "What doth the Lord require of thee?" (6:8). God's pleading, punishing,

and pardoning love for His people.

Nahum – 130 years after Jonah, Nahum tells of God's vengeance and goodness as he predicts in detail the destruction of Nineveh, "that bloody city." God's avenging love for His people.

Habakkuk – Promised that God would punish the Chaldeans for their wickedness in overthrowing Judah. God's providential, delivering love for His people.

Zephaniah – Divine judgment will fall on Judah as well as enemy nations. Israel is warned, but unconcerned. A remnant will be saved. God's jealous love for His people.

Haggai – This and the following two books belong to the post-exile period. Haggai returned with Zerubbabel and appealed to the people to "consider your ways," and to complete the rebuilding of the temple. God's encouraging love for His people.

Zechariah – Finding the people still complacent, he joined Haggai in charging them to complete the temple. Spoke of the "Lord of hosts," the prince of peace, and foretold the coming of the priest and king, who was Christ. God's remembering love for His people.

Malachi – The last of the Old Testament inspired prophets, he lived about 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah. He was connected with the reform movement of Ezra and Nehemiah. He reproved the people for heathen marriages, divorce, polluted sacrifices, corruption of the sabbath, withholding tithes, and others sins, declaring that punishment will certainly be theirs if they did not repent. He is the only minor prophet who foretold the coming of the "forerunner" of the Messiah (John the Baptist), which Isaiah also predicted. The constant, continuing love of God for His people in contrast to their lack of steadfastness.

Chapter 29

The Book Of Isaiah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Key word – Salvation. This word appears 26 times in Isaiah, but only seven times in all the other prophetic books combined. The theme of the book is found in Isaiah's name, which means, "Salvation is of the Lord." In no other book of the Old Testament, except in Psalms, does the word so frequently occur.

Key verses – Chapter 1:18; 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:6 –

1:18 – Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

7:14 – Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

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, Counselor, 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 his father David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

53:6 – All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Key phrase – "Holy One of Israel," occurs 25 times, and simply, "Holy One," at least eight more times. The phrase is found also in three Psalms (71:22; 78:41; 89:18),

twice in Jeremiah (50:29; 51:5), and II Kings 19:22, where Isaiah is the speaker.

Key chapter – Chapter 53 – This is one of the greatest passages in the Bible. Along with Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 gives specific prophecies of the “Suffering Servant,” in His atonement for the sins of all mankind. Its messages are the love of God, the sinfulness of man, and the rich provisions of salvation in Christ. Here we see Christ as the suffering one despised and rejected (v. 1-3); the man of sorrows (v. 3); the sinner’s substitute (v. 4-9; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:24), and the triumphant Christ (v. 10-12; I Cor. 1:21). By Christ’s fulfilling each clear prophecy, He and His inspired apostles later proved the messiahship of Jesus.

Subject – Isaiah wrote of the glory of God and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ. He gave prophecies of condemnation and of consolation. He pronounced God’s judgment upon immorality and idolatry in Judah and eleven surrounding nations, recorded in the first 39 chapters of Isaiah. The last 27 chapters record God’s assurance of Israel’s restoration after the Babylonian captivity, and the coming of the Messiah as their Savior and everlasting King. Isaiah is called “The Evangelical, or Messianic Prophet,” and the “Prophet of Redemption.” The book is referred to as “The Gospel According to Isaiah.” He speaks of God’s love and protecting care for His people, as seen in His appeal to them to repent, His judgment of evil and punishment of sin, His deliverance and restoration of a faithful remnant, and His promise of the redeemer.

Appeal – The main purpose of Isaiah was to utter prophecies whose certain fulfillment proved the Deity of God, the Messiahship of Jesus, and the full inspiration and truthfulness of the Bible as the word of God. In the New Testament there are 43 references to passages in Isaiah, most of which had to do with the glorious coming of Christ and His work of salvation. The test of true prophets was the fulfillment of the future events of their predictions (Deut.

18:21-22). Isaiah appeals to people of every generation to live righteous lives. He taught spiritual and moral lessons that were relevant both to the conditions of Isaiah's day and our own day.

II. ISAIAH, A MINIATURE BIBLE

The prophet – Isaiah is called, “the prince of Old Testament prophets,” because of the vast sweep, majestic character, and messianic content of his prophecy. Jewish traditions indicate that he was the cousin of King Uzziah. Being of the royal family, deeply spiritual, and well-educated, Isaiah was in many ways the most monumental figure in the middle period of Israel's history. His main subject was to predict the coming of the Prince of Peace, the everlasting King and Savior of the world. Above all, and in all, Isaiah was fully inspired of God.

The book of Isaiah is like a miniature Bible – It has 66 chapters with two main divisions of 39 and 27 chapters. The first division, like the 39 books of the Old Testament, emphasize God's judgment upon immoral and idolatrous men. The last part presents the grace of God in the promise of the redeemer, concluding with the final judgment. Like the 27 books of the New Testament, these chapters declare a message of hope in the promise of a Redeemer “to bear a cross and wear a crown” (**Open Bible**, p. 675).

God's word is true – One of the great purposes of Isaiah and all of the prophets is that the fulfillment of all their predictions came to pass exactly as they had foretold. Following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus reminded his disciples: “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

His word will prosper – “For as the rain cometh

down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (55:10-11). The gospel of Christ is still the only power of God unto salvation – His only message of salvation to all men of all time (Rom. 1:16).

Proof of divine inspiration – All of the prophets, and Isaiah in particular, offer the most convincing proofs that the Bible is the inerrant word of God. Later, exact fulfillment in detail of their prophecies is infallible evidence of divine inspiration. Only he "who knows the end from the beginning" could be the author.

Isaiah, the prophet – He is called the, "Prophet of Redemption," and the book, "The Gospel of-Isaiah," because of the many predictions concerning the coming of Christ and the work he would accomplish for mankind. "He was a man of powerful intellect, great integrity, and remarkable force of character," the most renowned of all the prophets. He began to prophesy in 759 B. C., in the last year of the reign of Uzziah, midway between Moses and Christ, and 38 years before the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah continued to prophesy in Judah through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, B. C. 759-698. Most of his life was spent in Jerusalem as a sort of court preacher to the kings. He was a contemporary of Micah in Judah and of Amos and Hosea in Israel. Although his message was for Judah, he appealed also to Israel to repent, and pronounced God's judgment upon Assyria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Babylon, Arabia, Tyre and other heathen nations. As the Messianic prophet, Isaiah spoke for all nations and for all times. His wife was a prophetess (8:3), and his two sons had prophetic names (8:3-4; 7:3). Tradition claims that he was of royal blood, the father in law of King Manasseh. Isaiah was a

writer, statesman, reformer, prophet and teacher.

The book – Many scholars regard Isaiah as the greatest and most sublime of all the prophets. The book is poetical in style and abounds in metaphors such as the terror of the Lord, “when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (2:19); “the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard” (24:20), and “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (57:20). Notable passages are the vision and call of Isaiah (ch. 6) and the suffering of Christ (ch. 53). The many claims of inspiration in Isaiah are confirmed by the explicit fulfillment of his predictions concerning Judah and other nations and those relating to the Messiah. Isaiah is verified also by Christ and the apostles. In the New Testament there are 43 quotations from Isaiah, more than any other Old Testament book, except for the Psalms. A remarkable instance of Isaiah’s divine inspiration was his naming of Cyrus, as the king who would authorize the return of the remnant following the 70 years captivity (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-14). He foretold this event 200 years before it occurred, long before the Persian ruler was born! Josephus says that this prophecy was given to Cyrus and when he read it, he was so impressed by Isaiah’s prediction that it influenced him to issue the proclamation, as recorded by Ezra.

Main divisions of the book – There are three divisions in Isaiah: prophetic (ch. 1-35), historic (ch. 36-39), and Messianic (ch. 40-66). The first contains judgments against Judah and Israel (ch. 1-12), predictions against foreign nations (ch. 13-23), and announcements of judgments and deliverances (ch. 24-35). The historic division relates to Assyria and Babylon during the reign of Hezekiah. The Messianic division speaks of the suffering servant, the Redeemer who was to come out of Zion, the glory of Zion, and the new heavens and new earth. In the first section, we see the Holy One, provoked unto anger, rebuking the sinful nation of Israel. In the second, the Holy One delivers

His people from Assyria (37:33-38). In the third division, the Holy One redeems and comforts His people (40:1) and assures them of His everlasting love (54:5-8).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM ISAIAH

Purposes of Isaiah

(1) To rebuke the sins of the people and to call upon them to repent and do the will of God.

(2) To warn them of the impending doom of Judah because of its unfaithfulness to God. This came to pass about 100 years later in the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity in Babylon, as Isaiah had predicted.

(3) To utter prophecies whose certain fulfillment proved Jehovah's deity and His right to rule over the Jews.

(4) To proclaim the glorious hope of the Messiah's coming.

(5) To teach spiritual and moral lessons that were relevant both to the conditions of Isaiah's day and our day.

The Dead Sea scrolls – Leather rolls discovered by chance in a cave by a Bedoin goatherd in 1947 near the north end of the Dead Sea proved to be a complete manuscript of Isaiah written in Hebrew about 100 B. C., nearly one thousand years earlier than the oldest known Hebrew text. Exploration of eleven caves furnished a full text and commentary on Habakkuk 1-2, parts or fragments of all the minor prophets, and many secular documents. These scrolls attest to the authenticity of Isaiah and the other prophets, and they also confirm the remarkable accuracy of manuscripts previously used in translating the Old Testament.

Spiritual condition of the nation – Only 38 years after Isaiah began to prophesy in Judah, the Northern Kingdom became so wicked that God permitted the Assyrians to conquer Israel in 721 B. C. and take the people into captivity. God called the Assyrian king "the rod of mine anger," with which He punished Israel and chastised Judah

for their idolatry (Isa. 10:5-11). In turn He warned that He would punish the Assyrians because the king had boasted of his power and had not given God the glory (10:12-19). "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?" (v. 15). At the same time, God promised Judah that He would spare their nation from the onslaught of the Assyrians and that a faithful remnant would be saved (10:20-27). The Southern Kingdom continued alone until God delivered it into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, in 586 B. C. During the reign of Uzziah, who did right until near the end of his reign, the nation attained its greatest material prosperity since the time of Solomon, but they soon declined spiritually. Uzziah's successors, Jotham and Ahaz, were evil, and during their reigns oppression, wickedness and idolatry existed everywhere, while they gave no heed to Isaiah's preaching. Ahaz, the worst of all the kings of Judah, made an alliance with the king of Assyria, and paid tribute to him. Ahaz was succeeded by Hezekiah, who listened to Isaiah and brought about reforms.

Following the fall of Israel, the Assyrian army invaded Judah and threatened Jerusalem. Through Isaiah, God assured Hezekiah that, "I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake" (II Kings 19:34). That night, the angel of the Lord smote 185,000 men in the camp of the Assyrians, thus sparing Jerusalem. One of Isaiah's main works was to keep Judah from Assyrian and Egyptian dominance. Hezekiah assisted Him in this, though the king's folly abetted Babylon's later captivity of Judah (II Kings 20:12-18).

Concerning the Jews – They were a perverse people (6:9-10). Jesus made application of this scripture to describe the spiritual blindness and hardness of heart of the Jews of this day (Matt. 13:14-15). Their "lip service" (29:13) was condemned by Jesus as vain worship (Matt. 15:8-9).

Everlasting things – There are seven everlasting things in Isaiah – Salvation (45:17), light (60:19), joy (35:10),

strength, the everlasting rock, or rock of ages (26:4), kindness (54:8), covenant (55:3), and judgment (33:14).

Three beatitudes – “Blessed are all they that wait for him” (30:18). “Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters” (32:20). “Blessed is the man that...keepeth the sabbath...and keepeth his hand from doing evil” (56:2).

God’s promises of comfort and abiding love – “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (66:13). “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord” (40:1). In the passage foretelling the anointing of Christ, with which he began his ministry, he was to “preach good tidings to the meek...to bind up the brokenhearted...to comfort all that mourn...to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (61:1-3). “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour” (43:1-3). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (26:3-4).

Doing God’s will – As a preacher, Isaiah was a good example of taking “heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine” (I Tim. 4:16). He was genuinely dedicated to the task of doing God’s will. When God needed a devoted messenger to go to the people, Isaiah answered, “Here am I; send me” (6:8). To emphasize the exceeding sinfulness of sin, he said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (59:2). On the same subject he declared, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my

God, to the wicked” (57:20-21). To portray the shame and captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia by Assyria, Isaiah obeyed God’s commands to walk naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and wonder to those wicked nations (20:2-3). And yet, he encouraged the people with his beautiful promise of redemption, “...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (1:18). This reminds us of the love of Christ, as expressed in Revelation 1:5 – “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

Misused passages –

(1) **Isaiah 14:12** – “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” Many have used this as a text to prove that Satan is a fallen angel. Lucifer has become a synonym for the devil. A careful reading of the chapter shows that the reference is to Nebuchadnezzar and to his kingdom, Babylon.

(2) **Isaiah 55:8** – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” We often use this passage, with I Corinthians 1:18-25, to emphasize the wisdom of God in contrast to the foolishness of men. Although the “riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” are unsearchable (Rom. 11:33-36), here Isaiah seems to say that Judah had not kept God’s ways and thoughts in their hearts and minds. They were not seeking the Lord. Because they had chosen to go their own ways, God would send swift punishment upon them.

IV. ISAIAH’S PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST AND HIS WORK

History of Christ in Isaiah – In His birth, ministry and reign Christ fulfilled all of Isaiah’s predictions concerning the Prince of Peace. “Isaiah saw his glory” (John 12:41). The greatest of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecies were his prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus (7:14), fulfilled in

Matthew 1:21-23; and his promise of one whom the Lord would anoint “to preach the gospel to the poor” (61:1-3), with which Jesus began his ministry, saying, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:16-21), and later used by Jesus to prove that He was the Christ (Matt. 11:1-6). Also, the sufferings of Christ (53:1-12), the text with which Philip began in preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35); and His victory over death (25:8; I Cor. 15:54). Christ is the tried stone, rejected by the builders, that became the chief corner stone (28:16; Rom. 9: 33; I Peter 1:6, 8). Isaiah foretold the establishment of the Lord’s house (2:1-4), and His eternal throne (9:6-7), both fulfilled on Pentecost with the beginning of the church, which is Christ’s kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:34-35; I Cor. 15:25-26). He would be a Branch of Jesse (11:1; Rom. 15:12); come with glory, power and good tidings (40:3-10), and feed His sheep like a shepherd (40:11). Galilee would be the scene of His ministry (9:1-2). He was to die with the wicked and be buried with the rich (53:9). The Messiah would bring an end to war with His gospel of peace (2:4; 11:9; 14:7).

Portraits of Christ in Isaiah – If I were an artist, I would be at a loss to know how to portray Christ on canvas, since He left no picture of Himself. “...he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (53:2). One must form his own image of Christ from the written accounts of His character, glory, and power.

Characteristics of Christ – Anointed with the Spirit of God, He would have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge, justice, righteousness and fear of God (11:2-4). He was to be a man of silence, gentleness, truth, perseverance, and light (42:2-6; 53:7; 9:2). In His vicarious sufferings for sinners He showed His compassion, meekness, sinlessness, submission, greatness and saving power (53:4-12).

Titles – Isaiah saw Christ as Immanuel (7:14),

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (9:6-7); righteous king (32:1), divine servant (42:1), arm of the Lord (53:1), anointed preacher (61:1), and mighty traveler (63:1).

Mission – The Messiah would give light to people who walked in darkness (9:2); also judge and reprove (11:3-4); bring a law of justice and set prisoners free (42:4, 7); heal us and bear the burdens and sins of us all (53:4-6), and make intercession for sinners (53:12).

The scheme of redemption in Isaiah – God's plan for redeeming man is found in four main points in Isaiah: (1) the rejected cornerstone, (2) the work of John the Baptist as a forerunner of Christ, (3) the one bruised for our iniquities, and (4) the new name given by God to His people.

(1) The rejected stone that became the head of the corner (28:16; I Peter 2:6; Eph. 2:20; Psm. 118:22; Acts 4:11-12). Christ is the chief cornerstone, the sure, tried, precious foundation of His church (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 3:11). He is the cornerstone of the great salvation.

(2) The messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord, also foretold by Malachi (Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6), fulfilled in the mission of John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-4).

(3) The vicarious sufferings of Christ for our sins (53:3-7), fulfilled in Philip's beginning with this text when he preached Jesus to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35), in Peter's declaration that Christ bore our sins in His body upon the tree (I Peter 2:24), and other references.

(4) The promise of the "new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name," after the Gentiles saw the righteousness of God (62:1-2). The Gentiles received the divine means of righteousness when Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his kinsmen (Acts 10). Soon afterward, "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). This is the new name, divinely given. We are to glorify God through the name Christian (I Peter 4:16).

Salvation in Isaiah – The key word is “salvation,” and Isaiah means, “Salvation of Jehovah.” Isaiah speaks of the wells of salvation (12:3), the joy of salvation (25:9), walls of salvation (26:1), everlasting salvation (45:17), day of salvation (49:8), the feet of them that bring good tidings of salvation (52:7; Rom. 10:15), the spread of salvation to the ends of the earth (52:10), the arm of salvation (59:16), the helmet of salvation (59:17; Eph. 6:17), garments of salvation (61:10; Eph. 6:10-17; Rev. 19:8), and the light of salvation (62:1; II Tim. 1:10; John 1:4-5, 9).

The kingdom of Christ – Isaiah foretold the time, place and circumstances for the coming of the kingdom (2:1-4). The house of the Lord would be established in Jerusalem in the last days, all nations would flow into it, and the law of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem. The house of the Lord is the church of God (I Tim. 3:15), which is also Christ's kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19). Luke informs us that these conditions were all fulfilled on Pentecost following the ascension of Christ (Acts 2). It was in Jerusalem, in the last days, the law of the Lord was proclaimed, Jews from all nations were represented, Christ was seated at God's right hand, and the church began.

Christ was to sit upon the throne of His father David, and His kingdom would be everlasting (Isa. 9:6-7). As a Branch from the roots of Jesse, He would reign with righteousness (11:1-10). God would give Him “the key of the house of David...and all the glory of his father's house” (22:20-22). From Pentecost onward we find Christ upon His Father's throne, and as head of His church, reigning with all authority, and to continue reigning until He conquers the last enemy, death, at His second coming, when He will deliver the kingdom back to the Father (Acts 2:30; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 3:21; I Cor. 15:23-25). There is nothing in Isaiah, or in any other book of the Bible, to suggest a future reign of Christ on earth, after He comes again. He is now reigning. His church is His kingdom. All who are in the

church are in the kingdom (Col. 1:13). His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), but is a spiritual kingdom (Rom. 14:17).

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Isaiah 66:1-2).

Chapter 30

The Book Of Jeremiah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Key words – “Forsake,” and “forsaken,” occur 24 times; “backslider,” and “backsliding,” 13 times, and “return,” 47 times.

Key verses – Chapter 3:11-12; 3:25; 5:30-31; 6:13-16; 7:23-24, 28; 8:20-22; 9:23-24; 10:23; 13:23; 23:1-8, 31:3, 31-34 –

3:11-12 – And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

3:25 – We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

5:30-31 – A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

6:13-16 – For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed

abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

7:23-24 – But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

7:28 – But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

8:20-22 – The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt...Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

9:23-24 – Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

10:23 – O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

13:23 – Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the

leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

23:1-8 – Here the Messiah is seen as the coming shepherd and righteous Branch, a king who ‘...shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS...’ (Vs. 5-6).

31:3 – The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

31:31-34 – Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Key phrase – “Thus saith the Lord,” or, “I have put my words in thy mouth” (1:9; 18:2, etc.).

Key chapter – Chapter 31 – The Messiah will bring in the new covenant (31:31-34), which would fulfill God’s covenants with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8), Moses and the people (Deut. 28-30), and David (II Sam. 7:1-17). This prophecy was fulfilled in the new covenant, the gospel of

salvation, of which Christ is the mediator, “a better covenant, enacted upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6), by means of which God is merciful to our unrighteousness, “and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:7-13; 10:16-17).

Message – Jeremiah is called “The Weeping Prophet.” He prophesied in Judah with a message primarily for Judah. “A heartbroken prophet with a heartbreaking message, Jeremiah labors for more than forty years proclaiming the message of doom to the stiff-necked people of Judah” (**The Open Bible**, p. 740). He foretold and witnessed the fall of Jerusalem. He warned of the fall of Judah and the captivity and suffering of the Jews that came as divine punishment for their backsliding and idolatry. He foretold the return of the remnant after 70 years of bondage in Babylon and spoke of the coming of “the Lord, Our Righteousness” (22:6; 33:16). Jeremiah’s message is God’s judgment because of sin; yet His eternal love as seen in His pleading for His people to repent and return to Him, His preservation of the Jews in captivity, His restoring them to their homeland, and ultimately providing salvation for them and for all people through the gift of His only begotten Son.

Appeal – The appeal of Jeremiah was for his generation and for all generations. It is the timeless call of God for all men to trust not in self, but in God, to glory not in wisdom or wealth, but to glory in the knowledge of God, to forsake evil and return to God. In these “last days,” the Christian dispensation, it is to accept salvation from sin and everlasting life in Christ, by means of obedience to the gospel of Christ – the new covenant of which He is the mediator. God’s plea now is the same as it was then – “Amend your ways.” “Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you” (26:13). Thus, Peter affirms, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that

any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

The prophet Jeremiah – His name means “Exalted of Jehovah,” or “Appointed of Jehovah.” He is the “weeping prophet,” or the prophet of doom, who foretold and witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the great temple. He was young, devoutly religious, tenderhearted, and uncommonly bold and courageous, one of the greatest preachers of all time. Not only did Jeremiah fearlessly denounce the sins of the rulers, priests, princes and false prophets of Judah and forewarn them of their doom, but he also pronounced God’s severe judgment against Egypt (ch. 43) and Babylon (ch. 50 and 51). Seeing the wickedness of priests and princes alike, and the people who loved to have it so, and living to see the fall of the nation and his people taken captive to Babylon, Jeremiah was the prophet of the broken heart. He has been called “the bravest, grandest man of Old Testament history.”

Jeremiah’s personal history – Unlike many of the prophets, Jeremiah had much to say concerning himself. Since the book is in part an autobiography, we know much more about the author’s personal life than that of Isaiah and most of the other prophets. He was the son of Hilkiyah, a priest of Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin, about three miles northeast of Jerusalem (1:1). God chose him to be a prophet even before his birth (1:5) and called him at an early age (1:6). He was divinely endued and commissioned (1:9-10) and assured that the Lord would be with him (1:19). His persecution was foretold (1:19), and because of the distressing times, God commanded Jeremiah not to marry (ch. 16). His own family (12:6) and his own townsmen (11:18-23) dealt treacherously with him. The men of Jerusalem also conspired against him (18:18) and beat him and put him in stocks (20:1-3). Released, he was assaulted and nearly lost his life (ch. 26). Because of his prophecy of the victory of the Chaldeans, the princes of Judah labelled him a traitor,

put him in prison and appealed to Zedekiah to put him to death (37:11-38:6). When Zedekiah delivered him into their hands, they put him in a slimy cistern, from which he was rescued by an Ethiopian, Ebed-melech (38:7-13). Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until Jerusalem was taken. At the order of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan, set Jeremiah free and permitted him to remain in his own land (39:11-14). After Jerusalem fell, and Gedaliah was appointed governor, Jeremiah assisted him (40:7). When Gedaliah was murdered (41:1-3), Jeremiah was compelled against his will to accompany the refugees to Egypt (43:5-7). None of these persecutions could stop Jeremiah from delivering God's message, which was as a burning fire shut up in his bones (20:9). Through all of his trials, God's word sustained Jeremiah. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart..." (15:16). "None of the other prophets comes so near to us in a human way as Jeremiah, and as a sufferer perhaps no other character comes so near to the Man of Sorrows."

Jeremiah's period – Jeremiah lived about a hundred years after Isaiah. His ministry began in 626 B. C. the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (1:2), and lasted 60 years, until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. At the time of Jeremiah's birth, the world powers were Assyria and Egypt. He lived to see both of them subdued by Babylon and to see Jerusalem fall to this great power. Isaiah saved Judah from Assyria, Jeremiah tried to save the nation from Babylon, but failed. He prophesied until after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem, blinded the last king, Zedekiah, and led him with his people into captivity. He foresaw how Babylon would fall. God would raise up an assembly of great nations from the north to utterly break and spoil the land of the Chaldeans. "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I shall bring upon her" (51:64).

Condition of Judah and the nations – Israel, the northern kingdom, had been carried into Assyrian captivity in 721 B. C., and Judah stood alone against her enemies. Evil kings led Judah into spiritual backsliding, moral corruption and idolatry. Jeremiah began to prophesy during the reign of the last good king, Josiah. He assisted the king with a great reformation after the book of the law was found. The reforms were temporary, and the rest of the kings were wicked. When Josiah was slain by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt in 608 B. C., Jehoahaz reigned in his stead for only three months before he was taken into Egypt. Jehoiakim was an open idolator, boldly defiant of God, and a bitter enemy of Jeremiah. In 606 B. C., Babylon destroyed Nineveh and Assyria and subjugated Egypt, and took the first group of captives from Judah, including Daniel. Ten years later, the Chaldeans returned and took King Jehoiachin to Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar returned to destroy Jerusalem in 586 B. C., he took the last king, Zedekiah, into captivity. After the assassination of Gedeliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jewish fugitives feared the vengeance of the Babylonians and determined to flee for safety to Egypt. Jeremiah warned them that God disapproved and that they would die in Egypt. They refused to listen and dragged him with them down to Egypt, where the prophet continued his ministry at Tahpanhes and predicted the fall of Egypt.

GREAT LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH, PART I

Summary of important topics in Jeremiah

1. God's call of Jeremiah, and His commission to Judah and the nations (1:4-10) – "Say not, I am a child."
2. The broken cisterns (2:11-13) – "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters" (2:13; 17:13).
3. From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely (6:13-14) – "Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

4. They were not ashamed when they committed abomination (6:15; 8:12) – “Neither could they blush.”

5. Amend your ways (7:3-5; 18:11; 26:13).

6. The folly of trusting in lying words (7:4-8).

7. The potter and the clay (18:1-11) – “As the clay in the potter’s hand, so are ye in my hand.”

8. The broken potter’s vessel (19:1-15) – “Even so will I break this people and this city.”

9. False pastors, or shepherds (23:1-4; 50:6) – “Woe be unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture” (ASV).

10. The Branch (23:5-8) – “Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (ASV).

11. The promise of the return of a faithful remnant after 70 years’ captivity (29:10-14) – “I will turn away your captivity, and...bring you again into the place.”

12. The new covenant (31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-13; 10:15-18) – “And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

13. Divine inspiration of the scriptures: God put His word into Jeremiah’s mouth (1:9; 18:2) – “Thus saith the Lord,” throughout the book.

14. The mutilation and restoration of God’s word (36:21-24, 27-32) – The word of the Lord is indestructible.

15. The people of God, then and now (24:7; 31:33) – “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (I Peter 2:9-10).

The problem of sin – God loved His people and wanted to deliver them, but they would not repent, and He could not save them in their sins. Sin separates men from God, enslaves them, and destroys them. Sin must be punished. The extent of Judah’s sins, the impenitence of the people, and the pathos of God’s pleading for them to return to Him are seen in many passages in Jeremiah.

1. “For my people have committed two evils; they have

forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13).

2. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (5:30-31).

3. "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness: and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (6:13).

4. Jeremiah often referred to the "imagination of their evil heart" (3:17; 7:24; 11:8; 16:12; 18:12).

5. Zephaniah, a contemporary prophet, said that the people rose up early to sin (Zeph. 3:7).

6. Micah, a hundred years before, observed that "the good man is perished out of the earth," and, "they do evil with both hands" (Micah 7:2-3).

7. "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God" (3:25).

8. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall..." (6:15).

9. Their worship became mere ritual and vain repetition as they trusted in lying words, saying, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" (7:4-7).

10. Truth had perished from their lives – "But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth" (7:28).

The wages of sin – In no other book are the tragic results of sin so vividly portrayed as in Jeremiah. By means of Jeremiah's dirty girdle, his visit to the potter's house, and the baskets of good and bad figs, God showed the prophet the hopeless condition of the people and the nation.

(1) God instructed Jeremiah to show the people, by

means of his marred girdle, the shame of Judah. "Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing" (13:9-10).

(2) Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house provided valuable lessons. God had power over the people as the potter had over his clay, and if the people would yield themselves to His will, He still would build them up. Otherwise, they would be ruined as was the marred vessel (18:1-11). The broken potter's bottle was another object lesson. So would God "break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again" (19:1-15).

(3) The Lord showed Jeremiah a lesson from the good and bad figs (24:1-10). One basket had very good figs, and other very bad figs, "that cannot be eaten, they are so evil" (v. 3). The good figs represented the remnant of faithful Jews whom God would restore after their captivity (v. 4-7), and the bad figs represented the evil king, Zedekiah, his princes, and the wicked Jews who would be destroyed for their sins (v. 8-10).

(4) A further lesson was given to Zedekiah and to the Canaanite kings by Jeremiah's wearing a yoke upon his neck. Their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar was certain. Therefore, God warned them that any nation that refused to serve the Babylonian king would be destroyed. "...that the nation and kingdom...that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand" (27:8).

God's plea: "Amend your ways." – "The Lord is...longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). God appealed time and again for the Jews to hearken and to repent. “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken” (13:15). “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever” (3:12). “Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you” (26:13).

GREAT LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH, PART II

God’s judgment upon Judah – Through Jeremiah and other prophets, God continued to plead with His people to repent and turn back to the way of obedience. He charged them to “...ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (6:16). He warned, “But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD” (12:17). Because they refused to obey God, and “walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart,” God declared that they “went backward, and not forward” (7:24). Their backsliding was perpetual (8:5). They had kindled the fire of God’s anger and wrath (42:18; 44:6). Soap and lye could not wash away their iniquity (2:22). Their burnt offerings were not acceptable to God (6:20). There was no more hope of their doing good than for the Ethiopian to change his skin (13:23). It was too late for them to turn back. “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (8:20). God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people (7:16; 14:11). “When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence” (14:12).

The cause of their downfall – God delivered the

people of Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar to punish them because they rejected God's word and turned to their own ways. They obeyed men rather than God. "Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it" (6:19). They turned to idols and "worshipped the works of their own hands" (1:16). There was no hope as long as they walked after their own devices and said, "We will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (18:12). They repeated the mistake of their forebears in the terrible period of the Judges, who disobeyed Moses' warning, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Deut. 12:8; Judg. 17:6). They listened to treacherous prophets who cried, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). They trusted in "lying words, that cannot profit" (7:8). God declared that such false promises only "healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly," and provided no balm in Gilead (8:22). All the tears of Jeremiah and the mourning women could not save the people (9:1, 18), even if their tears ran down day and night (14:17). They would learn by bitter experience that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23), and "cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (17:5). "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth..." (9:23-24). This is the will of God for the Christian dispensation, also (I Cor. 1:26-31). "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" (17:7).

The word of God – One cannot doubt that the Lord spoke through Jeremiah. As in the case of Isaiah and all

the other prophets, every prediction concerning Judah, Babylon, Egypt, other nations, Christ, the new covenant, and all other matters, came to pass exactly as foretold. The circumstances of His inspiration are clearly stated. When God called him, he touched the prophet's mouth and said to him, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (1:9), and later, "I will cause thee to hear my words" (18:2). Many times Jeremiah declares, "The word of the Lord came unto me," and "hear ye the Lord," and "thus saith the Lord," and "the Lord said unto me," and similar expressions.

The indestructibility of God's word was dramatically demonstrated when the wicked king, Jehoiakim, cut the book of Jeremiah with his penknife and burned it with fire. The word of the Lord came again to Jeremiah, and God told him to warn Jehoiakim once more that "the king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land" (36:29). God instructed Jeremiah to take another roll and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll. The prophet gave the roll, as before, to Baruch, the scribe, "...who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words" (36:32). "The word of the Lord endureth forever" (I Peter 1:25).

The manner in which God gave His word to Jeremiah may have been the method of divine revelation to all of the inspired penmen. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). The emphasis throughout the Bible, in regard to inspiration, is upon the words they received, and not upon hazy ideas or general thoughts left for the writers to formulate in their own words. We believe that the Bible came from God by some means of word for word guidance from the Holy Spirit that kept the writers from error, as Paul explained, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; combining

spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:13, ASV). A remarkable feature of divine inspiration is that the influence of the Spirit enabled the authors to choose from their own vocabulary the correct words needed to express the will of God. Each writer's characteristic style was maintained while the Holy Spirit said exactly what He meant to say in exactly the way He meant to say it. It seems that Paul, as did Jeremiah, used a secretary or scribe to take down the inspired message, adding a personal greeting in his own hand writing to authenticate each epistle (Rom. 16:22; I Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; II Thess. 3:17).

Unique things in Jeremiah – This book alone of all the books of the Bible declares: (1) That the ark of the covenant would have no place in restored Israel (3:16), (2) "Rising up early and speaking" is a phrase found only in Jeremiah (11 times, in 7:13, etc.), with the exception of II Chronicles 36:15; (3) it alone contains the phrase, "the generation of his wrath" (7:29), and "neither could they blush" (6:15; 8:12).

Jeremiah's prayers – In these, Jeremiah often seems to be questioning and conversing with God. They include: (1) His acknowledgment, "I am a child" (1:6). (2) "Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul" (4:10). (3) "Righteous art thou, O Lord...wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (12:1-4). (4) "We have sinned against thee...Do not abhor us for thy name's sake" (14:7-8, 21). (5) "O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors" (15:15-18). (6) "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed" (17:13-18). (7) "Give heed to me, O Lord...Shall evil be recompensed for good?" (18:19-23). (8) "O LORD, thou hast deceived me...I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me...the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me...Then I said, I will not ...speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine

heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones...and I could not stay" (20:7-9).

GREAT LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH, PART III

The new covenant (31:27-34) – The high point of the book of Jeremiah is the prediction of the New Covenant, not like the covenant God made with the Jews at Sinai. It was to be a law written on their hearts, giving true knowledge of God, and by which sins are forgiven and remembered no more. The prophecy referred to the new testament of which Christ is the mediator, the "better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6-13; 10:15-18).

This message of salvation is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), the word whereby we are saved (Acts 11:14; James 1:21), the truth that purifies our souls when obeyed (I Peter 1:22), the word of the gospel (I Peter 1:25), the one faith once delivered for all (Jude, v. 3; Eph. 4:4-6), and the gospel of salvation for all (Rom. 1:16).

"The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb. 7:19). "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect...But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:1-4).

Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," the perfect offering for sin (Heb. 9:26), by whose will "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). By means of His death on the cross, Christ fulfilled the law, redeemed mankind from sin, and dedicated His new covenant by His blood (Heb. 9:15-17). Thus he nailed the law of Moses to the cross (Col. 2:14). He took away the first law that He might establish the second (Heb. 10:9).

God gave His first covenant through Moses at Mt. Sinai only to Israel. As long as it was in force, Gentiles were excluded from the promises. They were "...without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). In His death, Christ removed the partition of the law that separated Jew and Gentile, "having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments," so that He might unite obedient Jews and Gentiles in His one spiritual body, the church (Eph. 2:14-16).

Individual responsibility – More than any of the inspired writers before him, Jeremiah stressed personal responsibility in our relationship to God. In the days of the new covenant, "they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge" (31:29-30). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son..." (Ezek. 18:4, 20). This is a basic teaching of the New Testament as seen in Christ's judgment parables (Matt. 25) and many other passages. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5), work out his own salvation (Phil. 2:12), and "give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11-12).

Knowledge of God – Jeremiah promised that God would give His people a heart to know God, "that I am the Lord" (24:7). There would be no need for those who have accepted the new covenant to teach "every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me" (31:34). As children of Abraham, the Jews were Israelites from birth and had to be taught to know God, after being born physically into God's chosen family. In the new testament, Christ provides for one's covenant relationship with God to begin with the new birth, when one is born again spiritually, after he has come to a

knowledge of God, Christ and the saving power of the gospel (John 3:3-5; 6:44-45). Infant membership in Christ's church, the spiritual family of God, is impossible. One cannot become a Christian until after he knows and acknowledges Christ as the Son of God.

Christ came to make God known to man (John 1:14, 18; 14:9). The message is for all men. Christ died for all; His gospel is for every nation (Heb. 2:9; Matt. 28:19). "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). This knowledge is vital, for Christ declared, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). God's word, the message of truth, is the source of this knowledge (John 6:68; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17). Paul considered "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" to be of such supreme value that he "counted all things but loss" in order to obtain it (Phil. 3:8). Men today, as of old, are destroyed not for lack of money, health, or power, but for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). By means of the knowledge of Christ, God has "...given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises..." (II Peter 1:3-4).

The people of God – The knowledge of God, through the new covenant, provides the way for all men to become "the people of God" (I Peter 2:9-10). God spoke of this through Jeremiah. "...they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (24:7; 31:33). God no longer has a chosen people on the basis of race or nationality, as were the Jews for 1,500 years. We may become the people of God only in a spiritual relationship. In the Christian dispensation, God's people are those of every nation who by faith are baptized into Christ, where "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.

3:26-29). When God provides the “new heaven and new earth,” at the coming of Christ, His relationship with His people will attain everlasting perfection. “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:3-4).

Other important passages –

(1) “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (15:16).

(2) “...his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones...” (20:9).

(3) “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord” (22:29).

(4) “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces” (23:29).

(5) “Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind” (51:50).

MESSAGES OF JEREMIAH

Background – During the last terrible forty years of Judah, Jeremiah saw “the death agony of the nation,” which had become so hopelessly attached to idols, that with all of Jeremiah’s pleadings, the people would not repent and return to God. For twenty years before Judah’s fall, Jeremiah insisted that the Chaldeans would be the victor and that Jerusalem should surrender to the king of Babylon. The prophet’s enemies accused him of being a traitor, conspired to kill him, and persuaded the people to pay no heed to his message.

The book – The book of Jeremiah is composed of

biography, history, and prophecy. It is largely autobiographical. Its biographical interest centers also in the other characters of the period – Baruch, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Necho, and Nebuchadnezzar. The historical interest is its record of stirring events of the period – finding the book of the law, the reformation, battles of Megiddo and Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah, Jehoiakim's burning of Jeremiah's scrolls, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Its prophetic interest is the prediction of the seventy years' captivity and the future of Babylon and of Israel. There is also a doctrinal interest – Jeremiah's teaching on God, the kingdom, sin, repentance, judgment, the Messiah, the new covenant, redemption and personal responsibility.

Main divisions – The book is not written in chronological order, but its contents fall into three main divisions corresponding to the reigns of the three notable kings under whom Jeremiah prophesied. The first period was under Josiah. It covered 20 years and was mainly one of appeals to repent, enforced by declaration of divine punishment (ch. 1-12). The second was under Jehoiakim, eleven years, and was one of warning, deepening into irrevocable judgment (various passages in chapters 13-49). The third period was under the last king, Zedekiah, fourteen years, and was one that promised restoration of Judah and the fall of Babylon (ch. 21, 24, 27-29, 30-39). The remainder of the book contains prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem – the remnant in Judah (ch. 40-43:3), the remnant in Egypt (ch. 43:4-44:30), and the conclusion (ch. 52).

Message to Judah – There were four stages in Jeremiah's message to the stiff-necked and rebellious people of God. (1) There is first the note of **denunciation**. In spite of all God's lovingkindness and provident care, His people had forsaken Him. (2) Next is the note of **visitation**. Sin must be punished, and God's wrath will be visited upon them as they are driven out of their land and taken into 70

years of bondage in Babylon (16:9, 13; 25:11). (3) There is added the note of **invitation**. These sinful people were the dearly beloved of the Lord's soul (12:7). God is both just and merciful, and so He calls upon the people to amend their ways and turn back to Him (7:3; 18:9-11). (4) Finally, the note of **consolation** is struck. "Beyond rebellion will be repentance, and glory will follow the gloom" (ch. 30-33). Judah will be restored from Babylonian captivity, and beyond that, Christ will come with salvation for all men. He will establish His church, a kingdom greater than all over which He will reign forever in righteousness and peace.

Recurring thoughts – All through Jeremiah's message, these ideas are ever recurring. (1) Judah will be destroyed, (2) Babylon will be victorious. (3) If Judah will turn from wickedness and do good, somehow God will save her from destruction. (4) If the people will submit to Babylon, their lives will be spared. (5) Judah, destroyed, will recover after the captivity and rebuild Jerusalem. (6) Babylon will be destroyed, never to rise again.

Contemporary prophets –

(1) Ezekiel, a fellow priest, preached in Babylon among the captives largely the same things that Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem.

(2) Daniel, a man of royal blood, gained favor in the palace and caused King Nebuchadnezzar to praise Jehovah.

(3) Habakkuk and Zephaniah helped Jeremiah in Jerusalem. Habakkuk proclaimed the doom of Babylon, and Zephaniah pronounced woe upon Jerusalem and her enemies.

(4) Nahum at the same time predicted the fall of Nineveh.

(5) Obadiah foretold the ruin of Edom.

Spiritual messages – In the backsliding, bondage and restoration of the Jews, we see God's treatment of sin.

(1) Jehovah's judgment of sin. Sin is sure destruction. National rebellion is national ruin. Sin must be punished (Rom. 6:23; Psm. 9:17).

(2) Jehovah's suffering for sin. God weeps over the doom that sin brings, as expressed in Jeremiah's poems of grief (Lam. 1:12; Matt. 23:37-39).

(3) Jehovah's victory over sin. God's tender love is eternal, as seen in His promise to restore them after punishing them for their sins and in His provision for the redemption of all mankind (24:4-7; 23:5-6; 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12; 10:16-18).

Jeremiah as a preacher – He was the greatest illustrative preacher, proclaiming God's message both by word and by sign.

(1) Rachel rising out of her tomb on the way to Bethlehem and weeping over her children as she sees them pass by on the long road to exile foreshadowed the grief in Judea when Herod slaughtered the innocents (31:15; Matt. 2:13-18).

(2) Jeremiah's marred girdle was a sign of the nation's corruption (13:1-10).

(3) The potter and the clay showed that Israel was to Jehovah what the clay was to the potter, that the Lord had power over the nation to break it down and to build it up (18:1-12).

(4) The broken potter's bottle illustrated Judah's irrevocable doom and judgment. "Even so will I break this people and this city" (19:1-13).

(5) Jeremiah wore a yoke on his shoulders as a sign to Zedekiah and the people of Judah's bondage to Babylon (27:2, 12).

(6) Stones in the brick kiln in Tahpanhes were a sign of the conquest of Egypt by Babylon (43:8-13).

New Testament references in Jeremiah

(1) A den of robbers, the temple desecrated (7:11; Matt. 21:13).

(2) Glory in the Lord (9:24; I Cor. 1:31).

(3) Weeping in Ramah (31:15; Matt. 2:17-18).

(4) The new covenant (31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12; 10:15-17).

Chapter 31

The Book Of Lamentations

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Key words – “Sorrow.” The word “how,” is also significant, as used by Jeremiah to describe the woefulness of Israel, as in chapter 1:1; 2:1, 4:1 – “How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary” (1:1). The Hebrew title of the book comes from the first word of these verses, “Ah, how!”

Key verses – Chapter 1:12; 2:5-6; 2:17; 3:25; 3:33; 3:40 –

1:12 – Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

2:5-6 – The Lord was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

2:17 – The LORD hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up

the horn of thine adversaries.

3:25 – The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

3:33 – For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

3:40 – Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Key phrase – “Renew our days as of old” (5:21).

Key chapter – Chapter 3 – The gem of the book, expressing great faith in the goodness and mercy of God, is Lamentations 3:22-25, especially when seen against the dark backdrop of the other four chapters. “In the midst of the five chapters of ruin, destruction, and utter hopelessness, Jeremiah rises and grasps with strong faith the promises and character of God” (**The Open Bible**, p. 804). The key verses trace the indifference of the people, the divine punishment and goodness, and Jeremiah’s appeal to them to repent. In chapter 3, God’s everlasting love and mercy are affirmed. “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” (3:22-24). “This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope” (v. 21).

Message – This book, written by Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem, contains poems of grief over the destruction of the city and the captivity of the Jews. The message is that sin brings misery and judgment, but that God still loves sinners, even when He must punish them, and He will show compassion upon all who repent. Three related themes run through the five laments of Jeremiah. First, the theme of mourning over Jerusalem’s destruction and desolation. God’s promised judgment for sin has come. Lamentations is a dirge that describes the funeral of the Holy City. The second theme is a confession of Judah’s sin

and an acknowledgment of God's righteous and holy judgment upon the nation. The third theme is an expression of hope in God's restoration of His people. In His mercy, He is faithful to His promises. Jeremiah's appeal to the desolate people is for them to realize that their punishment is just, that God's love and concern for them is everlasting, that His promises are true, and therefore they must turn unto the Lord, for He has not forsaken them forever.

The book – This sequel to Jeremiah is called, "Tears of Jeremiah," in the Septuagint, with this preface, "And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with lamentation over Jerusalem." Jews chant this dirge every Friday at the wailing wall in Jerusalem. It is one of the five "rolls" (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther and Lamentations) that are read in the synagogue respectively on the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and Purim, and on the anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem. From the first, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!" (1:1), to the last, "But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us" (5:22), as an expression of sorrow, there is nothing like Lamentations in the whole world.

Style – Lamentations was written in acrostic form, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In chapters 1, 2, and 4, there are 22 verses, and each verse begins with a letter of the alphabet in order (verse 1, **aleph**; verse 2, **beth**, etc.). In chapter 3, there are 66 verses; the first three beginning with **aleph**, the next three with **beth**, and so on. Chapter 5 also has 22 verses, but the style is irregular. The acrostic style may have been employed as an aid to memorization.

Brief outline of the book – Chapter 1, The way of wickedness; Chapter 2, The wrath of God; Chapter 3, The weight of sorrow; Chapter 4, The want of help; Chapter 5, The wreck of iniquity.

The five poems

First poem (Ch. 1) – Jerusalem represented as a weeping widow, mourning in solitude over the misery of the exiles, with “none to comfort” (v. 2, 9, 17, 21); “no rest” (v. 3), “no pasture” (v. 6), “no comforter” (v. 9).

Second poem (Ch. 2) – Jerusalem, as a woman veiled with a cloud, grieves over the ruin of Zion and the sins of the people that moved God to throw down the city.

Third poem (Ch. 3) – Jerusalem, represented by the weeping prophet, mourns before the Most High, whose judgments are just. He appeals to the people to “turn again to the Lord” (v. 40) and to God to judge their cause and recompense their enemies “according to the work of their hands” (v. 59-64).

Fourth Poem (Ch. 4) – Jerusalem represented as gold, now dimmed and changed, as snow now blacker than coal. Zion’s remembrance of former days contrasts the past with the present. Her enemies will be destroyed, when “the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity” (v. 22).

Fifth poem (Ch. 5) – Jerusalem, penitent, confesses her sins (v. 7) and pleads with God not to “forget us forever,” but to “turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old” (v. 20-21).

Jeremiah and Christ – This book foreshadowed the wailing of Jesus over the approaching desolation of the Holy City (1:12; Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-42). The misery and mockery of Jesus also are anticipated in Lamentations (2:15; 3:14-15, 19, 30).

Three major truths in the book – (1) Sin brings great tribulation and sorrow. (2) Their bondage could have been avoided if the backsliding people had but returned to God. (3) Divine chastening disciplines the people of God. These poems enforce Hebrews 12:5 – “Despise not the chastening of the Lord,” nor “faint,” when “rebuked of him.”

Other practical lessons

(1) Children of God can fall from grace and be taken captive by sin (John 8:34; Heb. 3:12; II Peter 2:20-22).

(2) God's word is true. His punishment of the Jews fulfilled prophecy and proved the certainty of His word and His wrath against evil doers (Josh. 23:14-16; Jer. 10:10; 12:17; 25:8-11; Lam. 1:2, 4, 8-9, 15, 22; 2:9, 15-16; 4:20).

(3) The sinfulness of God's people causes His enemies to blaspheme (2:15; II Sam. 12:14; Rom. 2:24).

(4) There is hope for the humble penitent. There is not enough weeping over sin (1:12; 2:13, 18; 3:31-32; Ezek. 8:17; Psm. 51:17; II Cor. 7:9-10; Acts 8:22; II Chron. 7:14).

(5) God's love and care constant (3:22-23; Psm. 46:1; Heb. 13:5-6).

(6) As in the case of Job (13:15), Jeremiah never lost hope (3:24).

(7) The Jews had sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7; Lam. 4:11, 20; 5:4, 8, 16). In their distress, they would eventually heed Jeremiah's pleading, "Let us turn again to Jehovah" (3:40).

(8) Jeremiah's great love and concern for his people – Instead of exulting over the fulfillment of his prophecies, Jeremiah mourned and wept (Jer. 13:15-17; Rom. 12:15).

Jerusalem and Babylon – Jerusalem symbolizes the people of God, and Babylon symbolizes the wicked. "Jeremiah's vision of Jerusalem wasted and Babylon exulting should be compared with John's vision of Babylon destroyed and the New Jerusalem revealed in triumph and heavenly beauty (Rev. 18, 21, 22). Better to be one with Jerusalem in afflictions that issue in glory, than one with Babylon in the pride that ends in shame" (Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, 123).

Chapter 32

The Book Of Ezekiel

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Key word – Glory.

Key verses – Chapter 18:4, 20; 33:11; 36:24-26; 36:33-

35 –

18:4, 20 – Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die...The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

33:11 – Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

36:24-26 – For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

36:33-35 – Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say,

This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

Key phrases – “They shall know that I am the Lord God” occurs at least sixty-six times. “The glory of the Lord” appears fourteen times in the first eleven chapters. Note the visible appearance of the Lord (the **Skekinah**), the glory of the Lord when the Spirit entered into Ezekiel, with God’s assurance that He would put His message for His people into Ezekiel’s mouth. “But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house” (3:27).

Key chapter – Chapter 37 – “Central to the hope of the restoration of Israel is the vision of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel 37 outlines with clear steps Israel’s future...Ezekiel uses prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to dramatize God’s message to His exiled people. Though they are like dry bones in the sun, God will reassemble them and breathe life into the nation once again. Present judgment will be followed by future glory so that ‘you shall know that I am the Lord’ (6:7).” (**The Open Bible, The New King James Version**, p. 812-813).

Message – Ezekiel’s message is one of divine justice and mercy. In symbols like Revelation, he describes both the goodness and severity of God as seen in his dealing with Israel’s sin. Sin must be punished, but God’s mercy is great in His forgiveness of those who do His will. Sin must be punished because it destroys both men and nations. Ezekiel pictures the certainty and severity of God’s judgment of his backsliding and impenitent people. He speaks also of God’s goodness in promising forgiveness and restoration to those who repent and turn back to God. Ezekiel’s message is summed up in four words: Sin, Punishment, Repentance, and Blessing. In the Christian dispensation, God’s mercy is great in His forgiveness of the sins of all who repent and

obey the Lord. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

Call to repentance – Through his "watchman," God made known His true nature and in the light of that knowledge, appealed to the people to see the awfulness of their sin, the necessity of repentance and the certainty of hope after they returned to God. The preservation of Israel's religion during the exile was largely the result of Ezekiel's work. The Jews forever gave up their idolatry. They sought out the books of the law, revised the canon, wrote some new books by divine inspiration, and perhaps inaugurated the synagogue as the place of teaching and worship. After the seventy years' captivity, a faithful remnant returned, rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem, and awaited the coming of the Messiah. In like manner, God "now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

II. EZEKIEL – AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

There is strong evidence in favor of Ezekiel's authorship. The first person singular is used throughout the book, indicating that it is the work of a single personality. This person is identified as Ezekiel in 1:3 and 24:24, and internal evidence supports the unity and integrity of Ezekiel's prophetic record. The style, language, and thematic development are consistent throughout the book; and several distinctive phrases are repeated throughout, such as, "they shall know that I am the Lord," "Son of man," "the word of the Lord came to me," and "the glory of the Lord."

Ezekiel was born in 622 B. C., deported to Babylon in 597 B. C., prophesied from 592 B. C. to at least 570 B. C., and died about 560 B. C. Thus, he overlapped the end of Jeremiah's ministry and the beginning of Daniel's ministry. By the time Ezekiel arrived in Babylon, Daniel was already well known; and he is mentioned three times in Ezekiel's prophecy (14:14, 20; 28:3).

Ezekiel no doubt wrote this book shortly after the incidents recorded in it occurred. His active ministry lasted for at least twenty-two years (1:2; 29:17), and his book was probably completed in 565 B. C.

Four sections of Ezekiel

The commission of Ezekiel (ch. 1-3), the judgment on Judah (4-24), the judgment on the Gentiles (25-32), and the restoration of Israel (33-48).

The prophet Ezekiel – His name means “God strengthens.” Like Jeremiah, he was a priest as well as a prophet. Ezekiel was carried by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in 597 B. C., in the second stage of the captivity, about nine years after Daniel was taken there and eleven years before the fall of Jerusalem. He was then 25 years of age and was called to prophesy five years later and continued twenty years. He lived in his own house on the River Chebar (1:1; 8:1), and in the ninth year of his captivity his wife died (24:18). He preached among the exiles the same message that Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem – the certainty of Judah's punishment for her sins and the promised return from captivity. He endeavored to convince them that before they could hope to return to Jerusalem, they must return to the Lord. He remained on the River Chebar, but in the spirit was transported to Jerusalem and the temple, where he received visions of the future events recorded in the book.

Relation to other prophets – Ezekiel and Daniel began to prophesy in Babylon during the latter years of

Jeremiah's ministry in Jerusalem. Isaiah was the prophet of the Son, Jeremiah the prophet of the Father, Ezekiel the prophet of the Spirit (at least 25 references to the Spirit), and Daniel of the Sovereignty of God. Isaiah spoke of the throne (Isa. 2:2-3; 9:6-7). Jeremiah saw the work of the One on the throne – God's judgment, restoration of the remnant, the righteous Branch, etc. Ezekiel unveiled the nature of the One upon the throne on the basis of hope for his people. Daniel foresaw the four great world kingdoms and the everlasting kingdom of God that would consume all the nations. Speaking of the first three major prophets, Scroggie said, "Isaiah was the great poet, Jeremiah was the great preacher, and Ezekiel was the great artist. Isaiah had blown the silver trumpet over Jerusalem, Jeremiah was playing the mournful flute in Judah, and Ezekiel was striking the iron harp by the Chebar." This prophet's nature is strong and stern. "No artist has given us pictures so inspiring, so mysterious, so charming and so terrifying as these."

III. BACKGROUND OF EZEKIEL

Conditions of the Jews

(1) ***Political and social conditions*** – The Jews living as captives in Babylon were treated as colonists and not as slaves. They increased in number and accumulated wealth. Some of them rose to the highest offices, as in the case of Daniel.

(2) ***Religious condition*** – They had religious freedom in Babylon, but because of false prophets, the exiles at first opposed Ezekiel's plea that they must return to God before they could return to Jerusalem. Ultimately he succeeded and his people's return to the Lord and their land was largely the fruit of his ministry.

(3) ***Their fall and restoration*** – Because of the abominations in Jerusalem, the glory of God departed from the temple and the city (9:3; 10:4, 18-19), Jerusalem was destroyed and the people taken into exile. After the captivity,

a remnant of the people were restored, the temple and city rebuilt, and the glory of God returned to the new sanctuary, as foreseen by Ezekiel (43:1-5).

The book of Ezekiel – The three main parts of the book are: (1) Ezekiel's prophecies before the siege of Jerusalem (ch. 1-24); (2) predictions during the siege of Jerusalem (ch. 25-32), and (3) messages after the fall of Jerusalem (ch. 33-48). The subjects of these three parts are, the denunciation of Judah, the judgment of the nations, and the restoration of Israel. Notable passages are Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God (ch. 1), his call to be God's watchman (3:16-21; 33:1-16), the fall of Jerusalem came as a consequence of their sin (7:8, 26; 9:9-10), his reproof of lying prophets as using untempered mortar (13:8-16), the valley of dry bones, a vision of the restoration (ch. 37), and their restoration would be a restoration of God's cause (39:28-29). The book is not directly quoted in the New Testament.

The divine inspiration of Ezekiel – From the beginning of his divine call to the end of his message, Ezekiel was God's spokesman, as he relates his call when God said, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation...And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (2:1-5). In almost every paragraph, the prophet introduces his message by affirmations of God's revelations to him, such as, "Thus saith the Lord God," "hear the word of the Lord God," "the word of the Lord came unto me," and "the hand of the Lord was upon me."

Three outstanding events in the book – (1) The departure of the glory of God from the temple (10:16-18;

11:23). (2) The fall of Jerusalem (33:21). (3) The return of the glory of God to his house (44:4).

IV. GREAT LESSONS FROM EZEKIEL

PART I

Notable passages

1. The grave responsibility of God's watchmen (3:16-21; 33:1-16) – Ezekiel must warn the wicked of their wicked ways. If he failed to do so, God would require their blood at his hand.

2. The clay and the iron plate (4:1-3) – The sketch on the tablet of clay symbolized the siege of Jerusalem, and the iron plate the obstacle the people had erected between themselves and God.

3. Ezekiel lying on his left side, then on his right side symbolized the exile of the northern kingdom and then the captivity of Judah (4:4-8).

4. By cutting off his hair and beard and scattering one part of his hair he showed that a remnant would survive whose hearts would be cleansed (5:1-17).

5. The new heart (11:19; 36:25-28) – God would cleanse them and give them a new heart and a new spirit.

6. Untempered mortar (13:8-16) – reproof of the lying prophets whose promise of "peace, when there was no peace," offered no more security than a wall built of crumbling mortar.

7. Prostitution of God's people (16:1-63) – the most graphic description of spiritual adultery in the Bible. Judah's sin exceeded that of her sisters, Sodom and Gomorrah. Other harlots were paid for their services, but Jehovah's bride paid the heathen to commit sacrilege with her.

8. Ezekiel is the only writer that tells of Israel's idolatry in Egypt and of God's first intention of destroying them there (20:1-9).

9. The search for a man of integrity (22:30; Jer. 5:1).

10. The fall of Tyre foretold (26:1-6) – A fortified city,

built about 700 B. C. on the Mediterranean, Tyre was a city of great commerce, great wealth and great sin. About three years after Ezekiel's prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar II besieged the city for 13 years and destroyed it. Later it was rebuilt only to be destroyed in 332 B. C. by Alexander the Great, who took the stones of the mainland city to build a causeway to reach and destroy the island city, literally scraping the dust of the city off the rock to do so. A remarkable fulfillment!

11. The folly of those who hear, but do not obey (33:30-32).

12. The valley of dry bones, a vision of the restoration (ch. 37). The bones were the "whole house of Israel" (v. 11), now in captivity, their kingdom dead. To open the graves (v. 12) was to give them new life in their own country again. The prophecy was fulfilled in three stages, represented by the shaking of the bones, the flesh and skin coming upon them, and the spirit of life entering into them. Later, Ezekiel describes clearly the restoration, when God would bring them back from captivity and have mercy upon the house of Israel (39:25-28). The prophecy found its fulfillment in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which gave the three stages of the return. (1) Cyrus issued the edict that allowed the Jews to begin rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1:2-3). (2) Darius later published his edict that removed every hindrance to a complete return (Ezra 4:23-24; 6:6-7). (3) Finally, Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah orders to return to Jerusalem to complete the rebuilding of the city and its walls (Neh. 2:7).

Messages –

(1) The terrible nature of sin. It destroys both men and nations.

(2) Individual responsibility – "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (18:20). Men suffer not for the sins of others, but for their own sins (18:1-4; 33:10f).

(3) The necessity of repentance in obtaining forgiveness

of sins (14:1-20; 18:20-32; 33:1-22). God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

The tragedy of sin – God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23). But He has no patience with those who considered their abominations of iniquity “a light thing” (8:17). The people thought that God could not see their evil deeds (8:12), and they “set up idols in their heart” (14:3). The Lord rebuked them because they were hearers, but not doers, of His word. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (33:31). Ezekiel and all the prophets stress the importance of all men in every generation obeying God. Jesus warned, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

Knowledge of God – Ezekiel stresses the importance of knowing God and acknowledging His law as the way of life, even as Jeremiah did. God said that the events and predictions in Ezekiel came to pass so that His people “shall know that I am Lord.” This expression occurs 66 times in the book. The true knowledge of God, revealed in part by the prophets and later in all its glory and perfection in Christ (John 1:14), is essential to our obtaining salvation and everlasting life in heaven (John 17:3). Eliphaz charged Job to “acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). Paul gave up everything “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (Phil. 3:8). “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Peter 1:3-4). This certain knowledge of

God is revealed to us only through the gospel of salvation (Rom. 1:16) and all the inspired scriptures which “thoroughly furnish unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The way of salvation – “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Eternal life is a free gift, but it is a conditional gift. Christ “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). By the word of God we come to know Christ and the saving power of His gospel (John 6:44-45; 8:32). By this knowledge we see that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), that Christ died to save us from sin (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:26), that our sin is most sinful, God’s judgment most sure, and victory through Christ most certain. Each one is responsible for his own sins (18:20; Col. 1:21), and must give an account unto Christ, the righteous judge (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:12). Every person must believe in Christ (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Luke 13:3), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). God gives us the victory over sin and death only through our faithful obedience to Christ (I Cor. 15:57-58; I John 5:4). He has promised, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

V. GREAT LESSONS FROM EZEKIEL

PART II

Twofold theme – The one theme of Ezekiel in the first part of his career is, “Jerusalem must be destroyed,” in answer to the false teachers who encouraged the people to have an unfounded optimism that Jerusalem would be spared. When the final calamity came, a spirit of hopelessness swept over the people, and they cried, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off” (37:11). To combat this despair is the aim of the second part of the ministry of Ezekiel, the prophet of the exile. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah set the future hope of the nation upon those in captivity, rather than the people in the land.

Prophetic methods – Ezekiel employed three methods of teaching in presenting his theme of the certain destruction of Jerusalem. These are his symbolic acts, visions, and allegories.

(1) ***Symbolic actions*** – This type of teaching was a sort of pantomime by which the prophet graphically acted out his message. Examples are his drawing the siege of Jerusalem on the clay brick (4:1-3), lying alternately on each side (4:4-8), eating sparingly of the mixture of various grains cooked upon cow's dung (4:9-16), cutting his hair and scattering it to the winds as symbolic of the various fates of the people of Jerusalem (5:1-17), breaking out of his house with covered head as a symbol of the captivity of the people and of Zedekiah being captured, blinded and taken to Babylon (12:1-16).

(2) ***The visions*** of the book carry the same message. In the spirit, Ezekiel was carried to the temple where he saw various forms of idolatry and abominations (ch. 8-9). The people said, "The Lord has forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (9:9), so they turned to other gods. The prophet saw the executioners of the city draw near (ch. 9), the glory of the Lord departing (ch. 10), and Petaliah, one of the leaders of idolatry, drop dead (ch. 11). These visions make it clear that Jerusalem was doomed.

(3) ***Allegories*** – The prophet presents his theme by numerous allegories, some of which he explains in detail. The vine, national symbol of the Jewish nation, is now worthless wood, whose fate is hopeless (15:1-8). In another allegory, Israel is a foundling girl, taken for a bride, only to become a harlot (ch. 16). In the allegory of the two sisters, Aholah and Aholibah, Samaria and Jerusalem, become harlots (ch. 23), whose perversions Ezekiel describes in extremely plain language. In the allegory of the lions, Ezekiel presents the tragedy of the reigning house. The lioness had trained her sons to catch prey, but the first, Jehoahaz, was captured by hunters and taken to Egypt. The second,

Jehoiachin, was put in a cage and taken to Babylon (ch. 19). Similar points were set forth by the allegory of eagles (ch. 17). These stories make clear that the rulers offered no security.

The glory of God – Ezekiel’s ministry began with a vision of God, and it closes with a vision of God among His people. He describes the appearance of the glory of the Lord (1:1-28; 3:22-27), the departure of His glory from the temple and from Jerusalem (9:3; 10:1-11:23), and the return of the glory of the Lord after the restoration of the temple (ch. 43). The book begins with heavenly glory in the vision of the living creature (ch. 1) and ends with earthly glory, in the vision of the new order (ch. 40-43). In between, it tells of the departing glory (8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23), first to the threshold of the house (10:4), then to the door of the east gate (10:18-19), then from the temple and city to Olivet (11:22-23). “Thus slowly, reluctantly, majestically, the Glory of the Lord left the Sanctuary and the City.” Ezekiel shows that the glory of God could abandon the temple and appear by the River Chebar, near Babylon. God’s glory is not limited to any one place. In the present age, Christ is the glory of God (Heb. 1:3) and our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Our highest purpose in life is to glorify God by our lives and faithful service (I Cor. 10:31; Phil. 1:11), through Christ and the church (Eph. 3:20-21).

The first vision – The power and majesty of God, as seen in the faces of the lion, ox, man and eagle of Ezekiel’s four living creatures (1:4-14), reappear in Revelation 4:6-8. The lion may symbolize God’s supremacy, the ox may represent service or sacrifice, man could represent the manifestation or unveiling of life, and the eagle, unfathomable mystery or Deity. These attributes of God correspond to the descriptions of Christ given by the gospel writers. Matthew presents Him as King; Mark in His sacrificial work as servant; Luke in His perfect manhood, and John in His infinite Deity.

Ezekiel and John – Ezekiel resembles the apostle John, and his book contains many symbols employed also by John in Revelation. Both men were in exile when called to prophesy, both at a time when God's people were oppressed. Both were told to take "a little book and eat it up," a reference to the word of God revealed unto them. Both wrote in visions and symbols. Both foretold the victory of the righteous. Ezekiel assured the faithful remnant of their restoration in Jerusalem. Christ, through John, promised His faithful followers entrance into the eternal city, where they will partake of the tree of life and the water of life forever. The Jews would be delivered from captivity for the sake of the Lord's holy name (36:21-24), and Christians will be saved in the name of Christ and for His glory (Acts 4:12; I Peter 4:16).

God's watchman – God chose Ezekiel to be His watchman in behalf of Israel (ch. 3 and 33), whom He called, "Son of man," about 90 times. The term means a human in contrast to the divine speaker who commissioned him. "The hand of the Lord," is his phrase to express divine control (1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah searched for a righteous man in Israel. Both were God's courageous messengers at a time when God needed men of integrity to call the rebellious nation to repentance. Even Noah, Daniel, and Job could have saved only themselves had they lived in the midst of the stubborn people (14:14, 20). As a watchman over the house of Israel, Ezekiel must "speak to warn the wicked from his way" (33:8). If he failed to warn the wicked, "that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." But if the watchman warned the wicked, then "thou hast delivered thy soul" (v. 9). This is a lesson for Christians in the importance of obeying Christ's command to preach the gospel to every creature. "...He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

VI. UNIQUE MESSAGES OF EZEKIEL

(1) ***Individual responsibility*** – “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (18:4, 20). Yet, God does not desire the death of a sinner, but that he repent and live (18:23,30-32; II Peter 3:9).

(2) ***Idolatry*** – The people had “set up idols in their heart” (14:3). Ezekiel shows that idolatry was an abandoning of the reason for Israel’s existence, motivated by the spirit, “We will be as the heathen” (20:32). The prophet traces their idolatry back to their sojourn in Egypt (20:7-8) and to the wilderness (20:15-16), but it had taken on new forms in Canaan (20:28).

(3) ***God acts “for the sake of his name”*** – He deals in keeping with His essential nature rather than according to their evil ways (20:44).

Messianic hope –

(1) The eagle allegory ends in the Lord planting a sprig of cedar that will bear fruit (17:1-6, 22-24), and “be a goodly cedar,” in whose shade fowls of every kind would dwell.

(2) The joined sticks, Israel and Judah, would have “David, my servant” as king over them forever (37:15-28), a reference to Christ’s reign over His kingdom, the church (Acts 2:32-36).

(3) God promises to become the shepherd to gather the scattered sheep (34:11-16), the source of the Good Shepherd figure used by the Lord (John 10).

Ezekiel and Revelation – References to Ezekiel that appear later in Revelation include the following:

1. The four living creatures (1:5; Rev. 4:6).
2. The rainbow around the throne (1:28; Rev. 4:3).
3. The eating of the scroll (3:1, 3; Rev. 10:10).
4. The sealing of the servants of God (9:4; Rev. 7:3).
5. The burning of the city (10:2; Rev. 8:5).
6. The fall of Tyre and the fall of Babylon (ch. 26-28; Rev. 18).
7. God’s dwelling in the midst of men (37:27; Rev. 21:3).

8. Gog of the land of Magog (38:2-3; Rev. 20:8).
9. The seer placed on a high mountain (40:2; Rev. 21:10).
10. The city measured (40:3; Rev. 11:1; 21:16).
11. The river issuing from the temple (47:1, 12; Rev. 22:1-2).
12. The gates with tribal names on the various sides of the city (48:31-34; Rev. 21:12).

Some memorable verses:

1. Eating of the roll of a book (2:8-3:3) – “There was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe...Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.”

2. “Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth” (8:12).

3. “...Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?...” (8:17).

4. “These men have set up idols in their heart” (14:3).

5. “As is the mother, so is her daughter” (16:44).

6. “The soul that sinneth it shall die” (18:4, 20).

7. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die...For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (18:23, 32).

8. “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (28:15).

9. “But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake...And I will sanctify my great name...and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes” (36:21-23).

10. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit

will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (36:26).

11. “And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there” (48:35).

Conclusion – The man who comes to God with idols in his heart will be answered according to the multitude of his idols. If he does not repent and turn from his idols, they will become a stumbling block and God will destroy him (14:1-11). God wants all men to be saved. With the coming of Christ, the Good Shepherd, God extended His grace and promised everlasting joy to those who turn to Him through Christ.

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand (Ezekiel 3:18).

Chapter 33

The Book Of Daniel

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Key words – Dominion, sovereignty, and triumph.

Key verses – The key verses relate to the theme of God's sovereignty and to the establishment of the Lord's spiritual kingdom, the church, during the fourth great world empire prophesied by Daniel – Chapter 2:20-22; 2:44; 2:47; 4:24-25; 4:37; 6:26 –

2:20-22 – Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

2:44 – And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

2:47 – The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

4:24-25 – This is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as an oxen, and they shall wet

thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

4:37 – Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

6:26 – I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

Key phrase – “The Most High ruleth.”

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – In this chapter God revealed to Daniel the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten, and the Lord gave Daniel the interpretation thereof. There were to be four great world empires, beginning with that of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian. In fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy, it was followed by the Persian Empire, and that succeeded by the Grecian, and Roman Empires, in their turn. During the reign of the kings of the fourth empire, the Roman, “the stone cut out of the mountain without hands,” representing the church, “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (2:34-35).

Chapter 9, is another great chapter. Daniel’s prayer for the people (9:1-9), is a sublime passage. In this chapter, Daniel received the vision of the Seventy Weeks, in which he prophesied the coming of the “anointed one,” the destruction of Jerusalem, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth, the church of which He is head.

Message – Daniel’s main theme is the universal sovereignty of God over the affairs of men and of nations. Man’s respect for the supreme rule of God is the assurance of victory for His people. Daniel saw the spiritually wise

“shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever” (12:3).

Appeal – The universal appeal of Daniel for both people of his day and ours, is that all men everywhere acknowledge that “The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (4:25). God exercises His rule today through Christ, to whom He has given “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). This includes Christ’s rule today over His kingdom, the church, which is His spiritual body, of which He is head. When God raised Christ from the dead, he “...set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23). It is by means of the gospel of Christ, the word of Christ, that He exercises His authority in the church. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). By means of the inspired scriptures Christ furnishes us completely for our teaching and unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16-17).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The prophet – Daniel, whose name means “God is my Judge,” wrote this book in Babylon, probably near the close of his life, B. C. 533. He was one of the first group of captives taken from Jerusalem, B. C. 606, when he was 18 years old, nine years before Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in the second captivity. Daniel and three other young Hebrews of outstanding character and ability were brought before Nebuchadnezzar and trained in the Chaldean language and sciences (1:4, 17-18). He and his companions showed great courage in the midst of trials, from refusing to eat the king’s meat (1:8-16) to their refusal to practice

idolatry (3:1-30; 6:1-24). Daniel “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” with the king’s dainties (1:8). He was unswerving in his loyalty to God. Not one blemish is found in his character. The angel repeatedly called him “greatly beloved.” Ezekiel spoke of Daniel’s righteousness (Ezek. 14:14, 20).

Daniel lived throughout the entire period of captivity and became God’s statesman in Babylon, where probably he died when he was past 90 years of age. His career resembled that of Joseph. He was promoted to the highest office in the realm (2:48), yet maintained his spiritual life in the midst of a heathen court (6:10). His contemporaries were Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, and Obadiah.

The book – Sir Isaac Newton said, “Christianity itself might be said to be founded on the prophecies of Daniel.” Christ set His seal upon this book as inspired of God (Matt. 24:15). It is the greatest book in the Bible on godless kingdoms and the kingdom of God. These are portrayed in chapter 2, from the human standpoint, by a dream; and in chapter 7, from the divine standpoint, by visions. In the first view the world’s kingdoms are represented by a great image, and in the other view, by four vicious beasts.

Like Ezekiel, the book of Daniel resembles Revelation in its symbolic language and its focus on “what shall come to pass” (2:28-29, 45) and “the time of the end” (8:17, 19, 23). Chapters 2:4-7:28 were written in Aramaic, or Chaldee, the rest in Hebrew.

The portrait of Daniel himself is one of the great values of the book. His prayer for the people (9:1-19) is one of its great passages.

Main divisions of the book

Section I – Daniel’s biography and events in Babylon (ch. 1-6).

A. During reign of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 1-4).

1. Daniel’s youth and education, with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in Babylon (ch. 1).

2. Interpretation of the image dream of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 2).
3. Daniel's companions in the fiery furnace (ch. 3).
4. Interpretation of the king's tree dream (ch. 4).
- B. During reign of Belshazzar (ch. 5).
 1. The feast and the handwriting (ch. 5:1-6).
 2. Interpretation and fulfillment (v. 7-31).
- C. During reign of Darius, the Mede (ch. 6).
 1. Daniel's office and danger (v. 1-15).
 2. Daniel's deliverance from the lion's den (v. 16-28).

Section II – Visions and prophecies concerning world kingdoms and the kingdom of Christ (ch. 7-12).

- A. During reign of Belshazzar (ch. 7-8).
 1. The vision of the four beasts and its meaning – the four world empires (ch. 7).
 2. The vision of the two beasts and its meaning – Medo-Persian and Grecian kingdoms (ch. 8).
- B. During reign of Darius (ch. 9).
 1. Daniel's prayer (v. 1-19).
 2. Gabriel's revelation of the seventy weeks (v. 20-27).
- C. During reign of Cyrus (ch. 10-12).
 1. Daniel's vision by the River Hiddekel of a man clothed in linen (ch. 10).
 2. Prophecies concerning Persia and Greece (ch. 11:1-33).
 3. Prophecies concerning "the time of the end" (11:34-12:3).
 4. Daniel and the final word (12:4-13).

World empires of the book – The two heathen monarchs of the book are Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, rulers of Babylon. The empires introduced are Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. (1) The Babylonian Empire (625-536 B. C.) with Nebuchadnezzar as the most powerful ruler, carried Israel into captivity. (2) The Persian

Empire (536-330 B. C.) became a world power through Cyrus, under whom the Jews returned to Jerusalem. (3) The Grecian Empire, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, subdued the entire Persian World. (4) The Roman Empire grew out of the Syrian Empire. During the reign of its kings, “the stone cut out of the mountain with hands” (2:34), representing the church, became a great mountain “and filled the whole earth” (2:35).

Purposes of the book – (1) To magnify the wisdom and power of Jehovah as the God of all nations. (2) To encourage the Jews to resist the evil and idolatrous forces of Babylon. (3) To give a model of righteousness in the life of Daniel and his companions. (4) To give a prophecy or vision of all the times from the day of Daniel to the Messianic prophecy. (5) To portray the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God.

New teachings – Not found in former prophetic books are Daniel’s teachings concerning angels (3:25; 6:22; 9:21; 10:5f; 12:1), and concerning the resurrection of the dead (12:1-4).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM DANIEL

Daniel’s character – Daniel’s resistance of temptation is an example of unswerving loyalty to God. He “purposed in his heart not to defile himself” (1:8). Like Joseph, he would not engage in evil and “sin against God” (Gen. 39:9). He and his companions did not compromise their convictions even to go along with a king’s command. They were not afraid to say, “No.” Christians, too, must “abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22). “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (II Tim. 2:19).

Spiritual courage – In the deliverance of the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace (ch. 3) and of Daniel from the lion’s den (ch. 6), we see the value of true faith and courage. Daniel’s three friends refused to worship the king’s

idol, saying, "...Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (3:17-18). The flame, made seven times hotter than usual, slew the men who cast them into the furnace, but God delivered them. "...The fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (3:27). The miracle caused Nebuchadnezzar to declare, "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego...because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (3:28-29).

Daniel's courage and faith were rewarded when he escaped from the lion's den. It grieved Darius, the Median king, to cast him into the lion's den and he said, "Thy God...will deliver thee" (6:16). He rejoiced when Daniel came out unharmed, and he decreed, "The God of Daniel...is the living God" (v. 26). "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (6:28).

God still is able to deliver His people from every threat and fear of evil. "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:6). "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Miracles in Daniel – Four of the remarkable miracles recorded in Daniel are: (1) The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (ch. 2); (2) The Hebrew's deliverance from the fiery furnace (ch. 3); (3) Daniel's escape alive from the lion's den (ch. 6), and (4) His visions of four great world empires and of the eternal kingdom which God would set up (ch. 2 and 7). These miracles occurred at a time of crisis in God's struggle with idolatry. God's nation had been destroyed by a nation that worshipped idols, evidence to the heathen that the gods of Babylon were more powerful than the God of the Jews. Now, with His people

in captivity in Babylon, God must show who is God, and what purpose was served by the miracles, as we see in their effect upon Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (3:29; 6:26). No doubt these and other miracles during the captivity had much to do with convincing the Jews that Jehovah is the True God, for they never again relapsed into idolatry.

Conflicts – The story of Daniel may be told in the series of six conflicts that were either experienced or witnessed by Daniel in Babylon. (1) Between self-indulgence and conscientious abstinence (1:8-15). (2) Between pagan magic and heavenly wisdom in the interpretation of dreams (2:1-47). (3) Between heathen idolatry and loyalty to God (3:1-30). (4) Between a pagan king's pride and divine sovereignty (4:4-37). (5) Between sacrilege and reverence for sacred objects (5:1-30). (6) Between malicious plotting and the providence of God over His saints (6:1-28).

The never ending kingdom – One of the monumental scenes of the Bible is presented in Daniel, chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. After his magicians failed in their attempts to tell him its meaning, Daniel had a vision from God that revealed to him both the dream and its meaning. Disclaiming any wisdom of his own, Daniel told the king that the secret which none of his wise men could tell him, the God in heaven “that revealeth secrets...maketh known to thee what shall come to pass” (2:27-30).

The dream was of a great image, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay (v. 32-33). He also saw a stone “cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet...and brake them in pieces...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (v. 34-35).

Daniel then gave the interpretation. There would be four great world empires. He said, “Thou, O king, art the head of gold” (v. 38). Kingdoms to follow were represented by the

others parts of the image. From world history we learn that the next was Persia, the conqueror of Babylon, represented by the upper body of silver. The brass part depicted the Grecian empire of Alexander the Great. The legs of iron and feet of iron and clay represented the Roman empire of the Caesars. It was in the day of those kings, the fourth world empire, that God would set up His everlasting kingdom (2:44).

In the New Testament, under the rule of Rome, Jesus promised to establish His kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:18-19). This He accomplished on the day of Pentecost, through His apostles, ten days after His ascension (Acts 2). From that time onward, the inspired writers referred to the church as the kingdom, and to its being then in existence (Acts 8:12; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:23-28; Rev. 1:6-9).

Inspiration – The historical accuracy and exact fulfillment of the predictions by Daniel and other prophets are strong evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Christ and His kingdom came as they foretold. The fate of Babylon and other nations came to pass precisely as prophesied. Jeremiah lived in Jerusalem during the rise of Babylon. Daniel lived in Babylon throughout the period of its greatest power, when it was the first city of the world. Isaiah lived 100 years before. Yet, all three foresaw the fall of Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans pride.” It would become an uninhabited wilderness (Isa. 13:17-22; Jer. 51:37-43). By the first century A. D., most of the city was in ruins. These ruins have been extensively excavated by archeologists for nearly 200 years. Buried records prove Daniel’s accounts. The foundation of the very wall of the palace where the handwriting appeared to Belshazzar was found. Daniel explained the fateful message, which was fulfilled that very night. “Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (5:28). Before the dawn, Belshazzar was slain, “and Darius, the

Median took the kingdom” (v. 30-31). Ancient historians relate that the Persians diverted the Euphrates and “guided by two deserters, marched by the dry bed into the city, while the Babylonians were carousing at the feast of their gods.”

Notable passages:

Chapter 2 – Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image.

Chapter 3 – Hebrew children in fiery furnace.

Chapter 5 – Belshazzar’s feast.

Chapter 6 – Daniel in the lion’s den.

Chapter 7 – The vision of the four beasts, judgment,
Son of Man.

Chapter 12:1-3 – Vision of Michael.

Other notable passages in Daniel –

(1) The Son of Man (Christ) coming to the Ancient of Days (7:13-14).

(2) “Your God is the God of gods” (2:47).

(3) “The abomination that maketh desolate” (11:31; Matt. 24:15).

(4) The vision of Michael (12:1-3).

(5) The soul winner’s reward (12:3; Prov. 11:30).

(6) The words sealed “till the time of the end” (12:4, 9; I Peter 1:10-12).

Choice verses –

1:8 – “Daniel purposed in his heart.”

2:22 – “He revealeth deep and secret things.”

2:44-45 – “A stone cut out of a mountain without hands.”

3:16-18 – “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.”

4:25 – “Till thou know that the Most High ruleth.”

4:37 – “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven.”

6:10 – “And Daniel...kneeled...and prayed.”

6:16 – “Thy God...will deliver thee.”

6:26 – “The God of Daniel...is the living God.”

12:3 – “They that are wise.”

Chapter 34

The Book Of Hosea

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Key word – “Return,” mentioned 15 times.

Key verses – Chapter 4:1; 4:6; 11:7-9 –

4:1 – Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

4:6 – My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

11:7-9 – And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

Key phrase – “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love” (11:4).

Key chapter – Chapter 4 – Just as Hosea’s wife, Gomer, became unfaithful to him, Israel was unfaithful to God. As Hosea continued to love her, forgave her, and restored her, so God continued to love Israel and to seek to restore them. But they would not heed God’s appeals as expressed by Hosea. The nation of Israel had left the

knowledge of the truth and followed the idolatrous ways of their pagan neighbors. Thus, their spiritual adultery caused their downfall and destruction.

The message can be written in three words – Sin, judgment, and love. Hosea’s appeal to Israel was that they realize the nature and enormity of their sin, the necessity of divine judgment, and the triumph of loyalty and love. His final word to the nation was, “...return unto the LORD thy God...say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously...” (14:1-2). Hosea’s appeal to all people in every generation is to know that apostasy from God is spiritual adultery (4:15-18; 5:4; 9:1). He uses the term whoredom 16 times. This exemplifies the relationship between Christ and His church (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33). All sin is infidelity to God’s love. The church is filled with the spiritual adultery of worldliness. Sin against love is the most heinous sin of all. God’s judgment upon Christians who sin against His love and become entangled again in the pollutions of the world is: “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (II Peter 2:20-21). Jesus warns, “I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

II. INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA

Main theme – Hosea showed that Israel’s idolatry and unfaithfulness to God are spiritual adultery. Because sin demands punishment, they must be judged and disciplined. “The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come. Israel shall know it” (9:7). Yet, God loved them still. “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love” (11:4). Just as Hosea loved his unfaithful wife and redeemed her from a life of unchasteness, so God maintained His love for a nation so steeped in infidelity. With unceasing, reconciling love, God promised, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away” (14:4).

The prophet – His name means, “deliverance,” or “God is salvation.” He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-726 B. C.), shortly after Amos, and contemporary with Isaiah and Micah in Judah. Hosea was the only writing prophet of Israel who preached to Israel. Amos, who also preached to the northern kingdom, was from Judah. Jonah, though from Galilee preached in Nineveh. Hosea’s call came at a time of outward prosperity in Israel, but inward decay. He denounced Israel for their unfaithfulness and foretold the captivity that they would suffer. His wife proved untrue, and her infidelity typified Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. As the weeping prophet of the north, Hosea was to Israel what Jeremiah was to Judah. He was the prophet of the sorrowful heart, also called the prophet of divine love.

The book – Hosea is a treatise on repentance, an exhibition of God’s method in the restoration of backsliders by His divine love. The first part of the book (ch. 1-3) gives Hosea’s personal history, in which his marriage to Gomer and their children allegorize the Lord’s relationship to Israel and the infidelity of His people. The second part (ch. 4-14) refers to the nation. It records Hosea’s attack upon Israel for their involvement in the idolatry and immorality of Canaan, with appeals to the backsliding people to return to God, who will receive them in mercy and love. The book contains great variety of thought expressed in vivid figures of speech. Chapter 14 is a great message for backsliders.

Conditions of Israel – The outward prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II was a brief Indian summer before the final decline and destruction of Israel by the Assyrians (II Kings 15:8-17:41). During the last 25 years of the northern kingdom, six kings reigned, four of whom were murdered in office. God’s people forgot the law, substituted the worship of Baal for the worship of Jehovah, and practiced the grossest immoralities. They were guilty of idolatry, lying, drunkenness, lust, robbery, murder and treason. Judah

enjoyed three periods of spiritual revival under Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. There were no revivals in Israel. From the beginning under Jeroboam, “who taught the people to sin,” idolatry abounded and reached a frightful state especially during the reign of Ahab.

Israel’s sins listed – Hosea cites: (1) Israel’s offering in high places (8:13), where they sought grain, wine, and oil from Baal (2:5-7, 13; 4:10-13; 9:10; 10:1-2; 13:1-2); (2) traffic at the shrines with women devoted to harlotry as a religious rite (4:14); (3) open idolatry (8:5; 10:5; 13:2); (4) turning to pagan nations instead of returning to God (5:13; 7:8-11), forming alliances that carried with them temptations to adopt the culture of the nations (12:1-7), and (5) Israel’s trust in material armaments instead of in the Lord (10:3).

The cause of their apostasy – The influence of the Canaanites upon Israel caused them to sin and finally to be punished by the wrath of God. Their spiritual adultery consisted mainly in their worship of Baal, the leading deity in Canaan. Israel’s involvement in Canaanite religion is summarized by Jack P. Lewis:

When Israel came into Palestine she came into a land already inhabited for more than a thousand years. She learned farming from the peoples she did not drive out. But Canaanite farming was integrally connected with religious custom that Israel adopted as the Pilgrims learned from the Indians to put two fish on each side of a grain of corn. Subtly the religion crept in on them.

El, Baal, and Dagon were leading deities in the Canaanite pantheon, but these had their female counterparts in Asherah, Astarte, and Anath...The major object of the rites was to obtain fertility for man, animal and field. Ritual fornication and bestiality were engaged in (**The Minor Prophets**, p. 27-28).

Message to Israel – Hosea’s message was first to Israel, which he mentions 44 times. The leading tribe was

Ephraim, the largest tribe, which he mentions 37 times. Judah is also in view for warning, as seen in the 15 times she is mentioned. Out of his agony of heart, Hosea learned the nature of sin. Out of that agony he learned how God suffers over the sins of His people, because of his undying love.

Because God knows that “the wages of sin is death” and because He loves His people and wants them to live forever, He must judge and punish their sin. Just as Joshua purged Israel of sin in the camp of Achor (Josh. 7), so Israel must now pass through the valley of discipline before reaching “a door of hope” (2:15). Tragically, the nation refused his mercy and was destroyed.

Message to us – God suffers when sinned against, yet loves in spite of sin and seeks to restore the sinner so that He can save him. With all of our ingratitude, unfaithfulness and unworthiness, the Lord “...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). God continues to love us and to call us to repentance and victory in Christ over sin and death (I Cor. 15:56-57; II Cor. 9:15). He will forgive and abundantly pardon those who genuinely repent and turn to Him in loving obedience to His will.

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM HOSEA

Lessons expressed in figurative language (Used to describe the evil conditions in Israel):

1. The Valley of Achor (“troubling”) for a door of hope – Just as Joshua at Achor purged Israel of sin in the camp (Josh. 7:24-26), they must now receive God’s corrections again (2:15).

2. “Ephraim is joined to idols” (4:17).

3. “Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as early dew it goeth away” (6:4), and “as the chaff...and as the smoke out of the chimney” (13:3). Their king was “cut off as the foam upon the water” (10:7).

4. "Mixed among the people" (7:8) – No longer a separated and holy nation. Christians, too, must be a separate people (II Cor. 6:14-18).

5. "Ephraim is a cake not turned" (7:8) – a half-baked cake, dough on one side, worthless, expressing their half-heartedness.

6. "Strangers have devoured his strength" (7:9) – weakened by evil associations.

7. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not" (7:9) – premature old age and unconscious spiritual deterioration.

8. "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart" (7:11) – in flitting between her lovers, Egypt and Assyria.

9. "Israel is swallowed up" (8:8) – their national and spiritual identity is lost.

10. "A vessel wherein is no pleasure" (8:8) – A vessel marred and useless unto the Lord. God's people must be vessels "meet for the master's use" (II Tim. 2:21).

11. "Their abominations were according as they loved" (9:10) – As the Israelites in the wilderness had joined themselves to the daughters of Moab and worshipped their gods, Baal-peor especially, so now they followed their evil hearts to sin.

12. "Like grapes in the wilderness" (9:10), Israel was "an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself" (10:1) – Ripe in idolatry, but no longer bearing fruit for the glory of God.

13. "Break up your fallow ground" (10:12) – Israel had plowed wickedness and reaped iniquity (10:13). Now it was time to seek the Lord by sowing in righteousness and reaping in mercy.

14. "Ye have eaten the fruit of lies" (10:13) – They had trusted in military might instead of God, and now must suffer the consequences of defeat and destruction.

15. "The balance of deceit" (12:7) – God's rebuke of Israel for their falsehood and oppression. The princes of Judah

had even removed the ancient landmarks (5:10).

Life with God is best – Israel had rejected knowledge and had forgotten God and His law, so that the law was a strange thing to them (4:6; 8:11, 14). They had “cast off the thing that is good” (8:3). After following many lovers, and finding no happiness with them, Israel would say, “I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now” (2:7). Life with God is always best. “For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them” (14:9).

The goodness of God – A persistent theme of Hosea is God’s unceasing love for His people and His grief over their sins. Just as Hosea sought to allure his unfaithful wife, God would seek Israel, to “speak comfortably with her” (2:14) and betroth her unto Himself in lovingkindness and faithfulness forever (2:19-20). God cried, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?...mine heart is turned within me” (11:8). He appealed to Israel to “return unto the Lord thy God” (14:1), so that God would “heal their backsliding,” as He assured them, “I will love them fully: for mine anger is turned away from him” (14:4).

Knowledge of God – The proper relationship of men to God is to know God personally and fully. Hosea uses the term that refers to the husband knowing his wife. We must come to know God in the most intimate experience that is humanly possible. God’s people were “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6). They refused to know God. Because there was “no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (4:1), but only “...swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery...Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish...” (4:2-3), as God rejected them and delivered them into the hands of the Assyrians. Hosea’s appeal was, “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up” (6:1). He urged them to press on, or “follow on to know the Lord”

(6:3). "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (6:6). Furthermore, Jehovah is a jealous God, warning, "And thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no savior besides me" (13:4). Jesus came to make God fully known to man and to bring the truth that makes men free (John 8:32). This he summarized in his mission: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Hosea in the New Testament –

(1) God's future grace, the people of God (1:10; I Peter 2:10).

(2) The Gentiles called (2:23; Rom. 9:25-26).

(3) "Our of Egypt have I called my son" (11:1; Exod. 4:22; Matt. 2:15).

(4) "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (6:6; Matt. 9:13; 12:7; Mark 12:33).

(5) "O death, where are thy plagues?" (13:14; similar to I Cor. 15:55).

(6) "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us" (10:8; similar to Luke 23:30).

(7) "On the third day he shall raise us up" (6:1-2; similar to I Cor. 15:4).

Other lessons –

1. The names of Gomer's children (1:3-9) – (a) The first, Jezreel, means "God scatters," a reference to God's punishment of Israel. (b) The second, Loruhamah, means "not pitied," a threat that God would not have mercy on the house of Israel. (c) The third, Loammi, means "not my people," showing that Israel's sins had broken their covenant relationship with God.

2. The triumphant announcement of hope and restoration (1:10-2:1) – Notice the seven "shalls" (v. 10-11), and the assurance. "Say ye unto your brethren, **Ammi** (my people); and to your sisters, **Ruhamah** (having obtained mercy)" (2:1).

3. "Like people, like priest" (4:9) – all had rejected God.
4. "I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel" (6:10) – a reference to the infidelity and defilement of Israel.
5. "I remember all their wickedness" (7:2). Israel had played the harlot (9:1), and the people thought their evil deeds would go unnoticed, but God has a book of remembrance (Mal. 3:16).
6. Although "they howled upon their beds," the people did not cry unto God "with their heart" (7:14). "...With their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. 33:31). We must serve God with our hearts as well as our hands.
7. We reap what we sow, "for they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (8:7; Gal. 6:7; II Cor. 9:6).
8. True prophets are the voice of God, by whom God preserves His people (12:13).
9. Because their kings turned them from the Lord, God removed the rulers. "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (13:11).
10. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help" (13:9). Man destroys himself, but only God can save.
11. "Who is wise" The crown jewel of the book is its last verse, which gives the answer to this question. The wise are those who walk in the ways of the Lord (14:9).

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein (Hosea 14:9).

Chapter 35

The Book Of Joel

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF JOEL

Key words – “Desolate,” or “desolation,” describing the devastation visited upon the Jews by the plagues of locusts and drought. The term occurs six times in Joel along with similar descriptive words, such as devour, destruction, recompense, lament, weep, mourn, judge, and tremble.

Key verses – Chapter 2:11-13; 2:28-29; 2:32 –

2:11-13 – And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

2:28-29 – And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

2:32 – And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Key phrase – “The day of the Lord,” which occurs five times in Joel (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14).

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – Joel uses the locust plague to announce a future “day of the Lord,” far more terrible and devastating than the natural catastrophe they had just experienced, and to call on the people to repent and return to God. In his appeal to Judah to repent Joel promised that God would repent of His judgment upon them, if they would truly turn back to the Lord. When the people refuse God’s gracious offer, Joel foretells the outpouring of the Spirit of God, and warns of “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (v. 28-31), fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, to herald the coming of “the last days,” the Christian dispensation that began on that day, to continue until the end of the world and the final judgment day of the Lord (Acts 2:16-21). Joel 2 is one of the most significant chapters in the Old Testament.

Message – Like Hosea, the book of Joel is a call to repentance. Its subject is the value and importance of God’s chastisement in bringing His people to repentance and restoration. The terrible judgments that God visited upon the Jews because of their sins were intended to cause them to return to God and the enjoyment again of God’s bountiful blessings. They are an example and admonition to Christians to “...despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth...afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness...” (Heb. 12:5-6, 11). The theme of Joel is God’s chastening and saving love for His people.

Appeal – Joel’s appeal to Judah was for the people to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord “with all your heart.” If they would rend their heart and not their garments, they would find the Lord “gracious and merciful.” Then, He promised, “And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (2:27). The universal appeal of Joel is for all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and be converted (Acts 3:19), in order to

receive remission of sins and all the blessings of the gospel that began on Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

The prophet Joel – His name means “Jehovah is God.” His period is uncertain. Tradition gives him an early date, around 770 B. C., the first prophet of Judah. He makes no reference to the Northern Kingdom, or to Assyria, by whom Israel was destroyed. No king is mentioned. Elders and priests are rulers in Jerusalem, as in the post-exile period. An unprecedented plague of locusts furnishes the occasion of Joel’s prophecy. This and plagues of drought and famine are seen as punishments from God for the sins of the people. God sent them severe plagues to call them to repentance.

The book – Joel begins in gloom and ends in brightness. He predicted a time of terrible trouble while promising that God would drive away their enemies and be their hope and strength (3:16). The 73 verses of the book are divided into four chapters in the Hebrew Bible, but only three in other versions, including English. Joel is historical (1:1-2:17), and prophetic (2:18-3:21). There are three major sections: (1) The locust plague and drought to bring the people to repentance (1:1-2:27); (2) the day of the Lord is heralded by the outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-3:16); (3) the glorious future of Judah and Jerusalem (3:17-21).

The locusts (1:1-2:27) – The book of Joel is sometimes called “the locust plague and what it teaches.” It gives the grandest description in all literature of locust devastation (2:4-9), an actual plague of unparalleled magnitude that cut off their food from before their eyes (1:16). Of twelve terms for locust in Biblical Hebrew, four of them are found here (1:4; 2:25) – cutting, swarming, hopping, and destroying – probably different kinds of locusts, or locusts of different

stages of growth. Fields were wasted, wine and oil failed, and the land mourned (1:10). This plague coupled with the drought left the seed to rot under the clods, the rivers to dry up, and both men and beasts to cry unto the Lord because of their resulting famine (1:16-20). The locusts were like war horses, rumbling as chariots, and their sound as the crackling of a flame of fire (2:4-5). An eye witness account of a raid of locusts confirms the reality of the Bible account. "A few months afterwards, a much larger army alighted and gave the whole country the appearance of having been burned. Wherever they settled, it looked as if fire had devoured and burnt up everything" (John D. Whitney, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague," **National Geographic**, XXVII 1915, 511-550).

The locusts were emblematic of an invasion of the land by hordes of enemies. They may be also typical of those in Revelation 9:1-11. Joel viewed the devastation as "destruction from the Almighty" (1:15).

The goodness of God – Apparently in a vision, Joel saw the Jews returning to God with all their heart (2:12) and once more receiving material abundance from the Lord – restoral of wheat, oil and wine (2:19), ample rain in its season (2:23), and there would be plenty (2:26-27). They would rend their heart and not their garments and turn unto God, to find the Lord "gracious and merciful" (2:13). They would be glad and rejoice as God did great things in sending the early and latter rains and in restoring all that was destroyed by locusts and drought (2:21-26). God would judge the nations and recompense the enemies of the Jews (3:1-8). As God thus dealt wondrously with them, He promised, "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed" (2:27). This typified the future glory of Israel when "the Lord also shall roar out of Zion...So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God" (3:16-17).

Joel, the prophet of Pentecost – Peter’s use of Joel 2:28-32, in Acts 2:16-21, is the fulfillment of one of the most significant prophecies in the Bible, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Upon “all flesh” does not mean all human beings, but “my servants” (Acts 2:17-18). Not all Christians received miraculous gifts, but only those in the early church to whom the Spirit willed to give them (I Cor. 12:1-11). God set some in the church to perform various works and endued them with spiritual powers, especially for the work of edification (I Cor. 12:28-30). “All flesh” meant not to Jews alone, but to every class of human beings among the faithful – Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, sons and daughters (Acts 21:9-10).

All who are baptized into Christ are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). This means that we receive the benefits that accrued from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, by which the apostles were guided in the preaching of the gospel of salvation. This gift is **from** the Spirit – the gift of salvation, Christian fellowship, and the hope of eternal life – which we receive by obeying the word of the Spirit. The influence and blessings of the Holy Spirit enter our lives and guide our destinies by means of the word of God, whereby we are saved (Acts 11:14; James 1:21). The word of God is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12), the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). Therefore, “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16), always following the word of God as a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psm. 119:105, 130).

God’s judgment – Who can abide the judgment of the Lord (2:11; Rev. 6:14-17; I Peter 4:17; I Thess. 5:2-3). Joel saw God judging the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2, 12), the valley of divine judgment. He calls this “the valley of decision” (v. 14). Multitudes are standing in the valley of decision, and all must give an account unto God in the final day (Rom. 14:12). Our decision

in regard to Christ now will determine God's decision in regard to us then, and His judgment is forever final.

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM JOEL

“The day of the Lord” – This term is found five times in Joel. It was often used by the prophets to describe any time when there was an outstanding judgment of God on the wicked, and, in some cases, of deliverance for the righteous. Joel's use of it referred to: (1) a time of judgment and destruction from God upon Judah (1:15); (2) a day “great and very terrible,” calling them to repentance (2:1, 11, 31); (3) a day of great wonders when God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (2:28-31); (4) a day of divine judgment upon “multitudes in the valley of decision” (3:14).

Meaning of the symbols of Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21) –

(1) **“Afterward”** – “Last days,” or “latter days” (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1; Acts 2:16-17); Septuagint, “after these things.” This refers to the Christian era, the days of the Messiah, the last period of the world (Heb. 1:1-2). Christ's reign began, to continue until all His enemies are conquered (Acts 2:34-35). The events of “the last days” began on Pentecost, but did not end there (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).

(2) **“All flesh”** – Not all human beings, but “my servants” (Acts 2:17-18) – not Jews only, but every class of human beings among the faithful.

(3) **“The great and notable day”** (Acts 2:20) – three viewpoints: (1) **Was it the day of Pentecost?** Probably not, since the day of the Lord was usually a day of judgment upon the disobedient, as in the destruction of Babylon (Isa. 13:1, 6, 13, 19). (2) **The day of destruction of Jerusalem** (A. D. 70), foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24:2. If this is the day of the prophecy, then the darkening of the sun, etc., is symbolic, the upsetting of the natural course of things through divine intervention. Isaiah used similar language to foretell the fall of Babylon (Isa. 13:10, 13). “Blood, fire,

vapor of smoke” denotes bloodshed and destruction by fire, the signs on earth. “Save yourself from this crooked generation” may relate to the doom of the Jews (Acts 2:40; Luke 11:49-51). (3) **The day of final judgment.** This seems most likely. Judgment day is called the day of the Lord in many passages (I Thess. 5:2; II Thess. 2:1-2; I Cor. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:10; 2:16). The wicked will suffer the wrath of God and the faithful will receive salvation at the coming of Christ (I Thess. 5:9-10; John 5:28-29; II Thess. 1:5-10). John the Baptist foretold both Pentecost and the judgment day (Luke 3:16-17). These are the two most wonderful days in God’s scheme of redemption. The events and message of Pentecost were given to prepare mankind for the judgment. Since a thousand years is a day with the Lord, it is reasonable that the next great event after Pentecost should be coupled with the message of salvation proclaimed on that day.

(4) ***Calling on the name of the Lord*** – In God’s plan for redeeming man the emphasis is upon man’s being taught and voluntarily obeying the gospel, “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17). Only those who are taught can call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13-17). What does it mean to “call?” Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11). The same Greek word for “call” is here translated “appealed.” Paul claimed the right of a Roman citizen in doing so. Ananias instructed Saul to be baptized, “calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). In baptism we appeal to God through Christ for forgiveness of sins, as in I Peter 3:21. After belief, every act of obedience – repentance, confession, baptism, worship, service – must be performed while “calling on the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17). Calling on the name of the Lord means more than simply acknowledging Him. It means that we realize that He possesses all the attributes of Savior, everything His name or title implies (John 1:12; 2:23). It means to rely upon His authority, person, power, commands and promises (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; Isa. 45:22).

Notable points in Joel –

(1) Admonition to drunkards (1:5).

(2) The grandest description in all literature of locust devastation (1:4; 2:4-9).

(3) The first intimation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (2:28-29).

(4) Joel gives the first reference to the Greeks (3:6).

(5) The matter of swords and plowshares, (3:10), is in contrast to Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3. Christ's spiritual kingdom is one of peace, while in Joel's day, instruments of peace must be changed into instruments of war, as the Jews defended themselves against ungodly nations.

Passages echoed in the New Testament, especially in Revelation –

(1) The moon turned into blood (2:31; Rev. 6:12).

(2) The description of the day of the Lord (2:10-11; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25).

(3) Who can abide the judgment of the Lord? (2:11; Rev. 6:14-17; I Peter 4:17).

(4) The judgment as a harvest (3:13; Matt. 13:39; Rev. 14:17f).

(5) Treading the winepress as a symbol of judgment (3:13; Rev. 14:20; 19:15; Isa. 63:3).

(6) The locusts of Joel 2:1-11, may be echoed in Revelation 9:3-11.

(7) "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:32; Rom. 10:13).

Other notable verses –

1:4 – "That which the palmer worm hath left hath the locust eaten..."

1:10 – "The field is wasted, the land mourneth..."

1:14 – "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly...and cry unto the Lord."

1:15, 17 – "Alas, for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come...The seed is rotten under the clods, the garners are

laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.”

2:12 – “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart...”

2:13 – “And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”

2:18 – “Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.”

2:25-27 – “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten...And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed...”

2:28 – “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh...”

2:32 – “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered...”

3:13 – “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.”

3:14 – “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.”

3:18 – “And it shall come to pass in that day...a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD...”

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (Acts 17:30).

Chapter 36

The Book Of Amos

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF AMOS

Key words – Judgment, punishment, captivity, and restoration.

Key verses – Chapter 3:1-2; 3:3; 4:12; 5:14-15; 6:1; 8:11-12 –

3:1-2 – Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

3:3 – Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4:12 – Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

5:14-15 – Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

6:1 – Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

8:11-12 – Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even

to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

Key phrases – “Thus saith the Lord,” and equivalent phrases occur many times throughout the book of Amos. “Seek ye the Lord,” or its equivalent occurs five times, as in 5:4-8: “Seek ye me, and ye shall live...Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live.” Also, they shall “seek the word of the Lord” (8:12).

Key chapter – Chapter 9 – Here God proclaims the complete destruction of Israel and its idolatrous temple in Bethel. The Lord’s judgments are inescapable. “...He that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down...Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us” (9:1-3, 8-10).

God condemned Judah, as well, for despising the law of the Lord (2:4-5). Yet, He promised that He would restore a remnant following their captivity, and they would rebuild the waste cities and inhabit them, and again plant vineyards and gardens and eat the fruit therefore (v. 13-15). The most significant promise was that the throne of David would be restored. “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this” (11-12). Jack P. Lewis offers this comment: “James (Acts 15) found the promise of the restored tent of

David (Amos 9:11-12) a basis upon which to justify the Gentile mission. The point made by James is that the tabernacle has been rebuilt; hence the Gentiles may seek the Lord. It is interesting to notice that the new covenant sect from the Dead Sea area (*Cairo Damascus Document* 7:11 ff.) also appealed to each of these two passages to justify their existence" (this passage and Amos 5:25-27, quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:42-43 to prove that Israel was disloyal already in the wilderness).

Subject – Amos was sent to denounce the sins of Israel and neighboring nations. Not even Judah would escape. Their sins must be judged. They must repent or perish. To warn of the impending doom of the rebellious people was the primary work of the prophet, as God spoke through Jeremiah in reference to the idolatry and wickedness of His people: "I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. 44:4). Thus, Amos speaks of the doom of sinful Israel and defends the justice of God in sending judgment upon His people.

Message – Amos appealed to Israel to "prepare to meet thy God" (4:12). His universal appeal is for all men to know that Jehovah is not only the God of Israel and Judah, but of all nations and all creation (1:2; 4:13; 5:8). He governs all on the same principles of righteousness. Sins may for a time go unpunished, but repentance is the only way of final escape from doom on account of them. God's treatment of the nations is just. He is altogether holy and righteous, and His judgments are not to be questioned. God judges both men and nations.

The living message of Amos is that there is no possible way to escape the consequences of persistent sin. Also, worship without truth and religion without morality are an insult to God. Amos pronounced the doom of Israel, while promising God's mercy if they would repent. His theme is the justice of God against the background of His righteous

and holy love for His people.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

The prophet Amos – His name means, “Burden,” as borne by God. God was burdened with their sins, as a wagon with sheaves (2:13). The message of a prophet was often referred to as his burden, especially a prophecy of doom (Isa. 13:1; Jer. 23:33, etc.). Amos was not of a priestly or prophetic line, but a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees in the village of Tekoa, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem (1:1). He was called of God to go from Judah to the Northern Kingdom as a prophet to Israel (7:15), at a time of outward prosperity but spiritual bankruptcy. In obedience to this call, he went to Bethel, where the sanctuary was, and delivered his bold prophecy. As the prophet of “woe,” he declared that Israel would not escape punishment for her sins. He warned Judah, also, of divine retribution, but promised restoration and the Messianic kingdom. Amos was humble, sincere and faithful, a great, fervent preacher (4:12). He was denounced by the idolatrous priest, Amaziah, who complained to the king, and Amos was forbidden to preach further in Israel (7:10-17). Whether he prophesied elsewhere is uncertain.

The date – Amos was a prophet from Judah to Israel, at an early date, during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jereboam II, king of Israel. Amos was called about 765 B. C., two years before the earthquake, which must have been of great magnitude, because more than 200 years later people were still referring to it (Zech. 14:5). Other prophets of his time were Hosea and Jonah, and possibly Joel. Amos probably wrote this book after he was expelled from Bethel and returned to Tekoa. It is the oldest book of sermons in existence.

Conditions – Israel was in the high tide of prosperity but at the low ebb of spirituality, steeped in idolatry and moral rottenness. Jeroboam I had set up the Northern

Kingdom 200 years earlier, with calf-worship as its religion (I Kings 12:25-33). Israel's kings soon introduced Baal-worship, and the people adopted the abominable practices of Canaanite idolatry and immorality. God sent Elijah and Elisha, but to no avail. Israel, now hardened in wickedness, was speeding on to its ruin, when God sent Amos and Hosea in a final effort to turn the nation back from its certain doom. The whole tone of the book is imminent disaster.

Major problems – Amos denounces their greed, dishonesty, and merciless brutality toward the poor. They were given to excessive luxury and self-indulgence. As did Hosea, Amos sees the land filled with swearing, stealing, injustice, oppression, robbery, adultery, and murder. Their plea was that “we are God’s chosen people.” This only proved that they were without excuse, as God replied, “Therefore I will punish you for your iniquities” (3:1-2).

Their experience, our example –

(1) Amos mentions specifically mistreatment of the poor by their “notable men” (2:6; 4:1), who dwelt in winter and summer houses of ivory (3:15), and were at ease in Zion, upon their beds of ivory (6:1-6). To dishonor the poor man is to blaspheme the name of Christ (James 2:6-9).

(2) Their materialism and idolatry went hand in hand (3:13-15), and so we are warned that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5).

(3) They listened to false prophets and disregarded true men of God. They gave wine to the Nazarites (2:11-12), and abhorred the prophets who spoke uprightly (2:12; 5:10; Isa. 30:10-11), just as there are those in the Christian age who “will not endure sound doctrine” (II Tim. 4:2-4).

(4) The Israelites practiced immorality and idolatry and corrupted justice (2:7-8; 5:7, 12; Hosea 5:10; 6:10).

(5) They had an arrogant spirit that would not repent or hearken to God’s pleading to “seek ye me and ye shall live” (4:10-12; 5:4).

(6) Their worship was only noise before God (5:21-23),

lacking in reverence (Psm. 89:7) and true humility (Psm. 95:6-7). God would not accept their offerings unless and until they practiced justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24). "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers..." (I Peter 3:12).

(7) In their worship and service they pleased themselves rather than seeking to please God (4:4-5). Our purpose in life is to please and honor God by being as God-like as it is humanly possible for us to be (I Cor. 10:31; II Cor. 5:9).

The book – The life of the herdsman is reflected in the illustrations he uses, such as the bird in the nest, two men meeting in the desert, sycamore trees, locusts, a basket of summer fruit, the wagon loaded with sheaves, cattle driving, winnowing of grain, and a shepherd snatching from the mouth of a lion two legs and a piece of ear. Although Amos had no schooling, he is unsurpassed in vividness and simplicity of speech. The book consists of a series of oracles (1:3-2:16), a series of sermons (3:1-6:14), and a series of visions (7:1-9:10).

Divine inspiration – "Thus saith the Lord" occurs 40 times in this prophecy. God gave Amos words to speak and visions to relate. He was not a prophet or a son of a prophet (7:14). Yet, God called him to "Go, prophesy to my people." Amos understood that prophets were raised up by the Lord (2:11), who revealed the secrets to the prophets (3:7-8). His words were of things that he saw (1:1), the words which God gave to him in the same manner as all scripture is inspired of God (Matt. 10:19; Jer. 1:9; I Cor. 2:13; II Peter 1:21).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM AMOS

Main points of the book – Four main divisions concerning Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations.

- I. Condemnation of the nations – their sins and sorrows (ch. 1-2).

1. Introduction – Amos called at an early period; “the Lord will roar from Zion” (1:1-2).
 2. God’s fierce wrath is pronounced against Israel’s neighbors – Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Moab, Ammon and Edom – nor shall Judah escape (1:3-2:5). Note the formula (v. 3), repeated eight times.
 3. Israel’s sin shall be punished (2:6-16).
- II. Condemnation of Israel – “therefore I will punish you for your iniquities” – Five speeches denouncing their sins (ch. 3-6).
1. The first three of these discourses begins with, “Hear this word,” and the last two with, “Woe.” Each ends with, “Therefore.”
 2. Sins of luxury, injustice, violence and robbery (ch. 3).
 3. Sins of oppressing the poor, idolatry, and hardness of heart (ch. 4). “I have withholden the rain from you...I have smitten you with blasting and mildew...I have sent among you the pestilence...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD O ISRAEL” (4:7-12).
 4. Rebuke of Israel for their false confidence in self-righteousness and divine call to repentance (ch. 5).
 5. “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion” (ch. 6).
- III. Five visions concerning Israel (ch. 7:1-9:10). Each disaster is a new call to repentance.
1. The locusts (7:1-3) – A threat of God’s punishment. Amos pleads for Israel and God spares them.
 2. The fire (7:4-6) – Again the prophet pleads, and God again relents.
 3. The plumbline (7:7-9) – God’s testing of Israel

and His warning of their doom. Amos pleads no more.

4. A basket of summer fruit (ch. 8) – Their iniquity was ripe for punishment. “The end has come upon my people Israel” (8:2).
5. The destruction of the altar (9:1-10) – No more services; none shall escape, though they “dig into hell” or “climb up to heaven;” or hide in the top of Carmel or in the bottom of the sea. “I will search and take them out thence.”

IV. Oracles of hope, promise of a better day to dawn (ch. 9:11-15).

1. Restoration of a remnant from Babylon.
2. The restored tabernacle of David prefigured the messianic kingdom, the church, through which salvation would be extended to the Gentiles (9:11-12), quoted by James in Acts 15:16-18, as proof that Gentiles were saved by the gospel and were not to be bound by the law of Moses.

The lion roars – Amos is sometimes called, “The gospel of the lion’s roar.” The Lord roared from Zion (1:2; 3:8). It was a time of prosperity. The sheep seemed safe and serene. Then the lion roars and judgment is inescapable. The enemy is not named, but the lion is roaring. Perhaps it is the lion of Assyria. The Lord roars through the Assyrian lion. A nation was to oppress them (6:14); Israel will go into exile beyond Damascus (5:27). Israel must face the day of the Lord, a day of “darkness, and not light” (5:18), the day of judgment that was the key note of Joel’s prophecy. In the face of their sins and impending punishment, Amos could only sing the funeral song of Israel (5:1-2; 8:3). The end was not long in coming. About 40 years after Amos uttered his oracles, the Northern Kingdom fell before the siege of Assyria. The lion had roared and taken his prey. Israel was no more.

How could a God of love punish His people? – Since

the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and since man, left in sin, would be miserable in all eternity, God must destroy sin and punish the impenitent sinner. Jesus came both “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10) and to “destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). “To preach the God of real, active love...is as Amos reminds us, to speak words of rebuke and condemnation. If God cared less, if Amos had been less sensitive to His word, we might have had a pleasanter book, but it would not have in that situation, spoken of God’s infinite and patient love” (John Marsh of Oxford).

“Firsts” in Amos – (1) Amos first called the nation, “The virgin of Israel” (5:1-2). (2) He was the first prophet to threaten Israel with exile (5:27). (3) He first presented the concept of the “day of the Lord” (5:18).

Some other notable verses from Amos –

2:4-5 – “...because they have despised the law of the LORD...I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”

3:3 – “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

4:6 – “And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

5:12 – “For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins...”

5:14-15 – “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live...Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate...”

5:18 – “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD...”

5:19 – “As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him...”

5:23 – “Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.”

6:1-6 – “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion...That lie upon beds of ivory...That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David...but

they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”

7:7-8 – “...Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more.”

8:11-12 – “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD...they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

Chapter 37

The Book Of Obadiah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Key word – Calamity.

Key verses – Obadiah 10, 15, and 21 –

Verse 10 – For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

Verse 15 – For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

Verse 21 – And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

Key phrase – “Thou shouldest not have” (v. 12-14).

Subject – Obadiah foretold the overthrow of Edom, Esau's descendants, which was also predicted in Isaiah 34:5-15; Jeremiah 49:17-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; and in Amos 1:11-12. The prophet wrote both to warn Edom and comfort Judah. Edom's destruction was certain as divine punishment for their pride and cruelties toward their “brother Jacob.” Edom is doomed, but Judah will be delivered and restored, a prophecy of the return from Babylonian captivity (v. 15-21).

Appeal – Obadiah warned Edom of the folly of pride and self-trust and of the certainty of divine judgment. His appeal to Judah and to all people is that God's judgments are right and His providence is over all nations and men. In God's displeasure with Edom for her cruel treatment of Judah there is a warning that God will visit His judgment upon those who are without compassion and who cause

distress to others. Obadiah's message is a rebuke of pride, of a lack of spirituality, and of a lack of brotherliness. It is also an affirmation of the law of divine retribution. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee" (v. 15). It shows that God's hand is against all evil everywhere (v. 16; I Peter 4:17).

Such mercilessness violates the spirit of love, for love is kind and does not rejoice in iniquity (I Cor. 13:4, 6). Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). But, "he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13). In Obadiah's vision of Judah's restoration, we see the delivering or vengeful love of God for His people.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

The prophet Obadiah – Obadiah means "Servant of the Lord." Nothing is known of the prophet. He cannot be identified with any of the 13 men with this name in the Old Testament. The calamity that Jerusalem suffered, of which Obadiah wrote (v. 11-14), and Judah's captivity (v. 20), must have been that brought about by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B. C. If so, Obadiah wrote after that date.

The book – Obadiah is called a vision (v. 1) and is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It is one of the seven Old Testament books that are not quoted or cited in the New Testament. Others are Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Obadiah, v. 1-9, closely resembles Jeremiah 49:7-16. Phrases found in Joel, chapter 3, are similar to some passages in Obadiah, such as, "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness for the violence against the children of Judah" (Joel 3:19). There are three parts in the book: (1) Announcement of judgment against Edom (v. 1-9), (2) Edom's sins that caused the judgment (v. 10-16), and (3) the promise of Judah's restoration when they would again "possess their possessions" (v. 17-21).

The Edomites – Descendants of Esau, they were proud, bitter, resentful people. They became idolaters (II Chron. 25:14-15, 20). Edom occupied a narrow mountainous strip of territory, 110 miles long and 30 miles wide, on the eastern side of the Palestinian valley, bounded on the east by desert. Seir is another name for the region that refers to the mountain range that runs north and south through its length (Gen. 32:3; Deut. 2:1, 5). The ancient capital was Bozrah. In Obadiah's time it was Sela, probably the city later known as Petra. This rock ribbed fortress in the midst of Mt. Seir gave the Edomites an impregnable defense. The security of their strongholds aided their military success and fed their pride. The pride of their heart would prove their downfall, and God would bring them down from their "nest among the stars" (v. 3-4), even as He had warned Israel that He would bring them down from heaven (Amos 9:2). By 312 B. C., Edom was called Idumea. During the Maccabean period, about 120 B. C., they were subjected to Judaism, and with the Jews they later came under Roman domination. Herod was an Idumaeen.

Edom and Israel – The enmity between Israel and Edom goes all the way back to the prenatal struggle of the ancestors, Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:22f), and the conflicts that followed. Johnny Ramsey refers to the history of Edom as "the high cost of a bowl of soup." Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and gave up his bright future for carnal pleasure. His descendants became a base and worldly nation, just as lacking in spirituality as was Esau. The Edomites had a grudge against Israel because Jacob had cheated Esau out of the blessing of their father, Isaac (Gen. 27:41), and their hatred for Israel was perpetual (Ezek. 35:3; Amos 1:11). David conquered their territory (II Sam. 8:13-14), but their later revolts reflected their sinful pride and godless defiance.

Some of Edom's crimes – (1) During the wilderness wanderings, they refused to permit the Israelites to pass

through their land (Num. 20:18-21). (2) In the reign of Jehoshaphat (914 B. C.), they attempted to invade Judah but failed (II Chron. 20:22). (3) In 586 B. C., they joined the Babylonians in the siege and capture of Judah, cheering the enemy on against Jerusalem, saying, "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof" (Psm. 137:7; Amos 1:11). (4) The occasion of Obadiah's prophecy is the cruelty of the Edomites in rejoicing over the fall of Jerusalem (v. 10-11).

Obadiah's description of Edom's sins – God promised to uncover the sin of Edom (Lam. 4:21-22) and announced His wrath and everlasting indignation against them (Mal. 1:1-4). Obadiah pronounced their doom because of their "violence against thy brother Jacob" (v. 10). They refused to help and became as one of the conquerors (v. 11). They rejoiced over the destruction of Judah (v. 12), shared in looting their substance (v. 13), and cut off the Jews' way of escape (v. 14). The Edomites participated further in the calamity of Judah by handing the fugitives over to their enemies (v. 14). In the day of Judah's affliction, they stood on the other side; in the day of disaster they simply looked on their brother; in the day of destruction they rejoiced; in the day of calamity they laid hands on their substance; in the day of distress they spoke proudly. Note the similarity of their conduct to that of the priest and the Levite in Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Edom must be punished – Their doom would be complete. "The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood...for Jehovah hath...a great slaughter in the land of Edom...For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion" (Isa. 34:6-9, ASV).

Lessons from the book –

1. The folly of pride – Edom trusted in her strongholds in the clefts of the rock, and the Lord said, "I will bring thee down" (v. 1-4). Compare Proverbs 16:18 and I John 2:15-17, concerning the sin of pride.

2. Lessons on sin – Sin's chief element is pride; its chief manifestation is violence, and its final issue is retribution. We reap what we sow.

3. Rebuke – "Obadiah is a standing rebuke to the spirit that prefers not to become involved in the problems of others, but it is even more a rebuke to him who finds a sadistic joy in the misfortunes of another" (Jack Lewis, **The Minor Prophets**, 95).

4. God's providential care of His people – He used nations both to punish the wicked and to preserve the righteous. "We cannot pass beyond the sphere of God's providence."

5. God judges nations as well as individuals. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psm. 33:12). God judges all the nations righteously (Psm. 67:4).

6. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psm. 118:8). Had Edom trusted in the Lord rather than in their armies, strongholds and alliances with other nations, they would have escaped God's curse. "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5).

7. One who is an enemy of God's people is also an enemy of God. So God promised Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3). Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

8. The day of the Lord was a prelude to the final judgment (v. 15; Amos 5:18; Jer. 46:10).

9. Hope – There is hope for those who repent of sin and seek God. A remnant would be restored in Judah (v. 17-20).

10. "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v. 21) – This

may have been a reference to God's sovereignty over all nations (Psm. 22:28; 47:7-9), and indirectly to the kingdom of Christ, when living waters would go forth from Jerusalem over all the earth (Zech. 14:8-9).

Fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy – Edom would be cut off forever and “be as though they had not been,” while a remnant of Judah would be saved and the kingdom of God would yet prevail (v. 17, 19, 21). Only four years after the fall of Jerusalem, in 582 B. C., Edom was raided and desolated by the Babylonians, the same nation that had taken Judah captive. A few Edomites were left in South Judea, where for four centuries they continued as enemies of the Jews. In 126 B. C., they were subdued by the Maccabean rulers and absorbed by the Jewish state. When the Romans conquered Palestine (63 B. C.), they placed the Herods, an Edomite (Idumean) family, over Judah. With the destruction of Jerusalem (A. D. 70), the Edomites disappeared from history.

Principles – Obadiah is a rebuke of pride, of the lack of spirituality, and of the lack of brotherliness. It is also an affirmation of the law of divine retribution. “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.” It shows that God's hand is against all evil everywhere (v. 16; I Peter 4:17).

Notable verses from Obadiah:

Verse 3 – “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee...”

Verse 4 – “Though thou exalt thyself as an eagle, and set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.”

Verse 8 – “Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?”

Verse 10 – “For violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.”

Verse 11 – “In that day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away captive his

forces...and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou was as one of them.”

Verse 17 – “But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance...”

Verse 18 – “There shall not be any remaining in the house of Esau.”

Verse 21 – “And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:45-46).

Chapter 38

The Book Of Jonah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF JONAH

Key word – Repentance.

Key verses – Chapter 2:7, 2:8-9, and 4:2 –

2:7 – When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

2:8-9 – They that observe lying vanities (worthless idols – NKJV) forsake their own mercy. But I sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

4:2 – And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Key phrase – “Let them turn every one from his evil way” (3:8).

Key chapter – Chapter 3 – This records the repentance of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah. God called Jonah the second time to preach to that great city “the preaching that I bid thee” (v. 2). It took three days to journey across Nineveh, and as he went, Jonah cried, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (v. 4). His message consisted of only eight words. Yet, it was one of the most effective sermons ever preached. It resulted in what one has called “the greatest revival of all time.” The entire city, king and people alike, “believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the

least of them” (v. 5). They cried out mightily unto God, as the king commanded, saying, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” (v. 8-9).

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not” (v. 10). Jesus referred to the example of Nineveh to show the necessity of repentance. “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:41). This reference also gives the meaning of true repentance. When the people of Nineveh repented, “they turned from their evil way.”

Message – God’s concern for Nineveh is an example of the universal, forgiving love of God for all men. Jehovah is the God of all nations. He is concerned for the salvation of all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles. God wants all men to repent and be saved. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:3-4). “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

Appeal – The appeal to Jonah was God’s call to go to Nineveh and cry out against the wickedness of that great city, the capital of Assyria, one of the ruling nations of the ancient world. The appeal to Nineveh was for the people to “turn every one from his evil way.” The universal appeal of the book of Jonah is for all men of every generation to know that Jehovah is the God of all nations, that God means what He says, that He has the knowledge of all things, and that we cannot hide from, or flee from God. We must accept Jehovah as a God of mercy. He cares for all mankind and

wants all to believe, repent and be saved. These events prove the power of preaching and repentance. They typify the power of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, Jesus commanded His disciples to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

(1) *The mercy of God.* As we have seen, a number of divine purposes are given in the book of Jonah. First, that Jehovah is the God of Gentiles and of all men, as well as the Jews. God's mercy extended first to Jonah and then to Nineveh, shows God's willingness to forgive and redeem those who will truly turn to Him.

(2) *Christ in the book of Jonah.* The central purpose of Jonah is that of prophesying the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Jonah is the only Old Testament character that Jesus singled out as a great type of Himself. The Lord referred to Jonah's miraculous survival after three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, as a specific type of His own death, burial and resurrection. Jesus called it a "sign," affirming the biblical account of Jonah as factual and historical and that the miraculous act is a token of divine authority and power. Thus Jesus answered the skepticism of the Jewish leaders. "Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah;

and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32).

III. THE MIRACLES RECORDED BY JONAH

(1) ***Seven miracles recorded.*** These were: the mighty tempest (1:4); the sudden calm (1:15); the great fish that God prepared to swallow up Jonah (1:17); Jonah's deliverance from the sea-monster (2:10); the gourd that God prepared to shade Jonah (4:6); the prepared worm that smote the gourd (4:7), and the sultry, scorching east wind also prepared by God (4:8).

(2) ***Miracles confirm the account.*** These wonders prove that the book of Jonah is of divine origin and authority. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16). "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Concerning the great salvation, the gospel of Christ, we read that it "at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:3-4).

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

Jonah – His name means, "Dove." He is called "the reluctant missionary." He preached in Israel in the days of Jeroboam II (790-749 B. C.). Jonah is first mentioned when he gave God's word that the Lord would spare the Northern Kingdom for a while (II Kings 14:25-27). He was a real person, the son of Amittai, who was of Gath-heper in Galilee, a few miles north of Nazareth. He was contemporary with Amos and Hosea and possibly Joel.

The book – The date is uncertain, but most likely it was written by Jonah between 790 and 750 B. C. It is a narrative about the prophet more than a collection of the prophet's oracles. It is a record not so much of his preaching

as of his actions. Jonah's message is to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The book relates his adventures, his preaching at Nineveh, and their repentance and deliverance. His message consisted of only eight words: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). Is the book history, allegory, or fiction? Jesus' reference to it is proof enough that it is historical and God's word. Also, the Jews before Christ accepted the book as a true narrative, one of the canonical books of prophecy.

Main divisions – (1) Jonah's first call, his flight from duty, chastisement, prayer and deliverance (ch. 1-2). (2) his second call, preaching at Nineveh, their repentance and judgment averted (ch. 3). (3) Jonah's anger and complaint, god's rebuke and divine mercy (ch. 4).

Uniqueness of Jonah – (1) The only latter prophet who wrote in narrative form. (2) The only minor prophet in whose career miracles played a major role. (3) The only one whose principal activity was on foreign soil and who preached exclusively to a foreign people. (4) The only minor prophet mentioned by Jesus. (5) Jonah was the only Old Testament character whose record includes a trip on the Mediterranean.

The converted prophet – Nineveh was 500 miles east of Palestine. Jonah fled in the opposite direction as he attempted to go to Tarshish, thought by many to be Tartessus in Spain, about 2,000 miles west of Palestine. He embarked from Joppa, 50 miles from Gath-heper. Jonah's experience with the storm and the great fish converted him. So he was ready to obey when God commanded him a second time to preach against Nineveh. "A converted prophet made a powerful preacher." At Jonah's preaching, the people repented, from the king on down, and they fasted in sack cloth and ashes.

The lesson of the gourd vine – When the Ninevites turned from their evil way, "God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not"

(3:10). So He spared the great city of three days journey. Jonah was disappointed when the people repented (4:1). He had too much concern for his own reputation as a prophet (4:2-5). He was pleased with the gourd vine that the Lord provided to shade him, but all the more bitter when it was cut off by the worm (4:6-8). God called Jonah's attention to his concern for the worthless plant. Could he not then understand God's concern for the 120,000 innocent persons of Nineveh (4:9-11)? These were probably the infants of Nineveh, since they knew neither right nor wrong. Nineveh's population probably was 600,000 or more, possibly a million.

Questions about the whale – Was the great fish a whale? If so, is it possible for a whale to swallow a man? Is it humanly possible for one to survive for three days and nights in the belly of a fish? The Hebrew word may be a fish of any species, including a whale. There are reports, but no authentic cases known of a man being swallowed by a fish and later being cast forth alive. The issue of the book is that God **prepared** a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and God caused him miraculously to survive.

Nineveh – The Assyrian capital was the Corinth of its day, steeped in wickedness (1:2). Assyria was a world empire for 300 years (900-607 B. C.). God used it to punish His rebellious people, because “they had sinned against the Lord their God...and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen” (II Kings 17:7-8). God spoke of the Assyrian ruler as “the rod of mine anger” against Israel (Isa. 10:5). About 30 years after Jonah's visit to Nineveh, God used the penitent heathen nation to punish His impenitent people. The Northern Kingdom fell in 721 B. C., and the Israelites were carried as captives into Assyria.

Nineveh's reforms were short-lived. A little more than 100 years after the fall of Israel, Nahum announced the doom of the cruel and wicked city. “Woe to that bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery” (Nahum 3:1). Zephaniah also foretold the destruction of Nineveh, for “this is the rejoicing

city, that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me: how is she become a desolation" (Zeph. 2:15). One may say, "Remember the lesson of Nineveh; how soon we forget!"

V. GREAT LESSONS FROM JONAH

God's pity – The main theme of Jonah is the fundamental truth of the whole Bible. The divine presence, divine patience, divine power, and divine pity are all revealed in Jonah. "Should I not have pity on Nineveh?" is the major theme. The word pity is significant. The Hebrew word literally means cover, or shield from danger. Compare the words of Christ in Matthew 23:37-39.

Lessons Jonah learned – (1) The folly and peril of running away from duty. (2) Jonah "paid the fare" (1:3). Sinners must pay the price of disobeying God (Rom. 6:23). (3) "Salvation is of the Lord" (2:9). (4) "Preach...the preaching that I bid thee" (3:2). (5) "Thou art a gracious God" (4:2). (6) Jonah was foolish for having greater concern for a gourd than for the souls of the Assyrians (4:10).

Main points – (1) God means what He says. (2) God has knowledge of all things. He knows where we are. We cannot hide from God. (3) God needs and sends messengers, using imperfect men as channels of truth and imperfect nations as instruments of His will. (4) God cares for all mankind. (5) Jehovah is a God of mercy. (6) The power of preaching and repentance.

Messages of the book of Jonah

1. The universality of God's presence. Compare Psalm 139:7-12; Amos 9:2-4.

2. Jehovah is the God of all nations (Psm. 72:11; 113:2; Acts 17:26).

3. God is concerned for the salvation of all mankind – Jews and Gentiles (John 3:16; Acts 10:34-35; Romans 1:16).

4. God wants all men to repent and be saved (Acts 17:30; II Peter 3:9).

5. Nineveh is an approved example of genuine repentance (3:10; Matt. 12:41).

6. The conditional nature of prophecy. Man's repentance can change God's mind and stay His judgment (3:9-10; Jer. 18:7-10).

7. True repentance and God's forgiveness. Nothing but genuine godly fear and repentance can bring deliverance from God's wrath. Repent or perish (Luke 13:3).

8. The duty of the preacher or prophet. He must preach just what God gives him (3:2), where God tells him to, without concern for personal interests, and leave the results to God. Compare II Timothy 4:1-4.

9. Man is a creature of choice and must give an account unto God for his choices (Rev. 22:17; Rom. 14:10-12).

10. Our influence is far reaching, greater than we think, by both our words and our works (I Tim. 4:16).

11. God's concern for Nineveh foreshadowed the entrance of the Gentiles into covenant relationship with God, through the gospel (Acts 11:18).

12. We must show godly compassion toward others (Col. 3:12-14).

13. God's dominion is over the universe (Isa. 66:1-2).

14. Jonah reveals the supremacy of divine mercy over divine judgment – an attribute of God ultimately expressed in the salvation of man through the gift of God's Son, as in the words of a hymn by Frederick W. Faber:

There's a wideness in God's mercy, Like the
wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in His justice, Which is more
than liberty.

Other notable passages from Jonah

1:3 – "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord...and he found a ship...paid the fare thereof, and went down into it."

1:12 – "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake

this great tempest is upon you.”

2:7 – “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.”

2:9 – “Salvation is of the Lord.”

3:5 – “So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sack cloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.”

3:10 – “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way.”

4:2 – “I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”

4:10-11 – “Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd...and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern their right hand from their left hand.”

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13:3).

Chapter 39

The Book of Micah

1. Keys to the Book of Micah

1. **Key words** – Hear, judgment, and restoration.
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 6:8; 7:18:

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (6:8).

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy (7:18).

3. **Key phrases** – “This time is evil (it is an evil time—ASV).” And, “when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” Micah 2:3; 7:8.
4. **Key chapters** – Chapter 6 & 7:

The closing section of Micah can be compared with a courtroom scene. God has a controversy with his people, and he calls the mountains and hills together to form the jury as he presents his case. “The people have replaced heartfelt worship with empty ritual, thinking that this is all God demands. They have divorced God’s standards of justice from their daily dealings in order to cover their unscrupulous practices. They have failed to realize what the Lord requires of man. There can only be one verdict: guilty.” (**The Open Bible, The New King James Version**, p. 921).

As Micah foresees the repentance of the Jews after their captivity in Babylon and the coming of the kingdom of Christ, he declares, “Therefore I will look unto the LORD;

I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me" (7:7). The heathen nations will come to fear the Lord, and God in mercy will forgive the sins of his people.

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old (7:19-20).

5. **Theme** – Micah was from Judah, but prophesied both to Judah and Israel. He denounced the wickedness of both of the divided kingdoms and foretold their punishment. He shows God's hatred of evil and his delight in pardoning the penitent. Micah spoke particularly to Israel and Judah, primarily to the two capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem. Yet, he teaches all men the need for humility and repentance. He shows clearly that the wages of sin is death. On the other hand, Micah gives assurance of the ultimate triumph of truth and right. The book of Micah portrays God's pleading, punishing, and pardoning love for his people.

6. **Micah's plea** – As Micah foretold the destruction of Israel by Assyria and Judah by the Babylonians, he never ceased to plead for their repentance and to assure them of divine pardon and restoration (2:12; 5:6-8). He speaks both of their immediate desolation and their future glory. In the identical language of Isaiah 2:2-3, Micah prophesied of the coming kingdom of the Lord (Micah 4:1-2). The universal appeal is for all men to understand and appreciate the nature and effect of the reign of Christ over his everlasting spiritual kingdom, the church of the Lord that began on the first Pentecost after his ascension (Acts 2). All must receive this kingdom by obeying the gospel of Christ in order to obtain salvation and every spiritual blessing. Under the Prince of Peace, citizens of his kingdom learn the ways of peace, and become peacemakers, to love their enemies and to learn war no more (Micah 4:3).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF MICAH

The prophet. His name means "Who is like the Lord?" It is typical of his message. "Who is a God like unto thee..." (7:18), in pleading, punishing, and pardoning? Micah was a farmer-preacher from Moresheth, a small town of Gath, about 25 miles south of Jerusalem. He prophesied both to Israel and Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Pekah and Hoshea, the last two kings of Israel. He was a younger contemporary of Isaiah in the south and of Hosea in the north. Unlike Isaiah, who moved among the rulers in Jerusalem, Micah was a humble countryman, who sympathized with the common people. He denounced the social wrongs of the time and became the people's advocate and defender as well as their accuser. But both Isaiah and Micah recognized the divine sovereignty and holiness of God. Each pointed out that disobedience to God brings punishment, and faithfulness brings divine favor. Micah gives no account of his call to prophesy, but we know that he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord (3:8). He was God's spokesman in pronouncing divine judgment upon princes, priests, prophets and people. He could hardly be called a popular preacher, for like Paul, he did not preach to please men (Gal. 1:10). He is bold, severe, and uncompromising, yet loving, tender and consoling toward them that repent.

The book. The heart of Micah's message is God's controversy with his people (6:2). The prophet denounced the wickedness both of Judah and Israel and foretold their punishment. Israel would be destroyed by Assyria, and the people would perish in captivity (1:6-7). Judah would be invaded by the Assyrians, but spared (1:9-16). Later, the Babylonians would take Jerusalem and destroy the temple (3:12; 7:13), and carry the Jews away captive to Babylon (4:10). A remnant would be restored, the Messiah would come, and the everlasting kingdom established (4:1-8, 13;

5:2; 7:11, 14-17). With his denunciation of their sins and pronouncement of their doom, Micah never ceased to plead for their repentance and to assure them of divine pardon and restoration (2:12; 5:6-8). He speaks both of present desolation and of future glory.

Main divisions. Micah is difficult to analyze. The prophet speaks of the people's sins, destruction and restoration. He mixes these elements throughout the book, which seems to fall into three parts.

(1) God summons the people to hear (chap. 1, 2): "Hear, all ye people..." (1:2); declaration of impending judgment, and promise of blessing after judgment (2:12-13).

(2) God summons the leaders to hear (Chap. 3-5): "...Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob..." (3:1); sins of the princes and prophets; end of idolatry; restoration of a remnant; establishment of the kingdom (4:1-3); and the triumph of the ruler from Bethlehem (5:2).

(3) God summons the mountains to hear (Chap. 6, 7): "...Hear ye, O mountains..." (6:1-2); God's controversy with his people, and the Lord's compassion for Israel.

Social and spiritual conditions. "...for it is an evil time." (2:3, ASV). Micah lamented the disappearance of the righteous man (7:2). He was concerned with the social injustice and moral decay of his time, but even more alarmed by the idolatry and spiritual sickness that produced the other disorders. God had sent Elijah, Elisha, and Amos to turn Israel back from idols, but in vain. The Northern kingdom was ripe for the death blow. Despite the further warnings of Hoshea and Micah, stubborn Samaria continued to its doom. The fall of Israel in Hezekiah's reign should have been a lasting lesson to Judah. They had suffered much under the reign of the former king, Ahaz, a gross idolator and one of Judah's most wicked rulers. But the reforms of Hezekiah, for which Micah was partly responsible, were short-lived. Judah ignored the warning, and Micah joined Isaiah in pronouncing the doom of the nation at the

hands of the Babylonians (4:10). The history of the period is given in II Kings 15:32-20:21 and II Chronicles 27:1-32:33).

Sins listed. (1) All forms of idolatry—graven images, idols, pillars, work of their hands (1:7; 5:13); (2) evil plans and devices (2:1); (3) covetousness (2:2); (4) grabbing of lands and houses (2:2, 9); (5) witchcrafts (3:7; 5:12); (6) dishonesty—scant measure, wicked balances, deceitful weights (6:10-11); (7) violence (6:12); (8) lying (6:12); (9) walking in the counsels of Omri and Ahab, instead of obeying God's law (6:16); (10) universal corruption, from the least to the greatest— "...That they may do evil with both hands earnestly..." (7:2-4); (11) treachery, so that none could trust even a friend (7:5); (12) dishonor in the family, so that "...a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (7:6).

False authority unmasked. The leaders in iniquity were the civil, spiritual and moral leaders (3:9-11). (1) Civil rulers—the princes, who judge for reward and who hate the good and love the evil (3:2, 9-11); (2) Spiritual rulers—the priests, who "...teach for hire..." (3:11); (3) Moral leaders—the prophets, who "...divine for money..." (3:11).

III. THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Prophetic utterances.

(1) The destruction of Samaria (Israel), "...as an heap of the field...and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley..." (1:6-7). "In one of the monuments to the conquest of Samaria excavated at Nineveh, the descriptions of Israel's cities, of which the inscriptions read, 'They were made into a rubbish-heap and a field.' Even today, Samaria 'is heaps of stone, not only on the hill-summit but also in the fields below.'" (Coffman, **Commentary on the Minor Prophets**, v. 2, p. 287).

(2) God will not hear their cry for mercy—"...he will even hide his face from them..." (3:4).

(3) There will be no vision, no guidance, "...and it shall be dark unto you..." (3:6).

(4) Desolation of Jerusalem and the temple—"...Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps..." (3:12).

(5) The carrying off of the Jews to Babylon (1:16; 4:10).

(6) A remnant will survive (2:12; 5:7-8).

(7) As in the days of the exodus, God will lead them back from captivity (2:12-13; 7:14-17), and will overthrow the enemy nations.

(8) The law will go forth from Zion, and the kingdom will be established in Jerusalem (4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-3).

(9) The ruler of Zion, the Messiah, will be born in Bethlehem (5:2).

(10) Mercy after judgment- "...he will have compassion upon us..." (7:18-20).

Passages fulfilled in the New Testament.

(1) The law of the Lord from Jerusalem (4:1-3); beginning of the church on Pentecost (Acts 2).

(2) The Messiah to be born in Bethlehem (5:2; Matt. 2:6; John 7:42).

(3) A man's enemies of his own household (7:6; Matt. 10:36; Luke 12:53).

(4) Christ's righteous reign over the whole world (2:12-13; 4:1-8; 5:4-5).

Other chief points in Micah.

(1) Micah was the first prophet specifically to threaten Judah with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (3:12; 7:13).

(2) The definition of true religion (6:8)—See also Amos 5:4; Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 66:2; James 1:27.

(3) More than 100 years later, the elders quoted Micah's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and thereby saved the life of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:16-19; Micah 3:12).

(4) God is light (7:8-10). Compare I John 1:5-7.

(5) Mercy will follow judgment, after they repent (7:18-20) The fundamental character of God is mercy (Psa. 100:5; 103:8; James 5:11).

The kingdom of Christ. In the identical language of Isaiah (2:2-3), Micah foretold the coming kingdom of the Lord (4:1-2), giving several details about the establishment of the kingdom. (1) It would be established in “the last days.” Peter interpreted Pentecost as the beginning of “the last days” (Acts 2:17). The establishment of the kingdom marked the beginning of the gospel age, the last spiritual dispensation (Heb. 1:2). (2) The term “mountain” symbolizes governments. The government of the Lord’s house would arise amid powerful civil governments. The “Lord’s house” is his church or kingdom (I Tim. 3:15). At the time the church began, the Roman government was the greatest political power the world had ever known (Acts 2:37-47). (3) It would be “exalted above the hills,” that is, the kingdom of the Lord would surpass all human governments. Its ruler is “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (I Tim. 6:15). (4) “Many nations” would enter into the kingdom, or as Isaiah expressed it, “all nations shall flow unto it.” The gospel is for all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:35; Gal. 3:28). (5) “He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” One cannot enter the kingdom without having been taught the gospel (Matt. 28:19; John 6:44-45), and one cannot serve the Lord acceptably without continuing in obedience (John 14:23; James 1:22). (6) The law of the Lord would go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The preaching of the gospel, the new law of the kingdom, began in the temple on Mt. Zion. From Jerusalem “the word of the Lord” went forth, by which the church was built and all men are to be saved (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 47).

The kingdom of peace. The effect of the reign of Christ is beautifully described by both Isaiah and Micah.

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any

more (4:3).

The kingdom of Christ is not carnal, but spiritual in nature (John 18:36), and our weapons also are spiritual (II Cor. 10:4-5). Under the rule of the Prince of Peace, citizens of his kingdom learn the ways of peace, to love their enemies, and learn war no more.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17).

Chapter 40

The Book of Nahum

1. Keys to the book of Nahum

1. **Key words** – Divine judgment and vengeance.
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 1:7-8:

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

3. **Key phrase** – “An utter end” (KJV), or “a full end” (ASV).

4. **Key chapter** – Chapter 1. The first chapter of Nahum describes the principles of divine judgment that resulted in God’s decree of the destruction of Nineveh and the deliverance and rejoicing of Judah. Nahum 1:2-8 portrays the power, patience, holiness and justice of God. The prophet describes the grandeur of the Judge and the certainty and completeness of his judgment. God is slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness; yet, he is full of wrath and indignation. Nineveh had become rich and powerful by means of ruthless cruelty. Her repentance at the preaching of Jonah, about one hundred years earlier, had been short lived. Although no nation could withstand her, Nahum foretells that God, who rules in the kingdoms of men, will bring her down. The prophet uses seven words to express the anger of God: jealousy, vengeance, wrath, anger, indignation, fierceness, and fury (1:2-6).

Beginning with chapter 1:9, Nahum foretells the doom of Nineveh, the retribution of God upon the wickedness of that proud city. The righteous God will no longer delay his wrath. Assyria’s cruelty and arrogance to other nations will

come to a full and sudden end. Her power is useless against the mighty hand of Jehovah.

This book describes the downfall of Assyria, but it was written to Judah, for the benefit of the surviving kingdom, which had suffered greatly at the hands of the Assyrians after their destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. The people in Judah who trusted in the Lord would be comforted to hear of God's judgment upon their cruel oppressors.

...Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder....Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off. (Nahum 1:12-13, 15).

5. **Theme** – Nahum's theme is to pronounce the doom of destruction of Nineveh. In three short chapters, the prophet tells both of God's goodness and his vengeance, as he predicts in detail the fall of "that bloody city." His message is to Judah concerning their enemies. He does not reprove the sins of his people, but he condemns the idolatry and atrocities of Assyria. His message was two-fold: to comfort Judah and to pronounce Nineveh's doom. He describes divine holiness in terms both of vengeance and mercy, the one bringing destruction upon the wicked (1:2), and the other salvation to the righteous (1:15). Nahum shows God's avenging love for his people. God's love for mankind demands that he punish sin and save the righteous. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

6. **Nahum's plea** – Nahum's appeal to Judah and to all people of all nations is to know the grandeur, power, and justice of the living God, the certainty and completeness of his judgment, and his unending love for all mankind.

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth...and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked... (1:2-3).

Yet, "The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF NAHUM

The prophet. Nahum means, "Consolation," or "Compassion," or "Full of Comfort." We know only his name and town, Elkosh. His name typified the encouragement his words brought to his people, so long oppressed by Assyria. God's decree of the fall of Nineveh was good news to the Jews (1:12-13, 15). Nahum did not preach to Nineveh as Jonah had done more than a hundred years earlier, but he delivered his message to Judah. He wrote sometime between the fall of Noamon (3:8), which is identified as Thebes, destroyed in 661 B. C., and the fall of Nineveh, which occurred in 606 B. C. Perhaps he preached in the reign of Josiah (639-608 B. C.), Judah's last good king, and shortly before the end of the Assyrian nation. If so, he was contemporary with Jeremiah and not far removed from the time of Zephaniah and Habakkuk. Nineveh had repented at the preaching of Jonah, but soon returned to her wickedness. Now, the cup of her iniquity was full and she was doomed to complete destruction. God revealed her punishment in a vision to Nahum (1:1).

The book. Nahum's message came to Judah concerning Nineveh when Assyrian power seems to have been at its height and its capital appeared impregnable. Once God spared Nineveh; now, "The burden of (oracle against) Nineveh" (1:1), foretells the end of "the bloody city" (1:8; 3:1), which Nahum predicts in vivid detail. His is the finest description we have of one of the great events in Jewish

history. He does not allude to the sins of his people or to the impending fall of their nation. After repenting at the preaching of Jonah, the Assyrians lapsed into gross idolatry, cruelty and arrogance. Their capital became like a lion's den full of prey (2:11-12). In the book of Jonah, to which Nahum seems to be a sequel, God forgave Nineveh; in Nahum he announced its doom. The message to God's people was one of consolation since their great enemy was to be overthrown.

Main divisions. (1) The coming of the Lord in judgment (chap. 1)—the doom of Nineveh announced. (2) The siege and fall of Nineveh (chap. 2)—

He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition (fortress), watch the way...fortify thy power mightily. (v. 1).

(3) The sins that will cause Nineveh's fall (chap. 3). Note the sins of idolatry, atrocities, and impenitence. Also note the spirited description of the battle for the city:

The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses (3:2-3).

The vengeance of God. Nahum describes the grandeur, power and justice of the Judge and the certainty and completeness of his judgment. Nineveh had become rich and powerful by means of ruthless cruelty. Though none could withstand her, Nahum foretells that God, who rules in the kingdoms of men, can and will bring her down. God is slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness; he is also full of wrath and indignation. "The Lord is good" (1:7), but there is a limit to his forbearance, an end to his patience (vs. 3, 8). God "will render to every man according to his deeds...for there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:6-11).

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God:
on them which fell, severity; but toward thee,
goodness, if thou continue in his goodness:
otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

The majesty and mercy of God. In Nahum we behold the preeminent majesty and immeasurable mercy of God. "Infinite power wedded to infinite love make God." God is on the throne. "His kingdom ruleth over all." He is the Avenger and the Deliverer of his people. God's love for man, whom God created in his own image, demands that he punish sin, the destroyer both of the image and the creation. We can understand God's wrath only in the light of his love for mankind. We must trust him as our Avenger over all wrong doers and the sole source of security and peace to those who love him. Christians are the new creation of God, by grace through faith, "...created in Christ Jesus unto good works..." (Eph. 2:8-10), and not unto evil deeds and divine wrath.

Nahum describes vividly the fall of Nineveh. (1) The fierceness of the onslaught (2:4-6; 3:1-3); (2) Nineveh despoiled (2:9-10); (3) "Where is the dwelling of the lions," national symbol of Assyria (2:11-12); (4) Nineveh, "the well-favored harlot," stripped and filth thrown on her (3:4-6); (5) her people no more forceful than defenceless women (3:8-13); (6) her rulers, helpless, flee (3:17); (7) the people are scattered (3:18); (8) all who hear of her fate will clap their hands (3:19); (9) it is really the Lord who is her attacker (2:13); (10) Zephaniah also predicted the fall of Nineveh (Zeph. 2:13-15).

The utter end. In 606 B. C., Nineveh fell before the onslaught of a combined thrust by Babylonians under Nabopolassar, founder of the Babylonian empire, by the Medes led by Cyaxeres, and by the Scythians. Thus, God made a "full end" of that wicked city (1:8-9 ASV).

Some peculiarities of Nahum. (1) There is no mention of a divine call or revelation; (2) no mention of any sin of

Judah, but only the sins of her enemies; (3) no quotation from the book, or reference to Nahum, in the New Testament.

III. HISTORICAL PROOFS OF NAHUM

Doom of Nineveh.

Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery...The noise of a whip...rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots....the bright sword and the glittering spear...and there is none end of their corpses....Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot...that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts...Nineveh is laid waste... (3:1-7).

Nineveh, capital of Assyria, was at the time of Nahum's prophecy the "queen city of the earth, mighty and brutal beyond imagination, head of a warrior state built on the loot of nations. Limitless wealth from the ends of the earth poured into its coffers. Nahum likens it to a den of ravaging lions, feeding on the blood of nations (2:11-13)" (**Halley's Bible Handbook**, p. 369). At about the same time, God said through Isaiah that he would punish the king of Assyria because of his wickedness and his arrogance. The king boasted of conquering and robbing other nations as one who robs a bird's nest.

And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped (Isaiah 10:14).

The most brutal of all the ancient heathen nations, Assyria practiced every form of cruelty. Descriptions of her savagery, torture and atrocities are horrifying.

According to Diodorus Siculus, pagan historian, Nineveh was 60 miles in circumference, surrounded by walls 100 feet high, so broad that three chariots could drive abreast upon them, having 1,500 towers 200 feet in height. Jonah's mention of 120,000 innocents (Jonah 4:11) suggests that it may have had a population of nearly a million. The city appeared to be impregnable, but because of her sins, she was doomed, soon to be thrown down by the Lord at one stroke. Its destruction was so complete that the site was soon forgotten. When Xenophon and his 10,000 passed by 200 years later he thought the mounds were ruins of another city. When Alexander the Great fought a famous battle near the site in 331 B. C., he did not know there had been a city there. So completely had all traces of Nineveh disappeared that many scholars came to think that the references to it in the Bible and other ancient histories were mythical; that in reality the Assyrian empire had never existed.

Archeology and Nineveh. In 1845, Sir A. H. Layard, called the "father of Assyriology," identified two mounds in Turkey (modern Iraq) as the site of Nineveh. He and his successors uncovered the ruins of the palaces of the Assyrian kings and hundreds of thousands of inscriptions that give the history of Assyria as the Assyrians wrote it, and which remarkably confirm the Bible account. The principal mound contains the palaces of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal. Sennacherib was the king who invaded Judah. His palace, grandest of all, was about the size of three large city blocks. The Library of Assurbanipal is one of the most important archeological discoveries ever made. It originally contained 100,000 volumes, of which about one-third are in the British Museum. The king had his scribes search and copy the libraries of ancient Babylon, of an age 2,000 years before his time, thus preserving to the present day knowledge of primitive Babylonian literature.

Nahum in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Fragments of a commentary on Nahum 2:11-13 were found in cave 1 at

Qumran near the Dead Sea and would be the earliest witnesses to the text of the book.

IV. TIMELESS TRUTHS IN THE BOOK OF NAHUM

Great lessons from Nahum.

(1) The changelessness of God—His word is immutable (Heb. 6:18). He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He keeps his word.

(2) Jehovah is a jealous God—He allows no other gods before him (Exod. 20:3-5; II Cor. 11:2).

(3) God rules in the nations of men—Psalms 103:19; 113:4.

(4) God is a stronghold in time of trouble for those who trust in him—Nahum 1:7; Psalms 46:1-2.

(5) There is no escape from God's vengeance against them that do evil—Psalms 34:16.

(6) As with individuals, nations also reap what they sow—Prov. 14:34. "The history of the world is the judgment of the world," said Schiller.

(7) Nahum is a book of relevance in the world of violence and brutality—"...for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

(8) Here we see the end of God's patience, what can happen when God has had enough! (Nahum 1:3; Heb. 10:30; 12:29). When our hearts become like an adamant stone (Zech. 7:12); past feeling (Eph. 4:19), and conscience seared (I Tim. 4:2).

(9) Sinners cannot withstand God's indignation—Nahum 1:6; Rom. 2:4-11; Rev. 6:17. God will not clear the guilty (Nahum 1:3; Isa. 10:3).

(10) Repentance must be genuine, evidenced by fruit worthy of repentance—Matt. 3:8; Acts 17:30-31.

(11) Every generation needs to be thoroughly converted. Nineveh's repentance in Jonah's day did not assure their continued obedience to God.

(12) Self-sufficiency and pride bring destruction—Prov. 16:18; Rev. 3:14-19.

Notable passages from Nahum.

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth...and is furious... (1:2).

The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet (1:3)

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him (1:7).

But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof... (1:8-9).

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!... (1:15). Compare Isaiah 52:7.

He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face... (2:1).

The chariots shall rage in the streets...they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings (2:4).

Where is the dwelling of the lions...The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps...and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin (2:11-12).

Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery... (3:1).

The noise of a whip...the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses...the bright sword and the glittering spear...and there is none end of their corpses...Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts...and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee...and will set thee as a gazingstock...Nineveh is laid waste... (3:2-7)

Chapter 41

The Book of Habakkuk

1. Keys to the book of Habakkuk

1. **Key words** – Justice and salvation.
2. **Key verse** – Chapter 2:4:

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

3. **Key phrase** – “O Lord, how long shall I cry...Why?”– 1:2-3.

4. **Key chapter** – Chapter 3: This beautiful poem has two divisions. Verses 1-16 describe a vision of God’s appearance for judgment, and verses 17-19 are a hymn of faith. The prophet prays for the Lord to “...revive thy work in the midst of the years...” (v. 2), with the assurance that whatever may come, he will hold steadfastly to the Lord. This chapter is one of the most majestic of all scripture and portrays the glory of God in past history and future history (prophecy). The book builds to a triumphant climax, with the close of this chapter (3:17-19):

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 me to walk upon mine high places...

5. **Message.** Just as Nahum pronounced the doom of Assyria, whom God used to destroy Israel, so Habakkuk foretold the fall of the Chaldeans, after God raised them up

to punish Judah. The prophet states the principle of righteousness, that the just shall live and the unjust shall die. He told how wicked God's people had become, the cause of God's punishment of them at the hands of the Babylonians. Then God would also punish the Chaldeans for their cruelty and greed. Habakkuk affirms that God reigns over all the nations and that the time will come when God will be glorified in all the earth. He speaks of God's providential, delivering love for his people.

(6) Purpose. Habakkuk's purpose is to justify the ways of God to man and to console the Jews, whose exile in Babylon was imminent. He speaks both of the problems of the people and the praise of God. He calls upon God's people to trust in the Lord and forsake all forms of idolatry, just as Elijah, nearly 300 years before, challenged Israel at Mt. Carmel, "...if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him..." (Hab. 2:4-10, I Kings 18:21). The universal appeal is Habakkuk's timeless, divinely inspired message for all men of all ages to seek the salvation of the Lord. In these last days, that is the salvation that God provides in Christ, through the:

...gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

This quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, refers to an obedient faith, as Paul states clearly in Romans 1:5 and 16:26, where he says that the gospel he preached made known to all nations "the obedience of faith."

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

The prophet. His name is not of Hebrew origin and does not occur outside this book. It may mean "to embrace,"

as Jerome and Luther thought. He described himself as "the prophet" (1:1; 3:1), as did also Haggai and Zechariah. The wrongs suffered by Judah under Jehoiachim (608-597 B. C.) may have been those of which the prophet complains. Habakkuk was likely a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah and slightly later than Nahum. He prophesied in Judah shortly before the first Chaldean invasion in 606 B. C. He tells how sinful the people had become. He asks God why he lets their wickedness continue and how long must the prophet cry out before God will hear him (1:2-4). God promises to raise up the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation" (1:6), to execute judgment upon Judah. The Chaldeans, too, will be overthrown because of their cruelty, greed, and pride. The prophet foresees the time when God will be glorified in the earth (2:14).

The book. This book is of excellent poetic form, noted for its literary beauty, especially Habakkuk's description of the majesty of God in chapter 3, which is an acrostic poem in Hebrew. Written in strong lyrical character, the book resembles the Psalms more than any other prophetic writing. Its greatest value is its religious significance and its timeless, divinely inspired message for all men of all ages.

Habakkuk is unique, in that two thirds of the book is a conversation between the prophet and God, written in the form of complaint and answer. In contrast to the other prophets who addressed themselves to God's people, Habakkuk addressed himself to God on behalf of the people.

Among the Dead Sea scrolls, the Bedouin in 1947 discovered a manuscript on Habakkuk, dating from the first century B. C. Only the first two chapters are given in this, our oldest copy of the book.

Inspiration. Habakkuk was divinely inspired. He was a prophet of God (1:1). He stood upon his watch, for the prophet was God's watchman (2:1). He wrote what God revealed to him (2:2). Being inspired, the book is a living

message, and “it shall speak, and not lie” (2:3). As God’s truth, it shall speak. God’s word is not a dead letter, but a living thing, hasting on its course, and accomplishing the purpose for which it was sent.

Main divisions of the book. Scroggie gives a three-fold view of the book: (1) Faith tested—the problem (1:1-2:1); (2) faith taught—the solution (2:2-3:15), and (3) faith triumphant—the issue (3:16-19).

The main points of each chapter are as follows:

(1) The problem of the apparent triumph of sin (ch. 1). How long will God allow lawlessness to go unchecked? How can God spare these cruel heathen to punish a people not as wicked as they are? The answer: God says that he is using the Chaldeans to punish evil doers and the Chaldeans also will be punished.

(2) The impending punishment of the Chaldeans (ch. 2). From his watchtower the prophet receives the reply of Jehovah that the purpose of God is soon to be fulfilled. He pronounces five woes against the conquering nation (vv. 6-20): Woe unto the plunderer, for he shall be plundered (vv. 6-8); woe unto him who gets selfish gain, for he forfeits his own soul (vv. 9-11); woe unto the cruel oppressor, for cities built with blood shall be destroyed (vv. 12-14); woe unto the tyrant, who reduces people to helplessness, for his violence will come home to him (vv. 15-17); and woe to idolators, for dumb idols cannot hear, awake, speak, teach or save (vv. 18-19). “But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him” (2:20).

(3) Habakkuk’s prayer psalm (ch. 3:1-19). The prophet expresses reverence, awe, and great faith in God (vv. 1-2, 16-19). Past history teaches that God will finally destroy Israel’s enemies (vv. 3-15). In triumph he sings that although the crops and vineyards fail, and the fields yield no meat, and the flocks are cut off,

...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 me to walk upon mine
high places (3:17-19).

In this prayer-poem we have the perfect blending of the
justice and mercy of God.

III. TIMELESS MESSAGES IN HABAKKUK

God's use of the nations. In Habakkuk we see the governing God, the ruler of all men. God is running the world. His hand is in the affairs of men and nations. He oversees the nations and uses them to accomplish his purpose. All rulers must respect his sovereignty. Those who fail to honor him will be punished, although God may have used them to punish some other wicked people (Isa. 10:12-14). By causing Nebuchadnezzar to live as a beast and "eat grass as oxen" for seven years, God taught the proud ruler a great lesson (Dan. 4:28-37). "...this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations" (Isa. 14:26).

God raised up Pharaoh that he might show his power in him, "...and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom. 9:17).

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom
I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on
whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of
him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of
God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:15-16).

God used Assyria (Nineveh) as his rod to overthrow Israel (Isa. 10:5). Chaldea (Babylon) was his agent in destroying Judah in 586 B. C., his battle-axe against wicked nations (Jer. 51:20). Nebuchadnezzar was the servant of the Lord (Jer. 25:9). Nahum and Zephaniah announced the doom of Nineveh because of its cruelty and wickedness. Nineveh fell in 612 B. C., before the combined assault of Babylonians, Medes and Scythians. Jehovah assured Habakkuk that the Chaldeans also would suffer the wrath of God. The Lord fulfilled his word in 539 B. C., when Cyrus conquered

Babylon and inaugurated the Persian period of biblical history.

The cause of Babylon's fall. They trusted in their own judgment rather than trusting God (ch. 1:7; Jer. 10:23). Their power was their god (1:11). Like their king, they became drunk on power and pride and failed to honor God (Dan. 4:30).

Three-fold theme of Habakkuk:

(1) **Doubt concerning God's providence**—How long will the Lord allow sin to go unpunished?—1:2-3; Compare Jer. 12:1; Psalm 73:3-4, 17.

(2) **Confidence—The triumph of faith**—The wicked shall be destroyed, while the righteous shall live by faith—Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.

(3) **The sovereignty of God**—He is king of kings, and ruler of all nations.

Three great lessons:

(1) God will do right in the government of nations.

(2) Sinful nations will finally perish, as did Assyria and Chaldea, even as God forewarned them.

(3) The just shall prevail (live) by his faith. Habakkuk prophesied that Chaldea would hasten to sin and die, while the righteous trust, and wait and live.

Spiritual messages of Habakkuk:

(1) God is "...of purer eyes than to behold evil..." (1:13). Perhaps God momentarily looked away from the One who "bore our sins in his body upon the tree"—I Peter 2:24; II Cor. 5:21.

(2) The wicked life is self-centered—(2:16-19).

(3) The righteous life is God-centered—2:20-3:19.

(4) God governs all nations with righteousness; the sinful nations will perish—Prov. 14:34.

(5) The universal supremacy and sovereignty of God. "Hath not the potter power over the clay..." (Romans 9:21).

(6) The triumph of the true God over idols—2:14-20.

(7) Contrast between the proud and the righteous—2:4.

Various translations of this verse all show that the soul of the proud is not right, and that the righteous shall live by his faithfulness to God. "Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith" (RSV). "See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright, but the righteous shall live by his faith" (NIV).

The remedy for sin. Sin separates men from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Christ died for all (I John 2:2; II Cor. 5:14). Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God take place only in Christ (Eph. 1:7; II Cor. 5:18-19). The only access to these blessings is the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5), when by faith the sinner is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

The battle-line. The conflict now, as always, is between God and idols. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:4).

What profiteth the graven image...a teacher of lies,
that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to
make dumb idols? (2:18).

Christians are warned, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols..." (I John 5:21). Forget not that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5) What is your idol? Money? Your work? Family? Children? Physical fitness? Pleasure? The following verses should be the prayer of all of us.

"The dearest idol I have known
Whatever that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee."

God's word is plain. "...make it plain...that he may run that readeth it" (2:2). God's word "...shall speak, and not lie..." (2:3). "...pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course..." (II Thess. 3:1). God cannot lie (Num. 23:19). The gospel is plain, not in "...wisdom of words..." (I Cor. 1:17). One of its traits is its simplicity, so that the common people heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). All can and must come to know and understand what the will of

the Lord is (John 6:45; Eph. 5:17). This we can do only from the pure, plain and simple word of God.

A common prevailing question, "Why?" "O LORD, how long...Why..." (1:2-3). At one time or another, many have asked, "Why, Lord?" In his distress, Job bewailed his birth, "Why died I not from the womb? why..." (Job 3:11-12). In anguish, David cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me..." (Psa. 22:1). From the agony of the cross, Jesus echoed David's lament (Matt. 27:46). At all times, and in all things, the man of God must "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart..." (Prov. 3:5). "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." (Job 13:15).

The everlasting God. God is eternal, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the great "I Am," without beginning and without end. "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One?..." (1:12). Abraham, Isaiah, and Paul all spoke of Jehovah as the everlasting God (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28; Rom. 16:26), as did Moses. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms..." (Deut. 33:27). Again, Moses wrote,

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 (Psa. 90:1-2).

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (I Tim. 1:17).

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God (Psalm 9:17).

Chapter 42

The Book Of Zephaniah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Key words – Divine jealousy and wrath.

Key verses – Chapter 1:14-16, 2:3, and 3:9 –

1:14-16 – The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

2:3 – Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

3:9 – For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

Key phrase – “The day of the Lord” occurs seven times in the book (1:7, etc.).

Key chapter – Chapter 3 – The last chapter of Zephaniah gives the two distinct sides of the day of the Lord: (1) divine judgment in the day of the Lord (3:1-8), and (2) divine blessing and restoration for the faithful remnant, after the day of the Lord. God promised His people that the wicked “shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy” (3:8). During the captivity in Babylon, the Jews repented of their rebellion and idolatry, and came to “trust in the name of the Lord,” and to rejoice in God’s mercy, as He had promised. “The remnant of Israel shall not do

iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid” (3:13).

God assured them that when they returned to Jerusalem they would not be afraid and their hands would not be slack, and God would be in their midst to save them. “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (3:16-17). Thus the book of Zephaniah begins with woe and ends with singing. The distress of their punishment will be turned to repentance, joy and praise. “At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” (3:20).

Theme – Zephaniah declares the certainty both of God’s wrath and His love. The great day of the Lord’s anger against all evil doers was at hand. Divine judgment would come upon all nations, including Judah. God will punish those who “have done violence to the law” of God (3:4). Israel is warned, but unconcerned. Yet, in the midst of His thundering against their sins, we can hear the heartbeat of God’s love for His people throbbing in these passages. Just as certain as the reality of God’s wrath was His sure promise that a remnant would be spared and restored, and these would worship the Lord “everyone from his own place.” None would make them afraid, for the Lord would be in the midst of them. Zephaniah beautifully expresses God’s jealous, redeeming love for His people.

Plea – The day of the Lord in Zephaniah reminds us of the final judgment when God will destroy the heavens and the earth. We must prepare to meet the Lord in order to receive His promise of everlasting life in the new heavens and new earth.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

The prophet – His name means, “Hid of the Lord,” or, “He whom the Lord has hidden.” A descendant of King Hezekiah, Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah in Judah, about 630 B. C., and was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah. Josiah, Jeremiah and Zephaniah were godly, extremely loyal to God, and apparently all were young men. Some say that Zephaniah was the most uncompromising of all the prophets. “Youthful courage and undaunted zeal for righteousness ring through his brief prophecy.”

The book – It is exceedingly somber in tone, yet ends with the coming of a glad day with the Lord in the midst of His people. “They shall trust in the name of the Lord...he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (3:12, 17). The three chief points of the book are: (1) the day of the Lord, a declaration of divine retribution; (2) rebuke of the heathen nations and a call to repentance, (3) Jerusalem’s sin and future hope, a promise of redemption. Two contrasted passages are worthy of note – a description of divine judgment (1:14-18), and a description of divine blessing (3:14-17). After gloom and sadness, there comes one of the sweetest love songs in the Old Testament.

Main divisions of the book –

1. ***God’s judgment of Israel*** – the devouring fire of God’s jealousy kindled in “the whole land” of Judah (1:1-2:3, and 3:1-7). All classes will feel the wrath of God– royalty, nobility, tradesmen, the indifferent and the obstinate. Woe to the sinners of Jerusalem, the filthy, rebellious, and polluted–princes, judges, prophets, and priests alike. In the day of destruction, God’s mercy still is extended to those who will repent. “Seek ye the Lord and ye shall live” (2:3; Amos 5:6).

2. ***God’s judgment of surrounding nations*** – the devouring fire of God’s jealousy over “all the earth” (2:4-15;

3:8), upon all of Israel's enemies—Canaan and Philistia (2:4-7), Moab and Ammon (2:8-11), and Ethiopia and Assyria (2:12-15). Zephaniah joins Nahum in pronouncing the doom of Nineveh, “the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly...how is she become a desolation” (v. 15). “The whole earth is the theatre where the Divine Judge displays the grandeur of His law and the glory of His love” (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, p. 184).

3. ***The salvation of a remnant*** – God's jealousy is quenched, and the Lord is at “rest in his love” (3:9-20). The people must trust God and wait for the destruction of their enemies and their future restoration and glory.

Historical Setting – Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah, son of Amon (1:1). This dark period had inherited a legacy of moral and religious degeneration from the days of Manasseh and Amon (II Chron. 33:1-25; II Kings 21:1-26). Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight and in his eighteenth year, with the discovery of a copy of the law, he carried out a sweeping reform. Zephaniah makes no mention of this spiritual revival, which may have occurred after his prophecy. His message may have had a part in the reform movement, although no connection can be established. Josiah's efforts were in vain. Only 34 years later, Nebuchadnezzar swept over Judah, exiled her people, imprisoned and blinded her king, destroyed her temple, and left Jerusalem in ruins.

The sins of Judah – Judah was on the verge of Babylonian bondage as divine judgment for her sins. The Jews “rose up early to corrupt all their doings” (3:7). They obeyed not, received not correction, trusted not in the Lord, and drew not near to the Lord. Particular sins given were:

(1) Idolatry – Practices introduced by Ahaz and Manasseh are condemned—worship of Baal (1:4), Malcham and the host of heaven (1:5), while at the same time bowing down and swearing to the Lord.

(2) Wearing foreign apparel (1:8), and leaping over the

threshold in imitation of heathen priests (1:9; I Sam. 5:5).

(3) Fraud and violence (1:9).

(4) Prophet, priest and king condemned as violent, unruly men (3:3-4).

(5) Luxury and indifference toward God's justice (1:12; 3:5).

(6) Failure to listen to God and to receive instruction (3:2, 7).

(7) They did violence to the law (3:4).

The day of the Lord – Zephaniah uses this phrase seven times, more frequently than any other prophet. Amos (5:18) was the first writing prophet to use it. Joel used it five times, and it occurs in Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Obadiah, and other prophets. In popular thought it was a day when all enemies would be put down and Israel and her God would be exalted at the end of history. As used by Zephaniah and the other prophets, it was a day within history in which nations would receive divine judgment because of their sins. It was a day of wrath, distress, desolation, gloom, thick darkness, and doom (1:15-16). It would be "the day of the Lord's sacrifice" (1:8), "the day of the Lord's wrath" (1:15, 18), and "the day of the Lord's fierce anger" (2:2-3; 3:8).

Zephaniah gives the content, the extent, and the intent of the day of the Lord in his prophecy: (1) The content of the day of the Lord—God's direct judgment and punishment of the wicked nations, including Judah (1:2-3, 12); (2) the extent of the day of the Lord—God's judgment executed against all wicked men, and all that they have polluted will be swept away (3:1-4); (3) the intent of the day of the Lord—God's judgment to punish sin and purge the nation of Judah—to encourage God's people to repent and to live in hope of the triumph of God and His people (3:13-17).

The final judgment – Zephaniah's Day of the Lord is echoed in the New Testament concept of the final judgment day. He speaks figuratively of God's consuming all things (1:2-3), and of all the earth devoured by God's fierce anger

(3:8). Similarly, Peter describes the destruction of the universe when the final day of the Lord comes, “in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:10).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM ZEPHANIAH

Divine jealousy – Twice Zephaniah refers to God’s jealousy; first, when the whole land (Judah), and again, when all the earth (heathen nations), “shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy” (1:18; 3:8). This is not the miserable, torturing suspicion of unfaithfulness, but the kind of jealousy that is the outcome of love. God “so loves his people that he cannot bear a rival, and must have their wholehearted devotion; and he will do everything to secure this, even going to the length of awful judgment, as here” (Robert Lee, **The Outlined Bible**, 36). He is jealous also of His church, which is espoused unto one husband, to be “as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2-3).

Purpose of divine punishment – God’s judgment upon Judah was for a twofold purpose—to punish their sins and to purge the nation of sin. His chastisement is proof of His love (Heb. 12:5-6). In their punishment, we see the patient purpose of God’s love. “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord...that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy” (3:8). He then promised, in most beautiful words, “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent” (3:9). Similarly, in the promise of Christ’s second coming, Peter reminds us both of the love and the wrath of God. “The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with

a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:9-10).

The pure language – God promised His people “a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord” (3:9). In captivity the Jews were purged of idolatry. The remnant who returned rebuilt the temple, restored the law, and reinstated the true worship of God, no longer with heathen corruptions, but with pure religion. We cannot call upon God out of impure hearts, with corrupt speech, and defiled lives. The remnant would be saved, who trusted in the name of the Lord, who did no sin, nor spoke lies, “neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth” (3:12-13). Although Zephaniah makes no mention of the Messiah, the pure language may have ultimately prefigured the gospel of salvation. This is the message by which all men can have correct thought toward God and the right words of redemption whereby all nations can be saved and worship God in Spirit and truth, “everyone from his place, even all the isles of the heathen” (2:11). In due time, Christ came to bless all nations (Rom. 5:6), by means of His gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

From darkness to light – Zephaniah has much to say about the “great day of the Lord,” the day of terror about to break upon Judah and the surrounding nations. It was to be “a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (1:15). It was a day of divine wrath from which neither silver nor gold could deliver (1:18). Zephaniah’s melancholy description of this day was the inspiration of the 13th century hymn of Thomas Celano (A. D. 1250), the opening lines of which are:

O day of wrath, O day of mourning.
See fulfilled the prophet’s warning.
Heaven and earth in ashes burning.

But the time of punishment and gloom would be turned into a time of joy and singing for the “daughter of Jerusalem,” when “the Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more...The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (3:14-17). This joyful promise reminds us of another hymn, words by James Rowe, in **Songs of the Church**,

After the midnight, morning will greet us;
After the sadness, joy will appear;
After the tempest, sunlight will meet us;
After the jeering, praise we shall hear.

After the battle, peace will be given;
After the weeping, song there will be;
After the journey there will be heaven,
Burdens will fall and we shall be free.

Chorus:

After the shadows, there will be sunshine;
After the frown, the soul-cheering smile;
Cling to the Savior, love Him forever;
All will be well in a little while.

Their repentance, restoration and rejoicing – God’s judgment of the nations enabled a remnant to possess the lands of their enemies (2:7, 9). They would be a people of pure speech, who would call on the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord (3:9). Israel would be no longer a proud people (3:11). None shall make them afraid (3:13). Jehovah would be in their midst as their King (3:17). Their sobs would be turned into singing (3:14-17), and all nations would worship the true God (2:11; 3:9-10).

Other lessons –

(1) Artists have pictured Zephaniah as the prophet with a light searching for a good man (1:12), as other prophets also sought in vain to find a righteous man during that evil

time (Jer. 5:1; Micah 7:2).

(2) As stated above, the living message of Zephaniah may be expressed in the words of Peter's description of the last day of the Lord (II Peter 3:9-13).

(3) Silver and gold will not deliver anyone from divine judgment (1:18).

(4) God's attitude toward sin is always the same. His righteousness has never allowed sin to go unpunished indefinitely. This is true with individuals and nations (Psm. 9:17; Prov. 14:34; Psm. 37:35-36).

(5) Preachers must boldly speak out against all forms of wickedness and all Christians must reprove ungodliness (Eph. 5:11; II Tim. 4:1-4).

(6) The wicked need to repent. Otherwise they will perish. All who are in sin should repent and turn to God (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).

(7) Singing is a wonderful expression of joy of and for God's creation (3:14; Job 38:7; Psalm 105:43; Matt. 26:30; James 5:13).

(8) The meaning of Zephaniah's name, "hid of the Lord," may have symbolized the thought of Ch. 2:3—"Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth...seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

(9) God was in the midst of Jerusalem to "bring his judgment to light" (3:5). He was in the midst of the faithful remnant to be their King and comfort them (3:15, 17). Christ is in the midst of those who come together in His name and do all things according to His word (Matt. 18:20; John 14:23).

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin
is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14:34).

Chapter 43

The Book Of Haggai

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

Key words – Build, consider, and hope.

Key verses – 1:7-8 and 2:7-9 –

1:7-8 – Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

2:7-9 – And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Key phrases – “Saith the Lord,” and “saith the Lord of hosts,” occur about 15 times, and “the word of the Lord,” with which Haggai began each of his messages, occurs five times.

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – Haggai is shorter than any other book of the Old Testament with the exception of Obadiah, consisting of only two chapters. Chapter one records the completion of the temple by the Jews who returned from exile in Babylon. Chapter two speaks of the glory of the latter temple (2:1-9), the present blessings of obedience (2:10-19), and the future blessings of promise through the Messiah, who is symbolized by Zerubbabel, who led the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem following the 70 years’ of exile in Babylon.

The older men present, who remembered the glory of Solomon’s temple, wept to see the latter temple, which

lacked the former glory. But because of its importance to the restoration of the Jews and to the coming of the Messiah, God assured them that He would “fill this house with glory...The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts” (v. 9).

During the years that they had neglected the work of rebuilding the temple, God had withheld His blessings and they had suffered from drought and hunger. Now, with the completion of the temple, the Lord said, “I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day upward...from this day I will bless you” (2:17-19).

Haggai closes with God’s promise that He would take Zerubbabel “and make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts” (2:23). He was the only “Son of David”—visible heir and successor to David—known to the world of that day. He was to be in the Messianic line, as confirmed by both Matthew and Luke. The signet ring conferred upon its wearer the full authority and power of its giver. This was a pledge of the absolute authority of Christ. Zerubbabel was an excellent type of Christ. He led the people out of slavery, as Christ leads men out of sin. He built a temple. Christ built the great temple of His church.

Message – Haggai and the following two books belong to the post-exile period, after Cyrus let the Israelites return to their homeland, as Isaiah had predicted (44:28), giving the name of the ruler 200 years before the event took place. Haggai encouraged the people to resume work on the temple, which they had discontinued soon after laying the foundation sixteen years before. The people obeyed, and the temple was completed in only four years. Jonah and Haggai were the most successful preachers among the minor prophets, judging by the immediate results of their messages. Haggai tells of God’s encouraging love for His people. Materialism, laziness, lukewarmness, self-centered thinking, defeatism

and indifference are all enemies of spirituality and hindrances to one's success in serving God. God's people must serve the Lord with unwavering faith and steady perseverance, in spite of opposition. "Be strong and work" (2:4). (Compare Rev. 3:15-22).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

The Prophet – Haggai's name means "the festive one," or "the joyous one." He and the two following prophets belong to the post-exile period of Jewish history. Haggai was the first to prophesy in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. He was born probably in Babylon. He prophesied in 520 B. C., sixteen years after the remnant returned under Zerubbabel and two months before Zechariah began to prophesy. Haggai delivered his oracles over a period of about four months. Malachi prophesied about 100 years later. Haggai's mission, as Zechariah's, was to encourage the Jews to complete the building of the temple.

The book – Haggai's brief book of two chapters totalling 38 verses consists of four oracles, which give in order God's word of reproof, His word of support, His word of blessing, and His word of promise.

First appeal – a stern rebuke and its results (1:1-15). The time for rebuilding the temple is long overdue (1:2-11), because of the indifference of the people (v. 2-4). They dwelt in their own ceiled houses while saying that the time for building the Lord's house had not come. God's warnings to them in the form of drought and famine have gone unheeded (1:6, 11), and God charges them, "Consider your ways," and urges them to work (1:7-8). Their unfaithfulness to duty was the cause of their calamity (v. 9-10). They failed to seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). As a result of Haggai's warning, only 24 days later, the people, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, set to work on the temple (1:12, 14), with the assurance that the Lord was with them (1:13).

Second appeal – words of encouragement, uttered at the Feast of Tabernacles, two months after the first oracle (2:1-9). The old men, who could remember Solomon's temple, as we have seen, wept when they compared its glory with the present undertaking (2:3; Ezra 3:12). God promised the wealth of the nations to glorify this temple (2:7). He assures them that its latter glory will exceed its humble beginning, and He promises peace (2:9). Note the **divine presence** strengthening the people (2:4); the **divine power** shaking the heavens and the earth (2:6); the **divine glory** filling the house of God (2:7), and the **divine peace** coming to His people (2:9).

Third appeal – two months after the second-assurance of God's blessings (2:10-19). God reproves their impurity. Because of their uncleanness they were unworthy to build God's house (2:10-16). Although God had smitten them with blasting, mildew and hail, they had not repented (v. 17). But from the day that they repented and resumed their work, the Lord would bless them (v. 18-19).

Fourth appeal – the Lord's promise of protection to His people, spoken the same day as oracle three (2:20-23). The Lord will overthrow the nations (2:20-22) and will make Zerubbabel to be a signet, the divine assurance of safety to the people of God (v. 23).

Historical background – The book of Ezra furnishes the background of Haggai, where two references to him (Ezra 5:1 and 6:14) make clear his role in completing the temple. This is the Persian period of history. The **Nabonaid Cylinder** and **Cyrus Cylinder**, both made of clay and now in the British Museum, are most significant extra-biblical sources for the events of this period. The latter contains an account of Cyrus II's conquest of Babylon and his policy of allowing captive people to return to their native lands and rebuild their ancestral temples. The Persians were human conquerors, but instruments of God. Nearly 200 years earlier, Isaiah named Cyrus as the agent of the Lord to

accomplish the return (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). During the second year of Darius I (521-486 B. C.), who was of a succeeding dynasty, Haggai was active (1:1). The effectiveness of his preaching is seen in that the temple was completed and dedicated in 516 B. C., the sixth year of Darius (Ezra 6:15).

The temple – The first company of captives who returned found the temple in ruins, the condition to which the Babylonians reduced it in 586 B. C. (II Kings 25:9). Under the direction of Zerubbabel, the priests promptly set up an altar and resumed the offering of sacrifices. The Levites were appointed to oversee the rebuilding of the temple, and amid shouts of joy, the people laid its foundation (Ezra 3:12; 5:16). The people of Palestine who had not been in exile soon frustrated the work by complaining to the Persian king that the Jews were rebellious (Ezra 4:4-24). Disheartened, the people soon left off building and for sixteen years remained inactive until Haggai stirred them up. After four years of work, the temple was completed and stood for 500 years, until King Herod replaced it with the much grander one that was in use during Jesus' ministry.

III. TIMELESS MESSAGES OF HAGGAI

Great lessons from Haggai

1. The people were given to materialism rather than spirituality. They dwelt in their ceiled houses while God's house lay in ruins. Christians must "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

2. Defeatism also dominated them. They said, "We cannot succeed because of our enemies, lack of building materials, and other hindrances." We must say as Paul did, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

3. They procrastinated, saying, "The time is not come" (1:2). "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:15).

4. They show us the folly of laziness, lukewarmness and indifference.

5. It is easier to promise than to fulfill the promise. We should purpose in our hearts to please God in all things, and then fulfill that purpose faithfully.

6. We must put God first in heart, life, and service (Matt. 6:33; I Cor. 15:58).

7. Without God, man labors in vain (1:6).

8. God's final word to His people: "Be strong and work" (2:4). Paul charges Christians, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (I Cor. 16:13-14).

9. Christ built His church through His inspired apostles. Christians must glorify God through the church (Eph. 3:20-21).

10. The purpose of the word of Christ is to build up His followers spiritually (Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:11-16). Paul's power was for building up, and not for casting down (II Cor. 13:8, ASV). Christians are to build each other up (Jude 20).

Some points to consider

(1) The messianic line is traced through Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27).

(2) The shaking of the heavens in contrast with the kingdom that cannot be shaken (2:6, 21; Heb. 12:26-28).

(3) God referred to the slothful Jews as "this people" (1:2; 2:14), but after they repented and obeyed Him, He called them once more, "my people."

Notable verses from Haggai

1:4, 6, 9 – "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?...Ye have sown much, and bring in little...Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste..."

1:5, 7 – "Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways."

2:4-5 – "...be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the

LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts...fear ye not.”

2:7 – “...the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity (I Cor. 16:13-14).

Chapter 44

The Book Of Zechariah

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Key words – Remember and obey.

Key verses – 1:3, 3:2, 4:6, 8:2-3, 9:9, and 14:8-9 –

1:3 – Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

3:2 – And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

4:6 – Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

8:2-3 – Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

9:9 – Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

14:8-9 – And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

Key phrase – “The Lord of hosts” (1:3, 4, 6, 12, etc.). This phrase appears first in First Samuel, occurs repeatedly in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Haggai, and was used more frequently by Zechariah than by any other prophet.

Key chapter – Chapter 14 – This chapter is a remarkable climax to the book. It continues the promise of chapter 13:1, of salvation by fountain of living water, the gospel of Christ. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (13:1). “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem...And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (14:8-9).

Coffman gives a very clear analysis of this chapter, which some scholar’s label as “obscure.”

The opening paragraph (ch. 14) is a reference to the destruction of literal Jerusalem, and must be applied to the literal city...However, there is an application far beyond the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A. D. 70. The destruction of Jerusalem, the capital of the apostate ‘chosen people,’ as a punishment of their rejection of the Son of God, is a type of the ultimate judgment against the apostate church of God at the end of the age and prior to the Second Coming. The first Israel was an eloquent type of the second Israel. (**Minor Prophets**, IV, 205).

Chapter 14. The literal Jerusalem will be destroyed, but not a Christian shall be lost (v. 1-2). The destruction of Jerusalem is seen as a type of the final judgment, in exactly the same manner as that of Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24. The Christ shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, a prophecy of Jesus’ ascension into heaven from that very spot (v. 4). God will make a way of escape, not merely for those involved in the fall of literal Jerusalem, but at the last day also (v. 5). Living

waters for all mankind shall flow out of Jerusalem (v. 8). God's displeasure with people who will not serve Him is revealed (v. 12). Fleshly Israel, 'Judah,' will fight against the holy New Jerusalem, repetition of the thought in 12:2 (v. 14). All nations shall worship God in Christ (v. 16). A new definition of what is sacred shall mark the days of the New Covenant. Sanctity will not derive from office, race, or association with any literal place, but even common things, 'bells on horses,' shall wear the label of 'Holy Unto Jehovah' (v. 20).

That this entire prophecy concerns principally the days of the Christian dispensation is made certain by the appearance throughout Zechariah of expressions such as 'the day of Jehovah,' 'in that day,' and 'those days,' etc. Twenty-four examples of this may be cited, including seven instances in chapter 12, three in chapter 13, and ten in chapter 14. (James Burton Coffman, **Commentary on the Minor Prophets**, IV, p. 13-14).

Message – Martin Luther described Zechariah as "the quintessence of the prophets." In many respects it is the greatest of the minor books of prophecy. Zechariah's name means, "Remembered of the Lord." A priest and prophet of the Persian period, Zechariah returned with Zerubbabel. He was a co-laborer with Haggai, and joined him in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. He began prophesying two months later than Haggai and continued two years longer, around 520-518 B. C. The two prophets were successful, and the people obeyed, completing the temple in four years, which they had begun sixteen years before, but soon left off building until God called these two men to stir them up and resume their work. Haggai and Zechariah belong to the post-exile period, as does Malachi, who prophesied 100 years later.

The heart of Zechariah's prophecy was the coming of the Prince of Peace (6:13; Isa. 9:6). He has more to say about the Messiah than any prophet other than Isaiah.

Rather than rebuking the people, Zechariah encourages them to action by reminding them of the future importance of the temple.

Plea – Zechariah’s immediate appeal to the Jewish remnant was to encourage them to complete their great work on the temple, especially since the structure would be used by the Messiah when He came to bring salvation. He also sought their spiritual revival so that the people would call upon the Lord with humble hearts and commit their ways to Him.

The universal appeal of Zechariah is for all men to repent and turn to the Lord, to accept the living water of salvation through the gospel of Christ, and to be in subjection to the Lord, the “King over all the earth,” who is head of His church, and savior of His spiritual body.

Just as Zechariah speaks of God’s remembering love and providential care for His people, so salvation in Christ is God’s gift of love for all men who believe on Christ as God’s only begotten Son and who obey His gospel of salvation.

II. BACKGROUND OF ZECHARIAH

Main theme – Zechariah’s theme is God’s remembering love and providential care for His people. God is jealous over them with a great jealousy (1:14), as Christ is over His church (II Cor. 11:2). Zechariah proclaims, “Holiness unto the Lord” (14:20), who constantly reminds the people to “turn ye unto me saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts” (1:3). The Messianic hope is the greatest assurance of God’s love and provision for those who seek Him.

The prophet – Zechariah and Haggai both prophesied during the second year of the reign of Darius I, who confirmed the edict of Cyrus for the restoration of Jerusalem. Zechariah joined Haggai in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. He promised a “priest and king” (6:9-15), who was Christ.

The book – After a call to repentance (1:1-6), Zechariah's message is divided into two sections. The first, largely symbolic, has to do with the rebuilding of the temple (1:7-8:23). The second is prophetic, concerning Judah's victory over neighboring nations and the coming day of the Lord when all the earth would be transformed, with all men worshipping the Lord (9:1-14:21). Zechariah is the longest of the minor prophets.

The night visions (1:7-6:8) – There are eight visions concerning the rebuilding of the temple by which God assures the Jews of His love and care and encourages them to overcome their complacency and to complete the temple.

(1) ***The rider on the red horse (1:7-17)*** – The earth appears at rest, yet God's eyes are upon the nations in spite of the apparent stillness. The "shaking of the nations" (Hag. 2:6-7) was not yet visible, but God had not forgotten His people. He has heard their cry, will enable them to rebuild Jerusalem and will punish the heathen.

(2) ***The four horns and the four carpenters or smiths (1:18-21)*** – God will break the power of Israel's oppressors. Horns are a symbol of power and here represent the rulers that scattered Judah. The carpenters symbolize the destruction of those powers.

(3) ***The man with the measuring line (2:1-13)*** – The Lord stopped the young man from laying out the walls of the city. Jerusalem was to be a city without walls. The Lord would be her protection, "a wall of fire about her" (v. 5), the "apple of his eye" (v. 8).

(4) ***Joshua, the high priest, appears in filthy garments (3:1-10)*** – Satan accuses Joshua, and the Lord said unto Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee" (v. 2). The Lord orders those before Joshua to replace the filthy garments with clean clothes, signifying that the priesthood shall be cleansed, forgiven, and made acceptable for service. A changed priesthood would become perpetual in the person of "my servant the Branch" (3:8; Isa. 4:2; 11:1-4).

(5) ***The golden candlestick with seven lamps and two olive trees (4:1-14)*** – The seven lamps of the candlestick represent the word of the Lord. The “two anointed ones” may be Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious leaders who are given assurance that the temple will be rebuilt. This could come to pass only with the help of God, for man’s works are not sufficient. God’s will must prevail: “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (4:6).

(6) ***The flying scroll (5:1-4)*** – This vision answers the question: How will crime be removed? The scroll flies over the land, and its curse destroys the houses of those who steal and who swear falsely.

(7) ***The woman sitting in an ephah (5:5-11)*** – This, too, shows God’s condemnation of wickedness among His people. The woman represents wickedness. She is borne in a large dry measure to Shinar. With the temple rebuilt, evil will be removed from the land.

(8) ***The four chariots and two mountains (6:1-8)*** – The four chariots from between the copper mountains go forth to patrol the earth. The mountains may mean Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary or the old covenant and the new. Under God’s protecting providence “the four spirits of the heavens” bring peace to the four corners of the earth.

The rest of the book

(1) The last part of the chapter (6:9-15) describes the symbolic crowning of Joshua, as the prophet looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, our high priest.

(2) In chapters 7-8, Zechariah gives a fourfold answer to the questions concerning certain fasts. For seventy years the people had observed days of fasting in remembrance of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple. Now that they had returned from captivity, should these fast days be continued? Zechariah answers: (a) They should discover their purpose for fasting and remember the former years (7:4-7). (b) The Lord requires inward righteousness

and not mere outward forms (7:8-14). (c) God will restore to His people what they had lost (8:1-7). (d) The fasts will be turned into feasts of gladness (8:8-23).

(3) In the second division (9:1-14:21), there are two burdens, or prophetic messages (9:1; 12:1). The first is divine assurance that Israel will be reunited and restored. In the second burden, God promises that their enemies will be overthrown, living waters will go forth from Jerusalem, the Lord will become universal King, and Israel will at last be characterized by "Holiness unto the Lord" (14:20).

The shepherds – The evil and foolish shepherds scattered the sheep, God's people (11:1-17; Ezek. 34). The shepherd is a figure of speech for the leader of the people of God. These shepherds are not identified, but the account suggests lessons for us. When Christ came, the people were sheep without a shepherd. He is the good shepherd (John 10:11-15). Elders are shepherds who must tend the flock, under the chief Shepherd (I Peter 5:1-4).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM ZECHARIAH

Three great ideas – God's universal purpose, the Messianic hope, and divine sovereignty characterize this book. The major purpose of Zechariah is, "Holiness unto the Lord" (14:20), as God constantly reminds the people to "return unto me and I will return unto you."

Two main topics – These are the purposes of the message (ch. 1-8) and the promises of the message (ch. 9-14). The first deals with the chosen people and the temple, and the second with the final restoration of Israel and the Messianic King.

The purposes of the message (ch. 1-8) were: (1) to encourage righteousness by calling the people to repent (1:3-6), to fear not (8:15), and to speak and love the truth (8:16,19); (2) to inspire hope (1:16,17; 2:10; 8:3,6,8); (3) to promote the rebuilding of the temple (4:9; 6:15), and (4) to point to Christ, "the Branch" (3:8; 6:12-13).

The promises of the message (ch. 9-14) were: (1) the enemies of Judah will be destroyed (9:1-6; 10:11; 12:9); (2) God will bless and strengthen His people (10:6-7, 12); (3) false leaders will be judged (11:17; 13:2), and (4) Christ the triumphant King will come, and living waters will go out from Jerusalem to the whole earth (9:9-10; 13:1, 6-7; 14:1-2, 4, 8-9).

Evangelistic theme – Zechariah's view is worldwide. The eyes of the Lord "run to and fro through the whole earth" (4:10). "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people" (2:11). "And they that are far off shall come" (6:15; Eph. 2:13). Men of every nation will be drawn to Jehovah through the dispersion of the Jews, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (8:23). "...every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts..." (14:16).

Messianic passages – Zechariah had more influence upon the picture of Christ than any other prophet.

1. He is "the man whose name is the Branch" (3:8; 6:12). Jeremiah referred to him as "the Branch of righteousness," who would "grow up unto David," a King who would "reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. 23:5; 33:15).

2. "He shall be a priest upon his throne," and prince of peace (6:13; 9:10).

3. "Thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass" (9:9; Matt. 21:4f; John 12:15).

4. The betrayal for 30 pieces of silver and the purchase of the potter's field (11:12-13; Matt. 26:15; 27:9f).

5. He shall be as David (12:8-9; Rom. 1:3).

6. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7).

7. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin

and for uncleanness" (13:1; John 19:34). The cleansing fountain is the wounded side of Jesus, from which the redeeming blood flowed forth.

8. There were wounds in the hands, "with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (13:6).

9. He was the rejected and smitten shepherd (13:7; Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).

10. He was Jehovah's "fellow" (13:7). Christ's Deity is here affirmed. He is fellow-Jehovah, equal with God (Isa. 9:6; 44:6; John 14:9; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9).

11. He is the king who reigns from sea to sea (9:10; Eph. 1:21; I Tim. 6:15).

12. The Beauty and the Bands (11:7-14) refer to the Good Shepherd's protecting care and the unifying nature of His peace.

Basic Bible messages echoed in Zechariah

(1) The Lord rules not only in Israel, but the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:25; Phil. 2:9-11).

(2) Then, as now, only a remnant remains faithful to God (Ezek. 36:21-24; Matt. 22:14; 7:13-14).

(3) A law that has no exception, men reap what they sow (Gal. 6:7-8; Hosea 8:7).

(4) For the righteous, sorrow and calamity can become a blessing (Psm. 126:5-6; Matt. 5:4, 11-12; John 16:20).

(5) Nations rise and fall; God's word, His will and His kingdom will stand forever (Matt. 24:35; Rom. 3:4; II Tim. 2:19).

(6) If we become worldly, we will be destroyed with the world (Gal. 5:19-21; I John 2:15-17; Rev. 18:1-5).

(7) A spirit of rebellion precludes a life blessed by God (Jer. 6:28-30; Rom. 1:28; 2:6-11).

(8) Christians should earnestly desire the coming of Christ; this hope towers above all earthly cares and woes (I Thess. 1:10; 4:16-18; 5:23; I Cor. 15:54-58; II Peter 3:11-13).

Difficulties explained

(1) Zechariah, the son of Berechiah (1:1, 7), is called “son of Iddo” in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. He was Iddo’s grandson; therefore, Ezra must have followed the common practice of using “son” to mean “descendant.”

(2) The potter’s field purchased with 30 pieces of silver is said to fulfill a prophecy of Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9-10). This may be a copyist’s mistake in the manuscript. Or, it may be that Zechariah (11:12f) gave the details of Jeremiah’s purchase of a field (Jer. 32:7).

Some notable passages from Zechariah

1:14; 8:2 – “...Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.”

2:4 – “...Run, speak to this young man...” (Compare Prov. 3:1; 23:26).

2:8 – “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

3:2 – “And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan;...is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” (Compare Jude vs. 9).

4:6 – “...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” “And I will strengthen them in the Lord” (10:12).

4:10 – “...who hath despised the day of small things?...the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

6:12-13 – “...Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH...Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne...”

Chapter 45

The Book Of Malachi

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Key words – Love (1:2), and rebuke (3:11).

Key verses – 1:2, 2:17, 3:1, 3:7-8 and 4:5-6 –

1:2 – I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?

2:17 – Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

3:1 – Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (Similar to Isa. 40:3 – The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.)

3:7-8 – Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

4:5-6 – Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Key phrase – “Ye say,” which occurs a dozen times in Malachi (1:2, 6, 7, 12, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13, 14). This is in contrast to the expression used so often by the prophets, “Thus saith the Lord.”

Key chapter – The remarkable unity of Malachi’s brief book (only 55 verses) makes division of the material difficult. The content of chapter 3 recommends this section as the key chapter. Here, in the last book of the Old Testament, the messenger of the Lord prophesies the coming of the Lord and John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ, who is “the messenger of the covenant” (v. 1). Four hundred years later many Jews went out to the Jordan, when they heard, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matt. 3:3). Many of them obeyed the message of John the Baptist, when he said, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt. 3:1-2).

In Malachi 3, God promised that the priests would be cleansed and that their offering unto the Lord would be in righteousness and pleasant unto the Lord (v. 3-4). He also warned of swift judgment upon the evil doers (v. 5). He reminded His people, “I am the Lord, I change not” (v. 6), and called upon them to return unto Him (v. 7). God reproved them for robbing Him by withholding tithes and offerings and by offering polluted sacrifices (1:7-8; 3:8-10). He promised to open the windows of heaven and pour out such a blessing to them, “that there shall not be room enough to receive it,” if they would bring all the tithes into the storehouse (3:10).

God reproved them for speaking against Him. Then He promised that those who feared the Lord and spoke often one to another, the Lord would hearken and hear, “And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” (3:13-16).

In one of the most beautiful passages of the book, Malachi, the messenger of Jehovah, promised that the Lord would own those who feared Him and receive all who returned unto Him. These were the ones who made a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, the one serving God and the other serving Him not.

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (3:17-18).

Theme – The theme of Malachi is threefold: (1) God’s rebuke of His people for their spiritual indifference and moral laxity; (2) His assurance of the constant, continuing love of God in contrast to the unfaithfulness of His people, and (3) His confirmation of the predictions of Zechariah and the other prophets of the certain fulfillment of God’s promises of the coming of the Messiah. God will not forget His people (Isa. 49:15). Yet, He will not accept mere lip service, but must have the undivided devotion of His people. They had grown discouraged, careless, and neglectful of their religious duties. The question they seemed to be asking was in regard to God’s justice and righteousness. “If God loves us, why does He not show it?” Malachi reminds them that their hard times are the result of their disloyalty to God. He calls upon them to return to God so that God will return to them. He begins with the encouraging words, “The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord” (1:1-2).

The forcefulness of the Hebrew tense here is, “I have loved you, I do love you, I will love you, saith the Lord,” as expressed by Jeremiah, “Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love” (31:3).

Appeal – Malachi appealed to Israel to see the judgment of God upon both wicked men and nations as

evidence of His righteous rule over all, and His sparing of the faithful remnant, whom He had restored to their homeland, as proof of His unending love for them. Also, he warned them of the judgment day when God will give to all men the just reward of their deeds. He called on them to worship and serve God with genuine devotion, from the heart. His message is relevant to our lives, today. We must obey the Lord from the heart (Rom. 6:17), worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), accept His great love in Christ (John 3:16), and live in the constant realization that in the judgment, we must all give an account unto God according to our works (Rom. 14:12). The Old Testament ends with a curse (Mal. 4:6). The New Testament ends with a blessing (Rev. 22:21).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI

The prophet – His name means “messenger of the Lord.” Nothing is known of Malachi more than the book reveals. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets, after whom there was a period of 400 years of silence on the part of divine revelation. He describes the same conditions as those faced by Nehemiah, with whom he was likely contemporary. A remnant had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. They had rebuilt the temple and restored lawful worship, at least in form. Later, Ezra and Nehemiah were authorized by Artaxerxes to go to the holy city, where they initiated sweeping reforms. Since neither of them mentions Malachi, he probably prophesied after their time, about 435 B. C., although he was connected with their reform movement.

The book – The four chapters of the book may be divided into three divine messages: (1) a message of God’s love (1:1-5); (2) a message of rebuke for their sins (1:6-2:17); (3) a message of hope in the renewed promise of the advent of Christ (3:1-4:6). Malachi’s charge to the people may be

summed up in four words—remember, repent, return, and rehearse. (1) Remember God's love and remember the law of Moses (4:4); (2) repent of your sins (1:9); (3) return to God (3:7), and (4) rehearse to one another God's love, grace and promise of the coming of the Lord (3:16). In style, Malachi employed the dialectic, or dialogue method of teaching, similar to that of the scribes. He presents seven controversies of God with Israel, in which he depicts the people arguing with God. The expression, "Ye say," is contrasted with "thus saith the Lord." In reminding them of their sins, God took account of their sayings and answered them.

Conditions – The work of Haggai and Zechariah 100 years before was now forgotten. After the completion of the temple, the people fell into many sinful practices. Although the Jews had not returned to idolatry, they had grown careless, negligent, sensual, selfish and filled with a spirit of worldliness. Without king, faithful priest, or prophet, they became as sheep without a shepherd. This led to their repeating the sins of their forefathers which had caused the destruction of the divided kingdoms (Isa. 28:15; Jer. 3:25). They had grown skeptical because the promises of the coming of the Messiah had not yet come to pass. Their worship was ritual without life, form without spirit, sacrifice without love. God would not accept their offerings, although they covered the altar with their tears (2:13). Malachi's message is timely today, when many hold "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:5).

The sins of the people – Malachi's charges were fourfold, relating to things religious, moral, social and material. He accused both priests and people of being corrupt, as he reproved them for sins denounced also by Nehemiah. These included marriages with heathen (2:11; Neh. 13:23-27); profaning the covenant of the priesthood (2:8; Neh. 13:29), and robbing God of tithes and offerings (3:10; Neh. 13:10-12). Malachi also condemned them for

failing to honor God (1:6), for offering polluted sacrifices and corrupting the sabbath (1:7-8; 12-13), for wearying God with their hypocrisy and vain words (1:12; 2:13, 17), for priests causing others to stumble (2:8), for the people's turning aside from God's law (3:7), divorcing their wives (2:14-16), saying it is vain to serve God (3:14), calling the wicked happy (3:15), and other sins (3:5). Thus, Malachi charged Israel with profanity, sacrilege, greed and indifference; with perversion of the moral order by calling good evil and evil good (2:17), with robbing God, and with blasphemy in that they said, "There is no profit in serving God" (3:14), sins that are all too common today.

Seven basic debates in the people's controversy with God

- (1) "Wherein hast thou loved us?" (1:2-3).
- (2) "Wherein have we despised thy name?" (1:6).
- (3) "Wherein have we polluted thee?" (1:7; 2:10-16).
- (4) "Wherein have we wearied the Lord with our words?" (2:17).
- (5) "Wherein shall we return to the Lord?" (3:7).
- (6) "Wherein have we robbed thee?" (3:8).
- (7) "What have we spoken against thee?" (3:13).

God's three messengers – Malachi's name means "the Lord's messenger," and all prophets were messengers of the Lord. He speaks of three other divine messengers. (1) The priest, Levi in particular, is "the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (2:7-8). (2) John the Baptist, here promised, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me" (3:1). (3) Christ, the messenger of the covenant (3:1), is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 9:15-17).

Messianic references – It is doubtful that "the sun of righteousness" (4:2) applies to Jesus, because the Hebrew uses the feminine pronoun, "her wings," to agree with "sun," which is a feminine noun in Hebrew. A more authentic messianic promise is seen in the messenger who prepares the way (3:1), who is also called Elijah, the prophet (4:5),

because John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah (Luke 1:17). These references were quoted by Jesus and the gospel writers and applied to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; Matt. 11:14). Malachi is the only minor prophet who prophesied the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah. (Compare Isa. 40:3).

One other reference quoted in the New Testament – The election of the Lord: “I have loved Jacob, and I hated Esau” (1:2-3; Rom. 9:13).

Contrast of Old and New Testaments – The first book of the Old Testament ends with a coffin (Gen. 50:26), and the last book ends with a curse (Mal. 4:6). The first book of the New Testament ends with the resurrected Christ promising to be with His followers “always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20), and the last book ends with a blessing upon those who keep His word (Rev. 22:7, 14), and a joyful anticipation of His second coming. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

III. GREAT LESSONS FROM MALACHI

God’s everlasting love – The first lesson of Malachi is God’s unfailing love for His people. But the people were so callous that they asked, “Wherein hast thou loved us?” (1:2). Whenever we cease to love God, we begin to wonder whether God loves us. Nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39). Salvation through Christ is the supreme gift of God’s love (John 3:16). We can never deserve the gift, for “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). He is the giver of life and every good gift (Acts 17:25; James 1:17). Malachi shows the importance both of divine and human love. God’s love is unfailing; without love, man is nothing (I Cor. 13:1-3).

“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (I John 4:16). “Love never faileth.” Even if we are unfaithful, Christ “abideth faithful, for he

cannot deny himself" (II Tim. 2:13). It is fitting that the last book of the Old Testament, as it anticipates the coming of the redeemer, should confirm and reassure us of God's unending love for His people. Therefore, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude vs. 21). "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Tim. 2:22).

We must prove our love of God – Sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4), the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21), which is the law of life and love, of grace and truth (Rom. 8:2; John 1:17). "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:3). Therefore, when we sin, we sin against God's love and grieve His spirit. This fact makes sin "exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:13) and every sin an act of unbelief and ingratitude. God's nature and His love for the sinner demand that he destroy sin and save the sinner (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:26; I John 3:8). Sin must be punished. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The price must be paid. "Jesus paid it all," when He bore our sins in His body on the tree (I Peter 2:24). He died once for all, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9; 10:10). God cannot overlook sin because of who he is; he cannot save us in our sins because of what sin is. Jesus said that if we die in our sins, we cannot go where He is (John 8:21).

Love is known only from its actions. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son (I John 4:9-10). We show our love in our obedience, for Christ said, "If ye love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). True spiritual love is not sentimentality, but obedience. Therefore, love can be commanded. We love God as the result of faith and deliberate choice on our part. Although God's love is unconditional and undying, the blessings of His enduring love are conditional. Everlasting salvation is only for those

who obey Christ (Heb. 5:8-9). He would have all men to be saved by their coming to a knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4). He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). The goodness of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4) and to forgiveness in Christ (Eph. 1:7), where the barrier of our sins that separate us from God is removed (Isa. 59:1-2; Col. 1:21-23), and our fellowship with God in Christ is restored (I John 1:6-7). God loves in a special way those who obey the words of Christ. “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

The name of the Lord – Another value of the book of Malachi is its revelation of the secret of strength in an age of spiritual failure. The people had not revered God’s name. “Then they that feared the Lord...thought upon his name” (3:16). As they thought on the name of the Lord, they took inventory of the wealth they had in the name of Jehovah. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). “They spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it” (Mal. 3:16). Whenever we think upon the things of God (Phil. 4:8), we will speak to one another about him, and he will hearken and hear us. Christ promised, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). “For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17).

“Put me to the test” – After reproving the people for robbing God, the Lord challenged them to bring “the whole tithe into the store-house...and prove me” (3:8, 10). If they would give and live as they have promised, then God would “open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will

rebuke the devourer for your sakes...And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts" (v. 10-12). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom. 11:33-36). He is still "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

"Behold the day cometh" (4:1, 5) – The Old Testament closes with God's promise to His people of the Lord's coming and with His warning for them to repent, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4:6). The central message of the New Testament is Christ's second coming (Acts 1:11; I Thess. 1:10; Heb. 9:28). The New Testament closes, not with a curse as does the Old Testament, but with the glad hope of His coming: "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus," and with a blessing. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen" (Rev. 22:20-21). Let us be ready for His coming, when "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

God's book of remembrance (Mal. 3:16) – They had forgotten that God keeps a book of remembrance. He took note of those who feared Him. He has also a book of life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 21:27). Only the faithful, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, will gain entrance into the heavenly city. The book will be opened at the judgment, and those whose names are not found therein will be cast into the everlasting fire (Rev. 17:8; 20:12, 15; 22:19).

Some notable passages from Malachi

1:10 – "...I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts..."

2:6 – "The law of truth was in his mouth..."

2:16 – "For the LORD... hateth putting away (divorce)."

3:6 – "For I am the LORD, I change not..."

3:7 – “...Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts...”

3:14 – “Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance...”

3:17 – “And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels...”

3:18 – “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked...”

4:6 – “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:1-4).

Know Your Bible

The New Testament

Section

Chapter 46

What Is The Bible?

What we call the Bible. The sacred writings or oracles which have come down to us from the mind of God through the Holy Spirit we call *the Bible, the Scriptures, and the Word of God.*

The word "Bible" is not in the text, itself. It is derived from the Greek *biblia*, and means "the books." It is an appropriate title, because the Bible consists of sixty-six books—39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. "The Book" is even more correct, for it is one complete whole. The 66 books fit together perfectly to make one volume—"The Book of Books." In the Bible we read of "*the volume of the book*" (Psalm 40:7; Heb. 10:7).

The word "Scriptures," derived from the Latin, means "the writings." This too, is an accurate term. In Daniel 10:21, we read of "the Scripture of truth," and in Exodus 32:16, in reference to the ten commandments, "the writing was the writing of God." This may be said of the whole, as well.

The "word of God" is an equally suitable title. We read of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17), and of "the word of God," which is quick and powerful (Heb. 4:12). Christ frequently referred to the writings of the prophets as the word of God and the scriptures. He said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

The author of the Bible. About forty persons, in all stations of life, wrote the sixty-six books of the Bible, over a period of about 1,600 years from about 1500 B. C., when Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, to about A. D. 97, when the apostle John penned Revelation, the last book. There is perfect harmony among all of the writings. The

actual author of the Bible was the One who knows the end from the beginning—the all-wise, all-knowing, everlasting God.

How God gave his word to man. God did not write out his complete revelation to man, all at once and all in one book, as he did in giving the ten commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little (Isa. 28:13).

Christ is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things (Heb. 1:1-2).

THE DIVINELY INSPIRED WORD

How Christ gave his word. Before his death, Jesus promised his apostles that after his departure he would send the Holy Spirit, “whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit’s work in inspiration. Jesus explained this work in these words.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:13-15).

Guided by the Holy Spirit. All writers of the Bible were divinely inspired, as we read in II Peter 1:21:

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

To be “moved by the Holy Spirit” means that they were carried along, or guided by, the Holy Spirit in all that they wrote. The penmen were fully inspired by the Spirit, even in their choice of their words, as Paul stated in I Corinthians 2:13:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual words (ASV).

This constitutes the body of truth, the “knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,” whereby God has “granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3-4, ASV).

KEY-NOTES OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

<u>Book</u>	<u>Key Words</u>	<u>Key Verses</u>	<u>Message</u>
Matthew	Kingdom	1:21-23	Jesus, the King of the Jews
Mark	Straightway	10:43-45	Jesus, the Perfect Servant
Luke	Son of Man	19:10	Jesus, the Ideal Man
John	Believe	20:30-31	Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God
Acts	Beginning	1:8	The Apostles' Witness of Christ, Beginning At Jerusalem
Romans	Righteousness	1:16-17	Justification is by Obedient Faith In Christ
I Corinthians	"Our Lord"	1:2, 10	The Lordship of Jesus
II Corinthians	Comfort, Ministry	4:5-6	Christians are ministers of comfort and of the new covenant
Galatians	Liberty	5:1	Christ is the Deliverer
Ephesians	The Church	1:22-23	The church is the body of Christ
Philippians	Joy, Love	1:21	"To live is Christ"
Colossians	Fulness	2:9-10	Christ is all and in all
I Thessalonians	Hope	1:9-10	Christ is coming again for the faithful
II Thessalonians	The Day of the Lord	1:7-8	The righteous judgment of Christ
I Timothy	Minister, Ministration	3:15-16	Be an example to the believers
II Timothy	Unfeigned Faith	3:14-17	Preach the word, keep the faith

Titus	Savior, Salvation	2:11-15	The grace of God brings salvation to all men
Philemon	Receive	vv. 9, 15-17	The transforming power of the Gospel
Hebrews	Better	8:6	The superiority of Christ over Moses, prophets, and angels
James	Faith, Works	2:21-26	Faith shown by works
I Peter	Suffering, Hope	3:15, 21	Suffering patiently and joyously to the glory of God
II Peter	Knowledge	1:3-4	The word of Christ is the source of life and godliness
I John	Fellowship	1:7	The life of fellowship with God
II John	The Doctrine of Christ	vv. 9-11	Christ's teaching must be received and obeyed, and all error rejected
III John	Truth	v. 4	Walking in the Truth
Jude	Keep, Kept	v. 3	Keep the faith so that God may keep you from stumbling
Revelation	Overcome	2:10	The glorious triumph of Christ, ultimate victory of the righteous

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. Introduction – The 27 books of the New Testament are logically divided:

- A. The Gospel Accounts (4 books): *Matthew through John*, the life of Christ.
- B. History of the New Testament church (one book): *Acts*, how to become a Christian.
- C. Epistles to churches and individual Christians (21 books): *Romans through Jude*, how to live as a Christian.
- D. Persecution and triumph of the church (one book): *Revelation*, the hope of the Christian.

II. The four accounts of the Gospel (not four gospels, but 4 accounts of *the* gospel). Why are there four accounts of the same message? (1) Each writer addressed a different group; (2) each account helps to corroborate the others, and (3) all four were inspired by the Holy Spirit, while maintaining the individual style of expression of each writer (II Peter 1:20-21).

- A. *Matthew* (28 chapters) – Jesus the Messiah, King of the Jews, written for the Jews.
- B. *Mark* (16) – Jesus, the all-powerful man of action, the perfect servant of God, written for Romans.
- C. *Luke* (24) – Jesus, the perfect Son of man, the ideal man, the savior and perfecter of all men, written for Greeks.
- D. *John* (21) – Jesus, the Son of God, the Divine Word, who became flesh, written for both Jews and Gentiles, that they might believe and have eternal life in his name.

III. The Book of Acts (28 chapters).

- A. Luke, the inspired writer.
- B. Three important teachings recorded in this book:
 - 1. The establishment of the church.

2. How to become a Christian.
3. Historical background for many of the epistles.

IV. The 21 Epistles: *Romans through Jude*, how to live, worship and serve God as a Christian.

A. Paul's 13 epistles: *Romans through Philemon*.

1. *Romans* (16) – The gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16), the key-note of this book and the central theme of the New Testament.
2. *I Corinthians* (16) – Division and other problems in the church at Corinth. The resurrection, steadfastness, do all things in love.
3. *II Corinthians* (13) – Exhortations to mutual encouragement, liberality, separation from the world, and Paul's defense of his apostleship.
4. *Galatians* (6) – The old law had fulfilled its purpose; Judaizers had perverted the gospel; men now justified by faith working through love.
5. *Ephesians* (6) – God's eternal purpose; Christ and the church; unity.
6. *Philippians* (4) – Christ, the only perfect spirit and example (2:5-11); the joy of being a Christian.
7. *Colossians* (4) – The divine glory of Christ. Similar to Ephesians, in which Paul presents the church as the body of Christ, while in Colossians he emphasizes Christ as the head of the church.
8. *I Thessalonians* (5) – The hope of the faithful at the second coming of Christ.
9. *II Thessalonians* (3) – The doom of the disobedient when Christ comes again.
10. *I Timothy* (6) – Qualifications of elders (I Tim. 3 and Titus 1); warnings of apostasy and charge to Timothy to live as an example.
11. *II Timothy* (4) – Paul's last letter; charge to Timothy to preach the word.
12. *Titus* (3) – Exhortation for Christians to live soberly, righteously and godly.

13. *Philemon* (1) – Personal letter concerning the conversion of Onesimus, a runaway slave.
- B. *Hebrews* (13)** – Author unknown. The preeminence of Christ, the mediator of a new covenant; the old law fulfilled; the necessity of enduring faithfulness.
- C. General Epistles:** *James through Jude*, seven epistles.
1. *James* (5) – To Christians scattered in unfriendly regions; practical Christian living as seen in good works done in faith.
 2. *I Peter* (5) – Written to Christians in Roman provinces to encourage and strengthen the brethren, who are heirs of the living hope.
 3. *II Peter* (3) – Exhortations to grow in grace; warnings against scoffers and false teachers; the end of the world.
 4. *I John* (5) – Written to Christians to strengthen their faith in Christ, assure them of eternal life and exhort them to love God and one another.
 5. *II John* (1) – Emphasizes love and truth and warnings against associating with false teachers.
 6. *III John* (1) – Christian hospitality and walking in the truth.
 7. *Jude* (1) – Similar to II Peter 2; warning against corrupt teachers and exhortation to contend for the faith.
- D. Book of Prophecy:** *Revelation* (22) – Written by the Apostle John while on the Isle of Patmos. Addressed to seven churches of Asia. The tribulations and triumphs of the church. Final victory of the righteous. The hope of the Christian. Certification that this book completes God's revelation to man (22:18-19). Revelation is an apocalyptic book, written in symbols. Therefore, it is called *The Apocalypse*.

Chapter 47

The Fourfold Gospel

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John).

Only One Gospel. There are not four gospels, but four accounts of *the Gospel*. There is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and it is the power of God unto salvation, God's only means of salvation (Rom. 1:16). The four gospel books are the foundation literature of Christianity. They present the person of Christ, his teaching and his work on earth in the days of his flesh. They tell us what to believe to be saved; Acts tells us what to do to be saved, and the rest of the New Testament, how to keep saved.

Why are there four accounts of the same gospel?

(1) Each account was written for a different purpose and to a different group of people. (2) Each evangelist portrayed Jesus from a different viewpoint. (3) Each account helps to corroborate and supplement the others. (4) Therefore, the four books constitute "*the Fourfold Gospel*."

What do the four books have in common with each other? All four writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, while each one maintained his individual style of writing (II Peter 1:20-21). By means of the Holy Spirit, Jesus taught them all things, and brought "all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Jesus promised his apostles further, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). **There is perfect harmony between them, as they set forth one message.**

The message of salvation. These books are more than a biography or portrait of Jesus, the Christ. They show his

divine characteristics and work by recording what Jesus, himself, said and did while on earth. He speaks and acts for himself. The books are not a complete record of Christ's life on earth. Primarily they tell of his redemptive work accomplished by his life on earth as Immanuel, "God with us," and by his death and his resurrection. John said that if the many other things that Jesus did:

...should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25).

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:31).

Were there other inspired accounts of the Gospel? No, the apocryphal gospels are spurious. As early as 150 A. D., Tatian, the Syrian, made a harmonic arrangement of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, from a Syriac translation of them then in existence. Irenaeus, about 175 A. D., argued that there were only four real "Gospels." He speaks of the fourfoldness of the gospel as analagous to the four quarters of the globe...and as the four pillars on which the church rests as it covers the earth.

II. COMPARISON OF THE FOUR BOOKS

The Synoptic "Gospels." Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called "the Synoptic Gospels," meaning that they follow a similar outline and give a general account of the same series of events in the life of christ. John does not follow an outline of Jesus' life. Primarily he records Jesus' teaching and miracles to prove that he is the only begotten Son of God.

Similarities and differences. According to B. F. Westcott's chart, if the total content of each book is represented by 100, the percentage of subject matter peculiar to each author is given in the left column, and the amount

recorded in at least one other book is given in the right column, under “concordances.” Mark has the least amount of matter peculiar to himself—only 24 verses not paralleled in either or both Matthew and Luke.

Book	Peculiarities	Concordances
Mark	7	93
Matthew	42	58
Luke	59	41
John	92	8

III. MATTHEW

Keys to Matthew.

1. *Key word*—Kingdom.
2. *Key verses*—Chapter 1:21-23:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

3. *Key phrase*—“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...”
4. *Recurring words*—The word “kingdom” occurs 50 times; “kingdom of heaven,” 30 times, and “king,” many times.

The Beginning of the Gospel. Although Matthew was not the first book to be written, it is fitting that the New Testament begins with this book, for its opening verses take us back to the Old Testament in giving the royal descent of the Lord.

Matthew’s Message. The theme is “Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Matthew wrote to the Jews. He wrote primarily to prove to them that Jesus of Nazareth was King of the

Jews and the Messiah of Jewish prophecy in whose life and death the Old Testament was fulfilled. In doing so, he gives 60 quotations from the Old Testament.

The genealogy according to Matthew. Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to show the Jews that Jesus fulfilled God's covenant with Abraham that through his seed, Christ, all nations would be blessed (Gal. 3:16).

The Old Covenant to be fulfilled and taken away. Matthew refers to the Jews as divinely chosen and set apart as a peculiar people through whom redemption would come, as they said, "We be Abraham's seed and heirs to the promises of God." The law of Moses was to remain in force until fulfilled and taken away by Christ at the cross (Matt. 5:17-19; Col. 2:14).

The Appeal of Matthew. Against the backdrop of the recurring message: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," there is the urgent message, "Repent ye," and the warning, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (3:2, 8).

All Authority. Matthew records Jesus' words following his resurrection: "All power (authority - ASV) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (28:18).

The Great Commision. Matthew gives the twofold great commission of Jesus to his disciples to "teach," "baptize," and "teach." (28:19-20).

IV. MARK

Keys to Mark.

1. *Key words*— Straightway, and immediately, occur 32 times.
2. *Key verses*—Chapter 10:43-45:

But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give

his life a ransom for many.

3. *Key phrase*— “What manner of man is this?”

Mark’s Message— Jesus, the Perfect Servant of God.

Works Rather Than Words— Mark wrote to the Romans, who trusted in the power that was embodied in the State and who believed that they were born to rule the world. They understood the meaning of power, action, law and universal dominion. Therefore, Mark presents Jesus as the perfect Servant of God, the man of divine power, worker of miracles, and almighty conqueror over nature, demons, disease and death. He records deeds rather than discourses.

Characteristics of Mark— Writing for Romans, Mark frequently uses Latin terms in explaining Jewish words and customs. He gives no genealogy and does not often refer to the Old Testament.

The Appeal of Mark— “Repent ye and believe the gospel” (1:14-15).

V. LUKE

1. *Key words*— Son of Man.

2. *Key verses*—Chapter 19:10: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”

3. *Key phrase*— “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things” (1:4).

Luke’s Message— Jesus, the ideal man.

The Perfect Man— Luke wrote to the Greeks, who “bequeathed to the world the grandest models of beauty and thought that the unaided human mind has ever produced,” and who created their gods in the likeness of man. Luke, “the beloved physician,” was himself a Greek scholar. To the Greeks he presented Jesus as the perfect “Son of Man,” the savior and perfecter of all men.

The genealogy according to Luke—Luke traced the genealogy of Jesus, through Mary, back to Adam to show

that Jesus was the universal man, with the universal gospel.

The Appeal of Luke— “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (24:47).

VI. JOHN

VI. John

1. *Key words*— “The Father,” to whom Christ refers more than 100 times, and “believe,” John’s principal appeal.

2. *Key verses*—Chapter 20:30-31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

3. *Key phrases*— “And the Word was made flesh” (1:14), and, “For God so loved the world” (3:16).

John’s Message— Jesus, the only begotten Son of God.

The gospel for all men— John wrote to all men, to inspire faith in Jesus as the Christ, the only begotten Son of God. His is the gospel of the Divine Word, who became flesh (1:1, 14).

The Appeal of John— John appeals to the spiritual needs of the soul by pointing men to Christ, the source of the abundant life here and eternal life hereafter, available through faith, love, obedience and true worship.

QUESTIONS ON THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

1. How many gospels are there? _____ Galatians 1:6-9.
2. List three benefits of having four accounts of the gospel.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. List two things that all four accounts have in common.
 1. _____
 2. _____
4. Which books are the synoptic “gospels”?

5. To whom did Matthew write? _____
6. For what purpose did Matthew write? _____

7. To whom did Mark write? _____
8. For what purpose did Mark write? _____

9. To whom did Luke write? _____
10. For what purpose did Luke write? _____

11. To whom did John write? _____
12. For what purpose did John write? _____

THE BIBLE

Despised and torn in pieces
By infidels decried
By thunderbolts of hatred
The cynic's pride –

All these have railed against it,
In this and other lands
Yet dynasties have fallen,
And still the Bible stands!

– James McGray

– Material from the manuscript, *Dunn's Bible Notes*,
by Frank J. Dunn

Chapter 48

The Gospel According To Matthew

I. KEYS TO MATTHEW

1. **Key words** – “Kingdom” (55 times), “kingdom of heaven” (32 times), and “king,” many times.
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 1:21-23:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

3. **Key phrase** – “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...”
4. **Key chapter** – Chapter 16: “...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (v. 6), “...Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (v. 13), “...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16), “...upon this rock I will build my church...” (v. 18), “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (vv. 26-27).
5. **Subject** – “Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews.”

II. THE PURPOSE OF MATTHEW

To the Jews. The book of Matthew was written by a

Jew to Jews about a Jew. Matthew's purpose was to present Jesus as the King of the Jews and the Messiah promised by the prophets. He proved by the genealogy of Jesus, his miracles, teaching, life, death, resurrection and promise to establish his kingdom that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament scriptures concerning the Messiah. Matthew referred to the Old Testament more than any other New Testament writer. He gave 60 quotations and made about 130 references to the Old Testament that were fulfilled by the Lord.

Christ, the King. Matthew validates Christ's claim that he is the Anointed One of Israel, the rightful heir to the throne of David. Matthew refers to him nine times as "the Son of David," a phrase that occurs only six times in all of the other accounts of the gospel. In reference to Christ, he speaks of "the kingdom of heaven" 32 times, an expression that occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Jesus is the climax of all the Messianic prophets. Matthew uses the phrase, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," nine times, but it occurs in none of the other accounts. From the time of the birth of "the King of the Jews" (2:2), to the setting of the inscription above his head on the cross, Matthew verifies that "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (27:37).

The Beginning of the Gospel. Matthew begins with the announcement of the fulfillment of Israel's hope in the coming of Christ. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). He traces the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham through Joseph, to show the Jews that Jesus fulfilled God's covenant with Abraham that through his seed, Christ, all nations would be blessed (Gal. 3:16), and that Jesus was the legal heir to the throne of his father, David.

Matthew is a bridge. The book of Matthew forms a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament, as seen in his beginning with the genealogy of Jesus, his

many references to the Old Testament, and his recurring affirmation of the many prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. As Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17).

III. THE AUTHOR AND TIME OF WRITING

The Author. There is no claim of authorship in the book, but the early Christian writers unanimously assigned this book to Matthew. Before the end of the second century, there were 21 writers, such as Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, and others, who cited the first gospel as Matthew's and of divine authority.

About the Author. His original name was Levi, the son of Alphaeus. All three synoptists relate the call of Matthew (Matt. 10:3; Mark 2:14; Luke 6:15). He was a publican, or tax collector, a post highly unpopular with his fellow Jews. He refers to himself as Matthew, the publican (Matt. 10:3). He is listed by all three as one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

Ready acceptance of his call. Matthew accepted the Lord's call and left his post without hesitation. Sometime after his call, he made a feast for Jesus, at which many tax collectors and sinners were present (Matt. 9:10; Luke 5:29). There is no other mention of Matthew except in Acts 1:13; where with the other apostles he waited in Jerusalem for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Date of writing. Matthew's two expressions "unto this day" (27:8), and "until this day" (28:15) suggest that a period of time had passed since the events he describes. Since he records Jesus' discourse concerning the approaching fall of Jerusalem, he must have written prior to 70 A. D., the date of that calamity. Probably he wrote around 58 to 60 A. D.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGLY GOSPEL

The Plan of the Book. Although it follows to some extent the same outline as the other two synoptics, it is not chronological, but it is systematic and topical. There is order and purpose in the arrangement of materials. Matthew arranges his subject matter into groups, as the miracles of chapters thirteen and twenty-five.

The Kingship of Jesus. The same orderly arrangement is seen in the development of the theme of the kingship of Jesus. First, Matthew writes of the person and nature of the king (1:1-4:16), then of the program of the king and his kingdom (4:17-16:20) and finally of the great work of the king for all men by his death and resurrection (16:21-28:20). Matthew passes entirely over the Judean ministry, where the Jews rejected Jesus, while he relates in detail the great and successful Galilean ministry of Christ (4:12-18:35).

The Gospel of the Kingdom. While Mark relates the facts and incidents of Christ's life, Matthew emphasizes his teaching, especially that which revolves around the kingship of Jesus. He speaks of the "gospel of the kingdom." He records Jesus' promise to give to Peter "the keys of the kingdom." Christ shall gather all nations before him as he sits upon his throne, and "the king says" unto them, "the king shall answer," and other similar expressions (25:34-40). Matthew stresses the authority of the king. He speaks with authority (7:28-29). He is God's beloved son (3:17; 17:5, declared to be the Christ (16:16). He had authority to reject the Jews (21:43), to silence his critics (22:46), to denounce the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (23:1-39), and by virtue of his resurrection to possess all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

Key Phrases. Matthew frequently uses the word, "fulfilled," in reference to Old Testament writings fulfilled in Christ. The word "kingdom" occurs 55 times, "kingdom

of heaven” 32 times, and “son of David” seven times.

Five great sermons in Matthew. (1) Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27); (2) Instructions to the apostles (10:5-42); (3) Parables of the kingdom (13:1-52); (4) Discourse on humility and forgiveness (18:1-35); (5) Prophetic discourses (24:1-25:46). In a sense these sermons are the backbone of this book.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

Chapter 49

The Gospel According To Mark

I. KEYS TO MARK

1. **Key words** – “Straightway” and “immediately” occur 32 times.
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 10:43-45:

But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

3. **Key phrase** – “What manner of man is this?”
4. **Key chapter** – Mark 16–All evidence is in favor of the controverted passage (vv. 9-20) that it is authentic, as stated by B. W. Johnson’s following explanation.

The remainder of the chapter is not found in the Vatican or Sinaitic Greek MSS. , but is found in the Alexandrian. These are the three oldest and most reliable MSS. Some hold these verses to be a later addition, but as they are found in all the ancient versions they must have been a part of Mark’s Gospel when the first century ended. Schaff, Plumptre, Olshausen, Lochman and others regard them genuine, while other critics consider them doubtful. A circumstance in their favor is that the Vatican MS. has a vacant space for them. It seems probable that in an early copy, therefore, they were omitted for some cause by a copyist who left space for them, but did not afterwards fill it, and that the Sinaitic MS. was made from the

mutilated copy. It is clear that verse 8 was not designated to conclude Mark's narrative.
Vol. 1, p. 218.

5. **Subject** – Jesus the perfect servant.
6. **Appeal** – Jesus' farewell charge to his disciples:
...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (16:15-16).

II. BACKGROUND OF MARK

The Author. He is not named in the book, but it was the unanimous opinion of Papias, Eusebius, Irenaeus and the other early writers that Mark wrote it. He was not an apostle, and therefore not an eyewitness of the events he records. Based in part upon his being in Babylon with Peter and being called by Peter, "Mark my son" (I Peter 5:13), early writers regarded Mark as the disciple and interpreter of Peter. Justin Martyr referred to Mark's gospel as the "memoirs" and "gospel of Peter." He is called "John, whose surname was Mark" and "John" as well as Mark. John was his Jewish name, and Mark seems to be his Roman designation.

References to Mark. He was the son of Mary, a woman of Jerusalem in whose home Christians gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12). He returned from Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:25) and accompanied them on the first missionary journey as far as Perga (Acts 13:5, 13). There he left them and returned home. Because of Mark's withdrawal Paul declined to take him on the second missionary tour and separated from Barnabas, Mark's cousin (Col. 4:10), who chose Mark for his companion, while Paul chose Silas to accompany him (Acts 15:37-40).

Ten years later Mark was with Paul in his imprisonment at Rome and was counted by Paul as a fellow-worker (Col. 4:10; Phile. 24). Paul found him useful and in his last epistle

asked Timothy to bring Mark to him in his imprisonment (II Tim. 4:11). Mark was with Peter when he wrote his first epistle (I Peter 5:13).

The date of writing. The date is uncertain. Some say 60 A. D., others say as late as 68 A. D. The fact that he was with Paul in Rome at the time of his imprisonment (62–63 A. D.) accords with the tradition that Mark wrote his account in that city, possibly between 63–66 A. D.

Purpose of the book. Mark wrote primarily for the Romans, who were men of power and mighty works. Mark appealed to them by recording the powerful deeds of Jesus. He pictures Christ as the wonder-working Son of God, the perfect Servant of God, living and active among men. Citizens of the great Roman Empire were attracted to the Almighty King who is seen in Mark as the ruler of an omnipotent and everlasting kingdom.

Characteristics of the book. Since the Romans cared nothing for Jewish Scripture, Mark omits all reference to Jewish law and refers only once or twice to the Old Testament. He omits the genealogy and the birth and childhood of Jesus. He explains Jewish words such as “Boanerges” (3:17), “Talitha cumin” (5:41), and “corban” (7:11). He reduced Jewish money to Roman currency (12:42) and explained Jewish customs and terms that were not understood by Gentile readers (7:3; 14:12, 15:42). He uses words like legion, centurion and other Latin terms. Although Mark emphasizes Christ’s divine power, he often alludes to his human feelings—his disappointment (3:5), his weariness (4:38), his wonder (6:6), his sighs (7:34; 8:12), and his affection (10:21).

Book of action. Mark is the shortest of the four accounts of the gospel. It is the gospel of activity and energy. It stresses the works rather than the words of Jesus. Few discourses and only four parables are given, while nineteen miracles are recorded in rapid review. Mark’s use of the present tense in narration gives the reader the feeling of

being a witness of the events. The quick succession is indicated by one Greek word, which occurs 41 times in this book and is translated by seven words—"immediately," "anon," "forthwith," "by and by," "as soon as," "shortly," and "straightway." Twice Mark records that in the press of events the apostles had no time to eat (3:20; 6:31). The swiftly changing scenes are like a moving picture.

The miracles. Nineteen miracles are recorded which demonstrate the supernatural power of Christ, as follows:

1. There are eight which prove his power over disease—1:31, 41; 2:3-12; 3:1-5; 5:25; 7:32; 8:23; 10:46.
2. Five show his power over nature—4:39; 6:41, 49; 8:8-9; 11:13-14.
3. Four demonstrate his authority over demons—1:25; 5:1-13; 7:25-30; 9:26.
4. Two show his conquest over death, including his own resurrection—5:42; 16:9.

Effect of the miracles. By his miracles Jesus proved his power over demons, disease, despair, death, and depths of the sea. Mark records the effects of amazement, fear, and awe that they had upon the people (1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:33; 7:37). The apostles, also, were amazed by his miracles (6:50-51; 10:32). Even the Roman centurion at the cross said of Jesus, "...Truly this man was the Son of God" (15:39).

Brief outline of Mark—

- I. The work of John the Baptist, preparatory to Christ's public ministry—1:1-13.
- II. The Galilean ministry with Capernaum as the center of its operations—1:14-9:50.
- III. The last journey to Jerusalem—10:1-52.
- IV. The closing scenes of Christ's life—11:1-16:8
- V. The resurrection, great commission and ascension—16:9-20.

Central teaching of Mark. Jesus, the perfect and tireless Servant of God, is presented in key passages (1:1, 14-15; 10:44-45). He fulfilled the true law of service by his

sympathy, suffering and sacrifice for mankind. His message is the gospel of a perfect servant, a perfected service, and a perfecting salvation.

Isaiah was the prophet of the Servant of God. Paul wrote of the self-emptying whereby the Son of God became the Servant of God (Phil. 2:5-11). And he said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ..." (Phil. 2:5).

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

Chapter 50

The Gospel According To Luke

I. KEYS TO LUKE

Key words – “Son of man,” 23 times; “Son of God,” 7 times; “Kingdom of God,” 32 times.

Key verse – Chapter 19:10.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save
that which was lost.

Key phrase – “that thou mightest know the certainty...”
(1:4).

Key chapter – chapter 15 – the Prodigal Son.

Subject – Jesus, the ideal man.

Appeal – “that repentance and remission of sins should
be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at
Jerusalem” (24:47).

II. THE PURPOSE OF LUKE

Purpose of the book – Luke wrote primarily for the Greeks. His purpose was to show by means of an accurate and orderly narrative of the life of Christ that Jesus was the perfect man and Son of God. While the Romans sought to conquer humanity, the mission of the Greeks was to perfect humanity. They looked for the ideal man, who would be representative of the whole human race. They idealized human reason, beauty and truth. They made all of their gods after some form of their idea of perfect humanity. Luke appealed to them by representing Jesus as the ideal, universal man, the perfect expression of reason, beauty and truth. He traced the ancestry of Jesus back to Adam to show that Christ was truly the “Son of Man,” the savior and perfecter of all men.

Theme of the book – Chapter 2:52 – Jesus is portrayed as the highest in social, physical, mental, and spiritual attainment. He was “made like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:17) that he might bring “many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10). Thus Luke traces the human growth of Jesus, who was “the fruit of the womb” (1:42), the “babe” (2:16), the “child,” (2:27), and the “man” (23:6). At the same time he was the Messiah, the ruler of an everlasting spiritual kingdom (1:31-33).

The author – He does not give his name, but Luke is the only person mentioned by early writers as the author. The earliest lists of New Testament books, such as Muratorian Canon (170 A. D.), include “the third book of the gospel, according to Luke, the well known physician.”

Paul refers to him as “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14), where he is contrasted with Jewish Christians, those of the circumcision (Col. 4:11). Luke was a Gentile, probably a Greek. He was the best educated of the gospel writers. He was not an apostle, and therefore not an eyewitness of what he wrote. No doubt he drew upon material from the many narratives of others and was guided by the Holy Spirit in tracing accurately and in order the events in the earthly ministry of Jesus which he records (1:1-4).

References to Luke – Luke’s name appears only three times in the New Testament (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:11). He was one of Paul’s fellow workers and the only one with Paul in Rome when he wrote his last epistle from prison. Luke also wrote Acts, which begins where his gospel record ends. In certain passages the author changes the pronoun to “we” and “us,” indicating that he was present at these times. Thus, Luke was with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10-16). He remained in Philippi, where he joined Paul again on his return from the third missionary tour (Acts 20:1-6). Luke went with Paul to Jerusalem, remained with him during his imprisonment in Caesarea, and accompanied him to Rome (Acts 20:7-28:31).

Theophilus – The author addresses both Luke and Acts to Theophilus, whom Luke calls “most excellent.” His name means a “lover of God.” Any other information about Theophilus is only speculation.

Date of writing – Probably Luke wrote his gospel record sometime between 58-60 A. D., while he was with Paul in Caesarea.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

(1) ***It is a gospel of great beauty, accuracy, and precise detail.*** Luke made numerous references to contemporary history, giving dates of some important events and names of members of the Herodian family, the emperors Augustus and Tiberius, and the census under the Syrian governor Quirinius. His writings abound in medical terms, as in his accounts of the miracles of healing and of the agony of Christ. He wrote with great skill, in the highest literary style, using the best and most beautiful Greek of all the gospel writers. His vocabulary is larger than any of the other writers of the New Testament. In the gospel he uses 55 words and in Acts 135 words that occur nowhere else in the New Testament. Renan calls this gospel “the most beautiful book ever written.”

(2) ***It is a more complete biography of Christ than the other three accounts.*** About one half of the material in the book is not in the others. Luke gives the fullest account of the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, his birth, childhood, and youth (2:1-52). The Perean ministry is largely peculiar to Luke (9:51-19:28), while he omits the early Judean ministry. He alone records the miraculous draught of fishes (5:1-11), raising of the widow of Nain’s son (7:11-17), the ten lepers (17:12), Jesus healing Malchus, high priest’s servant, after Peter cut off his ear (22:51), Jesus’ trial before Herod (23:6-12), and His appearance to two disciples on the way to Emmaeus (24:13-35). Other incidents recorded only by Luke include Christ weeping over

Jerusalem (19:41), references to the conversation with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:30-31), Christ's bloody sweat (22:44), and the penitent thief (23:40).

(3) ***It is a gospel of song and praise.*** There are the songs of Mary (1:46-55), of Zacharias (1:68-79), of the angels (2:14), and of Simeon (2:29-35). Expressions of praise include those of the shepherds (2:20), of the people (5:26; 7:16), of the woman healed of an infirmity (13:13), of the Samaritan leper (17:15-16), of the blind man of Jericho (18:43), and of the centurion at the cross (23:47).

(4) ***It is a gospel of prayer.*** It contains Christ's prayer at His baptism (3:21), after cleansing the leper (5:16), before choosing the twelve (6:12), at his transfiguration (9:28-29), before teaching the disciples to pray (11:1), for Peter (22:32), in the garden (22:44), for his murderers on the cross (23:34), and as "he gave up the ghost" (23:46). Luke also gives us Jesus' command to pray (21:36) and three parables on prayer not found in other gospels – the friend at midnight (11:5-13), the unjust judge (18:1-8), and the Pharisee and publican (18:9-14).

(5) ***It is a gospel of womanhood and childhood.*** Luke gives us the praise and prophecy of Elizabeth (1:42-45), the song of Mary (1:46-55), Anna and her worship (2:36-38), sympathy for the widow of Nain (7:12-15), the sinful woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50), the women associated with Jesus (8:1-3), the woman with an issue of blood (8:43-48), Mary and Martha (10:38-42), the "daughter" of Abraham (13:16), Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9), and the consolation for the "daughters" of Jerusalem (23:28). He gives more information concerning the birth, boyhood and youth of Jesus than any other writer. He records Jesus' interest in little children (18:16).

(6) ***It is a gospel for the poor and outcast.*** More than any other of the evangelists, Luke reports Jesus' concern for the outcasts and neglected. There are numerous references to the publicans (5:27, 29-30). He has sympathy

for harlots (15:30), the prodigal son (15:11-32), Lazarus the beggar (16:19-31), the poor, maimed, halt and blind (14:7-24). He gives the story of Zacchaeus (19:1-9) and states the Savior's mission to save the lost (19:10). It "is the gospel not only of children and of Gentiles, and of the humble and the despised, of the blind, the lame, the halt, the maimed, but even of the publican and the harlot, the prodigal and the outcast; not only of Mary, but of the Magdalene; not only of Zacchaeus, but of the dying thief." (Canon Farrar).

(7) ***It is a gospel for all the world.*** Here the angels announce the great joy for all the people (2:10). Jesus is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (2:32), and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (3:6). The good Samaritan (10:25-37) is Christ's illustration of a true neighbor. "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (24:46-47).

Great lessons from Luke – The most notable discourses found only in Luke are:

- (1) The good Samaritan (10:25-37).
- (2) The rich fool (12:13-21).
- (3) The prodigal son (15:11-32).
- (4) The rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31).
- (5) The Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14).

Brief outline of the book –

- I. Introduction (1:1-4).
- II. An account of the time preceding Christ's public ministry, giving information not found in the other Gospels (Jesus birth, boyhood, youth, etc.) (1:5-2:52).
- III. The Galilean Ministry, in which is to be found much material in common with Matthew and Mark (3:1-9:50).
- IV. The last journeys to Jerusalem, giving matter principally peculiar to Luke alone (9:51-18:14).

V. Events relating to the sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior (18:15-24:53).

Chapter 51

The Gospel According To John

I. KEYS TO JOHN

(1) **Key words** – “the Father,” to whom Christ refers more than 100 times in John, and “believe,” John’s principal appeal. Other words that occur often are eternal life, light, life, love and truth.

(2) **Key verses** – Chapter 20:30-31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

(3) **Key phrases** – “And the Word was made flesh” (1:14), “the only begotten from the Father,” “the only begotten Son,” “For God so loved the world” (3:16).

(4) **John’s message** – Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

(5) **The theme** – John proves by the great miracles and teaching of Jesus – by His works and His words – that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of the living God. All chapters, especially chs. 1 and 20, are “key chapters” in proving this theme

(6) **The appeal of John** – Since faith comes only “by hearing the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), the Gospel of John is one of the greatest faith building books of the Bible. John appeals to the spiritual needs of the soul by pointing men to Christ, the source of the abundant life here and eternal life hereafter, available to all through faith, love, obedience and true worship.

II. THE PURPOSE OF JOHN

To all Christians everywhere. Matthew wrote to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, Luke to the Greeks, and John to all Christians. At the time he wrote, the church had spread throughout the Roman Empire. It was no longer looked upon as a Jewish sect. False teachers, particularly Gnostics, who denied the deity of Christ, had infiltrated the church. John wrote to Christians everywhere to refute this false teaching and to reaffirm the basis of faith in Jesus as the Christ, **the only begotten Son of God** (John 20:30-31). "In this Gospel, Jesus Christ is presented as the One whom we are to believe; in John's epistles, the One whom we are to love, and in Revelation, the One for whom we are to wait."

Relation of John to the other accounts of the Gospel. John is the gospel of Christ's deity, Luke of his humanity, Matthew of his kingship, and Mark of his servanthship. Matthew explains Christ's Messianic work, as ruler of his everlasting spiritual kingdom, the church. Mark writes of His active, miraculous works. Luke describes Christ's person as the unique God-man and makes us see the Word made flesh. In the art of the early church, Matthew is represented by the lion, the symbol of royalty; Mark by the ox, denoting service; Luke by man, God's highest creation, and John by the soaring eagle, the symbol of heavenly things.

John gives the descent of Jesus, not from Abraham as Matthew did, or from Adam as Luke did, but from God Himself. Over half of the book is not found in other accounts of the gospel. John records for the most part events that took place in Judea, giving us the only account of Jesus' early Judean ministry. In contrast to the Synoptics, he mentions very few incidents in Galilee. More than one half the space in John is given to the events and teaching of Christ during His last days on earth. John records Jesus' longest prayer (ch. 17).

Only John records the four passovers during Jesus' earthly ministry (2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 13:1). He uses the word "Jew" more than 60 times, while it is found only once in Matthew, twice in Mark and twice in Luke. John records Jesus' greatest miracles and His greatest discourses. One writer calls this "the chief gospel, a commentary and exposition of the whole Bible."

III. THE AUTHOR AND TIME OF WRITING

The author. John is also the author of three epistles and the book of Revelation. Only Paul wrote more books of the New Testament than John did. John was a Jew, one of the apostles, an eye witness of most of what he relates. He was a Galilean, the son of Zebedee and brother of James (Mark 1:19-20), and like his father and brother, a fisherman, as were Andrew and Peter. John was probably one of John the Baptist's two disciples whom he turned to Jesus (1:40). He is one of the three most prominent apostles (Matt. 17:1-3; 26:36-37). Although Jesus referred to James and John as "Sons of Thunder," John is known as the apostle of love and the one whom Jesus loved. Judging from his writings, John must have had a good education, although he received no rabbinical instruction (Acts 4:13). According to history John died in exile on the Isle of Patmos about 100 A. D., after writing Revelation. He is the only apostle who did not suffer martyrdom.

The date of writing. Various writers suggest dates from 70 A. D. to 90 A. D. According to Irenaeus, the pupil of Polycarp who was a friend and pupil of John, he wrote his account of the gospel from Ephesus, "sixty years after the Ascension."

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

(1) *Christ's concern for individuals as well as multitudes.* As in the case of Luke's account of Jesus' visit

in the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42), and in the home of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), John records Jesus' regard for the embarrassed host that prompted his first miracle at the marriage in Cana (2:1-11). John tells of the visit of Nicodemus, to whom Jesus gave His great lesson on the new birth (3:1-15), and of His conversation with the woman at the well, where Jesus defined true worship (4:23-24). John shows Jesus' compassion for the woman taken in adultery (8:1-11). He gives the account of Jesus' giving sight to man who was born blind (ch. 9), and of His raising Lazarus from the dead, where at the tomb, "Jesus wept" (ch. 11). He speaks of Mary Magdelene with other women at the cross, and of Jesus' concern for His mother when He said from the cross, "Woman, behold, thy son!" and to John, "Behold, thy mother!" (19:26-27). On the other hand, John records Jesus' concern for the multitude when he fed the 5,000 with the loaves and fishes and afterward taught the great lesson on the bread of life and the water of life (John 6).

(2) ***It is a simple and profound gospel.*** John expressed the deepest heavenly mysteries in the simplest Greek. His writings are like a well of water, so clear and sparkling that at first we think we see the bottom; but the well is so deep that the more we gaze into it, the deeper it appears, and no one has yet been able to fathom it. Right at the threshold we are startled with a message from the depths of eternity: "In the beginning was the Word." We then hear about the creation of the world, the shining of the true light in darkness, the incarnation of the Word, and the testimony of John the Baptist. We listen with wonder to those sublime discourses about the new birth, the water of life, the bread of life from heaven, about the relation of the eternal and only begotten Son to the Father, to the world and to believers, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the promise of many mansions, the farewell to the disciples

and the great intercessory prayer that brings us nearest to the throne of God.

(3) ***It is a spiritual gospel.*** John's purpose is "not so much the historic record of facts as the development of their inmost meaning." It discloses the very heart of God and reveals the divine human nature which Christ possessed. The book is called "the bosom of Christ" and "the heart of Christ." One of its central messages is that, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (1:4). Life and light are embodied in Christ. He is the source of all spiritual life and the essence of all spiritual truth.

(4) ***It is a gospel of testimony and belief.*** John wrote to prove that Jesus is the Christ and by that proof to lead the people to believe in him unto eternal life (20:30-31). There are seven lines of testimony: (a) That of John the Baptist, (b) of other individuals, (c) of Jesus' work, (d) of Jesus to Himself, (e) of the scriptures, (f) of the Father, and (g) of the Holy Spirit. John gives eight miracles (signs that He is the Christ), not including the resurrection of Jesus. Six of these are found only in John: The water made wine (2:1-11); healing the nobleman's son (4:46-54); healing the man at the pool (5:1-9); the man born blind (9:1-7); the raising of Lazarus (ch. 11); and the second draught of fishes (21:1-6).

(5) ***It is a gospel of great teaching.*** John is concerned with Jesus' discourses and conversations which reveal Him to be the Christ. These are found only in John: The talk with Nicodemus about the new birth (3:1-21), and with the woman of Samaria concerning true worship (4:1-26); the discourse to the Jews at the feast of tabernacles proving that his teaching was from God (7:14-39; 8:12-58); the parable of the good shepherd (ch. 10); his parting instructions and comforting words to His apostles (chs. 14-16); His intercessory prayer (ch. 17), and His meeting with the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (ch. 21).

(6) ***It is the gospel of the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Jesus.*** God is the spiritual father (4:23), life-giving father (5:21), the message is the father's (7:16), the father is greater than all (10:29), the words are the father's (14:10), God is the indwelling father (14:23), eternal father (17:5), holy father (17:11), and righteous father (17:25). Jehovah is the "I Am" of the Old Testament (Exod. 3:14). John presents Jesus as "I Am" of the New Testament. He and the father are one. Jesus declared Himself to be sent from God (8:23). He says, I am the Messiah (4:26); "I am the bread of life" (6:35); "I am from above" (8:23); I am the eternal one (8:58); the light of the world (9:5), the door (10:7), the Son of God (10:36), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the Lord and master (13:13), the way, truth and life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1). Because of these aspects of Jesus' character and other portraits of Christ presented by John such as the soul winner, great physician, water of life, defender of the weak, the king riding on an ass, the humble servant washing the disciple's feet, the consoler, giver of the Spirit, uplifted Savior, etc., the Gospel of John is sometimes referred to as "A Picture Gallery of Christ." Thus, John enables the reader to have a clearer picture and better understanding of God than any of the other gospel writers. See John 1:14, 18.

V. BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The Prologue – Incarnation of the Word (1:1-18)–

I. The revelation and ministry of the Son of God to the world.

1. Testimonies borne to Christ: by the Baptist (1:19-34); by the disciples (1:35-51); by the miracles (2:1-12).
2. The ministry of Christ: in Judea (2:13-3:36); in Samaria (4:1-42); in Galilee (4:43-54).
3. Christ's self-revelation as the Son of God: in Jerusalem (5:1-47); in Galilee (6:1-7:10).

4. Christ's ministry in Jerusalem: at the feast of Tabernacles (7:11-8:59); at the feast of Dedication (10:22).
5. Christ's glorification as the Son of God in the resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-57).
6. Close of Christ's public ministry (12:1-50).

II. The revelation and ministry of the Son of God to His disciples.

1. The last discourses of Christ to His disciples (13:1-16:33).
2. The intercessory prayer (17:1-26).

III. The revelation of the Son of God in his sufferings and resurrection (Compare Rom. 1:4).

1. The last sufferings of Christ (18:1-19:42).
2. The resurrection (20:1-31).

The Epilogue -

1. The appearance of the risen Lord at the Sea of Tiberias (21:1-14).
2. The Lord and His two disciples, Peter and John (21:15-25).

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep (John 10:10-11).

Chapter 52

The Acts Of The Apostles

I. KEYS TO ACTS

(1) **Key word** – Beginning.

(2) **Key verses** – Chapter 1:8:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47:

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost...Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

(3) **Key phrases** – “What shall we do?”; “Repent and be baptized” (2:37-38). “What must I do to be saved?”; “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (16:30-31). “What shall I do, Lord?”; “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (22:10, 16).

(4) **Message** –The work that Jesus began to do was continued by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, fulfilling His promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13), and His command to them to

teach and preach the gospel to all men (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

(5) *The theme* – The establishment of the church in Jerusalem and the spread of Christianity unto the uttermost part of the earth.

(6) *The appeal* – For all men to hear, believe, and obey the gospel, “and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (3:19), and for all Christians to continue “steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (2:42).

II. THE PURPOSE OF ACTS

Stated in the key verse. As we have seen, the theme of the book was given by Jesus shortly before His ascension, when He promised His apostles that they would “be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence,” and they would “receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:5,8). This promise was fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, about fifty days after Jesus ascended back to heaven (Acts 2:1-4). Then, for the first time, the apostles began to preach the gospel of salvation in the name of the resurrected Christ, beginning at Jerusalem.

The book of spiritual beginnings. As stated above, the key word of Acts is, “Beginning.” Just as Genesis is a book of beginnings in the Old Testament, Acts is the book of beginnings of spiritual things that fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies concerning God’s eternal purpose to save sinners by the gospel. The book of Acts is the divinely inspired record of the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit as active agent, the beginning of the Christian dispensation, of the church, of the reign of Christ over His

spiritual kingdom, which is His church, the beginning of persecution of the church, the beginning of missionary work, and of Christian worship.

III. THE NAME, AUTHOR, AND DATE OF WRITING

The name denotes the theme of the book of Acts.

The Acts of the Apostles is a book of history, a record of the works of the apostles, but not the acts of all the apostles. It is primarily an account of the deeds of Peter and Paul. It is in truth, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," and "The Acts of the ascended Christ," as they worked with and through the apostles. It is the book of conversions and of the establishment and spread of the church. It is the principal history book of the New Testament, covering a period of about thirty years, from the ascension of Christ to Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

The author. The same author wrote Acts and the third account of the gospel. (Compare Acts 1:1 and Luke 1:1-4). Although he does not give his name, the earliest Christian writers considered Luke to be the author. The use of "we" and "us" indicates that the author was a companion of Paul and went with him to Rome (Acts 16:11; 20:7,13; 21:1, 7, 15, 17; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 16, etc.)

Time of writing. In his epistles, Paul informs us that Luke was with him during his imprisonment in Rome. Luke probably wrote Acts from Rome, in A. D. 63 or 64.

Relation to other books. The vocabulary and style of writing of Acts are the same as that of the gospel according to Luke. In his gospel, he wrote "of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). In both books, he addresses Theophilus. In Acts, Luke summarized what the ascended Christ and the Holy Spirit *continued* to do through the apostles, and what He is *still* doing through His inspired word (Mark 16:19-20; John 16:13-14; 17:8, 18). The gospel books end with the great commission, our Lord's first

announcement of the conditions of salvation (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21-23). Acts is the record of the evangelists carrying out this commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" and to tell them what to do to be saved from sin.

Background for other books. The book of Acts gives the historical background for all of the other books of the New Testament. In the detailed account of Paul's missionary journeys we are told of his preaching in Philippi (ch. 16), Thessalonica (ch. 17), Corinth (ch. 18), and Ephesus (ch. 19). He later wrote epistles to the churches he established in these cities.

The Triumph of the Gospel. Acts is the only unfinished book of the Bible. It closes with Paul a prisoner in Rome. Later writings prove that his work had not ended. Even in prison he had the opportunity to preach the gospel and to strengthen the brethren (Phil. 1:12-14). As he later approached death for the sake of Christ, he wrote from prison, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and he confidently awaited "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto me in that day" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

The Holy Spirit – In the Old Testament God the Father was the active agent. In the gospels, the Son (Jesus) was the active agent. In Acts and even afterward the Holy Spirit is the active agent. He is mentioned about 70 times in Acts. Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles (John 14-16; Acts 1:5) and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). The book of Acts is a record of the coming of the Holy Spirit and of the mighty spiritual power seen everywhere in the work of the inspired apostles and of those to whom the apostles imparted spiritual gifts by the laying on of their hands.

Theme – The establishment and spread of the early church, or the spread of Christianity, according to the instructions given to the apostles by Christ in Acts 1:8, the

key verse of the book. The key word is "beginning."

Teaching – The two main topics of Acts are: (1) the establishment of the church, and (2) how to become a Christian.

Brief Outline Of Acts (The spread of the gospel in the order that Christ gave in Acts 1:8).

I. Preaching the gospel in Jerusalem and Judea, Chs. 1-7.

1. Preparation for the work, ascension of Christ (Ch. 1).
2. Events of Pentecost (Ch. 2).
3. Growth of the church, persecution, and the first martyr (Ch. 3-7).

II. Preaching the gospel in Samaria and Palestine (Chs. 8-12).

1. Philip evangelizes Samaria (Ch. 8:5-25).
2. Conversion of the Eunuch (Ch. 8:26-40).
3. Conversion and early labors of Saul (Ch. 9).
4. Conversion of Cornelius and his household, the first Gentile converts (Chs. 10-11).
5. Persecution of the Jerusalem church by Herod and his death (Ch. 12).

III. Preaching the gospel in the uttermost parts of the earth (Chs. 13-28).

1. Paul's first missionary tour from Antioch (Chs. 13-14).
2. Jerusalem council in regard to Gentiles and the law (Ch. 15).
3. Paul's second missionary tour from Antioch (Chs. 15:35-18:23).
4. Paul's third missionary tour from Antioch (Chs. 18:23-21:17).
5. Paul in Jerusalem, arrested, sent to Caesarea (Chs. 21:18-23:35).
6. Paul's two years in Caesarea (Chs. 24-26).
7. Paul's trip to Rome, a prisoner in Rome (Chs. 27-28).

Discourses In Acts –

1. Peter on Pentecost (2:14-39)
2. Peter on Solomon's Porch (3:12-26).
3. Peter before the Sanhedrin (4:8-12).
4. Stephen's Defense (Ch. 7).
5. Peter's sermon to Cornelius' household, the first sermon to Gentiles (10:35-43).
6. Peter's defense before the Jerusalem church for the conversion of Cornelius (11:5-18).
7. Paul at Antioch (13:17-41).
8. Paul at Athens (17:22-31).
9. Paul to the Ephesian elders (20:18-35).
10. Paul's defense in the temple (22:3-21).
11. Paul before Felix (24:10-21).
12. Paul before Agrippa (26:2-29).
13. Paul to Jews at Rome (28:23-28).

Cases Of Conversion In Acts –

1. Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2).
2. Samaritans (8:5-25).
3. Eunuch (8:26-40).
4. Saul (9:1-22; 22:3-21; 26:2-23).
5. Cornelius (10:1-48).
6. Lydia (16:14-15).
7. Jailor (16:30-34).
8. Corinthians (18:1-11).
9. Ephesians (19:1-7).

IV. SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

Introduction – Let us remember that the key word of Acts is “beginning.” Just as Genesis is the book of beginnings for the Old Testament, Acts is the book of beginnings of many spiritual things. It is a record of the beginning of gospel preaching, of the Christian dispensation, the reign of Christ over His spiritual kingdom, the church, the work

of the Holy Spirit as active agent, and of the Christian worship.

The importance of Acts 2 – This chapter is a key to a proper understanding of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. It contains the only inspired record of the establishment of the church and its spread among both Jews and Gentiles. James Bales called it ***The Hub of the Bible***, the title of the book in which he gave a comprehensive analysis of Acts 2.

Acts 2 is a record of many great spiritual events, as follows:

(1) The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the only instance of Holy Spirit baptism. (The outpouring of the Spirit upon the household of Cornelius in Acts 10:44-47 was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised only to His apostles, Acts 1:5. The Gentiles received a “like gift,” like that given to the apostles in only one of its effects, the gift of speaking in tongues. See Acts 11:15-17).

(2) The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, the coming of the day of salvation, proclamation of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the beginning of Christ’s reign upon the throne of David.

(3) The gospel first preached in the name of the resurrected Christ.

(4) The question of what to do to be saved was first answered by inspired men.

(5) The gift of the Holy Spirit was first promised to those being saved.

(6) Penitent believers were for the first time baptized into the name of Christ.

(7) The great commission of Christ was first executed.

(8) The new law, the word of the Lord, went forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12).

(9) For the first time, the Lord added those who were

being saved to His church (Act 2:47). The church was in existence for the first time.

(10) This was the beginning of the church, the Lord's establishment of His church, or kingdom, which He said was to come with power (Mark 9:1).

(11) It was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to build His church upon the foundation of Himself as the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matt. 16:16-18).

(12) For the first time, Peter used the "keys of the kingdom" in giving the terms of entrance into the church, or kingdom, in the name and by the authority of Christ.

(13) This was the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of salvation to Jews and Gentiles (v. 39).

(14) It marked the beginning of the Christian dispensation, the last age of the world in relationship to the Patriarchal Age and Jewish Age that preceded it.

(15) The items of Christian worship, except for singing, are given for the first time (v. 42).

(16) Peter later referred to the events of Acts 2 as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

(17) This is the first instance of "the great salvation" being confirmed by the miraculous acts of the apostles (2:43; Mark 16:19-20; Heb. 2:1-4).

(18) It was not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but the complete overwhelming of the apostles with the power of the Spirit, that constituted Holy Spirit baptism, in fulfillment of Christ's promise to them of that power (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).

(19) This was the beginning of the apostles' bearing witness to the resurrection of Christ and to His being the Savior of all men.

(20) The terms of salvation given in Acts 2 are the same as those given by Christ in the great commission, and in every other case of conversion in the book of Acts, as well as in all other related scriptures. (Compare Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:36-38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27; I Peter 3:21, etc.)

(21) The message of salvation proclaimed in Acts 2 was “the word of the truth of the gospel,” which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” and by which we receive the hope that is laid up in heaven (Rom. 1:16; I Peter 1:22-25; Col. 1:5).

(22) Thus, Pentecost marked the beginning of the gospel which will continue to be God’s message of salvation for all men “even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20).

(23) The message that had its beginning on that day was given to prepare all men for that next and last great day of the Lord, when He comes with His angels to judge all men in righteousness (Acts 2:20-21; 17:30-31; Matt. 16:26-27).

(24) The gospel that was preached on Pentecost cannot be changed and God holds all men accountable to obedience of its terms of salvation (Gal. 1:8-9; II Thess. 1:7-9).

(25) From the time of Acts 2 forward, the church, or kingdom of Christ, is always referred to in the New Testament as being in existence (Acts 8:1; I Cor. 1:1-2; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:13, etc.). Before that time, all scripture references point to the church, or kingdom, as yet in the future (Matt. 3:2; Mark 9:1; Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:6-8).

“What Must I Do To Be Saved?” Question asked and answered three times in Acts. Note that faith, repentance, and baptism are required.

Philippian Jailor—“Believe on the Lord Jesus” (16:30-34).

Jews on Pentecost—“Repent, and be baptized” (2:36-38).

Saul of Tarsus—“Arise and be baptized” (22:10,16).

Additional Verses To Memorize From Acts –

1:8,11	11:26	20:28
2:42	15:10	20:32
3:19	17:30-31	20:35
4:12	18:8	24:25
5:29,42	20:7	26:28
8:35-39	20:20	28:27-28
10:34-35	20:26-27	

Chapter 53

Introduction To The New Testament Epistles

I. WRITERS AND DIVISIONS OF THE EPISTLES

1. The 21 epistles, or letters, from Romans through Jude, were addressed to Christians.
2. The known authors were Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude, all fully inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21).
3. The three principal groups of epistles:
 - a. Paul's epistles (13) – Romans through Titus.
 - b. Hebrews – author unknown, the book resembles Paul's epistles and may have been written by him.
 - c. General epistles (7) – James through Jude.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLES

To give instruction to the church, "for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:12).

1. Relationship of the epistles to the Gospels – They are founded upon the gospel accounts. The epistles presuppose the gospel history and often allude to the death and resurrection of Christ as the foundation of the church and of the Christian hope.
2. Relationship of the epistles to Acts – The book of Acts gives the historical background for many of the epistles by recording the works of some of the writers and the establishment of churches to whom epistles were written.
3. Comparison to Acts – The sermons in Acts are primarily missionary addresses to outsiders, with

a view of converting them to Christ. The epistles are letters to the converts, some written to particular congregations, some to the church at large, and others to individuals.

4. The epistles and the great commission – In the gospels the great commission is stated (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). In Acts, the first half of the commission is executed. In the epistles, the last half – “teaching them to observe all things” – is accomplished.
5. Their purpose – to build up the church spiritually by encouraging, consoling, reproving, and exhorting the brethren; strengthening their faith, correcting false doctrine, and giving special instruction in doctrine and practical duties.
6. The unity of the faith – The Gospels tell us what to believe about Christ in order to be saved; Acts tells us what to do to be saved; the epistles, how to live to keep saved; and Revelation, what is the hope of eternal salvation.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLES

1. Their supreme importance – Without parallel in all literature, they were written for the purpose of men “understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). The epistles are the words of Christ just as the gospel accounts are, and they should be received on a par with Jesus’ personal teaching (John 16:13-15).
2. Divinely inspired – Although the Holy Spirit permitted each writer to use his own style and vocabulary, He guided them in the selection of material and even of the words they wrote (II Peter 1:21; I Cor. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16).
3. All sufficient and age lasting – Called forth by special problems in the early churches, yet they

suit all occasions and all generations (II Peter 1:3-4).

4. "The perfect law of liberty" – Since the inspired scriptures were completed about 100 A. D., they have supplied all spiritual instruction for the church, replacing the temporary spiritual gifts of prophecy, etc., of the New Testament period (I Cor. 13:8-10; James 1:25; II Tim. 3:16-17).
5. Key-note of joy – Composed amidst missionary labors and cares, under trials and persecution, some of them from prison, yet they all abound in joy and thanksgiving.
6. Tracts – As the prophets of the Old Testament delivered divine oracles to the people, the apostles wrote letters to the brethren. These were tracts for the time and tracts for all times.
7. Brief – They compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings, human or divine, except the gospels.
8. Profound – They discuss the highest themes that can challenge a mortal mind: God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, sin and redemption, incarnation, atonement, regeneration, faith and good works, repentance, holy living and dying, the conversion of the world, resurrection, the judgment, eternal glory and immortal hope.
9. Transforming power – Addressed not to the mighty, but to the poor and lowly, Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians, wise and foolish, freedmen and slaves, recent converts from idolatry and grossest immorality, the Spirit of God through the epistles can transform the most humble sinner into the image and glory of Christ. On what other ground could one explain the complete change in the life of Saul of Tarsus in his conversion and service to Christ?

10. Value – The epistles are of more real value to the church than all systems of theology combined. For nineteen centuries they have nourished the faith of Christians and made perfect those who follow their sacred precepts. The influence of the epistles upon the hearts and lives of Christians is the best influence of their divine inspiration (II Tim. 3:16-17).

IV. THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

I. The life and character of the Apostle Paul.

1. He “labored more than they all.” Paul was the greatest worker among the apostles, both as missionary and as a writer.
2. A Hebrew, Pharisee, native of Tarsus in Cilicia, born a Roman citizen, educated by Gamaliel, the great Pharisaic teacher, Paul was the best educated of any of the apostles.
3. About the same age as Jesus, Paul first appeared after the ascension and the beginning of the church, in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:1).
4. Before his conversion, as Saul of Tarsus, he was the foremost persecutor of the church; afterward, as Paul the Apostle, he was the most persecuted disciple in the New Testament (II Cor. 4:7-11; 11:22-28).
5. Converted after the sudden appearance to him of the risen Lord, he began preaching in Damascus, then because of persecution, went into Arabia (Acts 9:1-25; Gal. 1:15-17).
6. Returning from Arabia, he visited Jerusalem and Damascus; then went to Cilicia and was brought from there by Barnabas to Antioch, where he

worked a year with Barnabas (Gal. 2:1; Acts 11:22-26).

7. After going to Jerusalem, he returned to Antioch, where he was called by the Holy Spirit to begin his missionary journeys (Acts 13:1-3).
8. He completed three missionary tours from 45 to 58 A. D., then was arrested in Jerusalem and sent as a prisoner to Caesarea and two years later to Rome.
9. According to tradition, Paul was released from prison and had a period of freedom (63-67 A. D.), was arrested again, sent to Rome a second time and was beheaded for Christ by the order of Nero in the Spring of 68 A. D.
10. When Paul wrote his last letter from prison in Rome, he was ready to be offered (II Tim. 4:6).
11. Paul was always true to his conscience (Acts 24:16), a man of sincerity, of strong determination of will, of unselfish service, and of uncompromising adherence to duty. Yet, he realized that in all good conscience he had done many things contrary to Christ, and was the chief of sinners.
12. He was fully committed to Christ (Acts 20:24; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21), with but one aim, to please God (II Cor. 5:9), and with one goal, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). His unworldliness was more complete, his love of souls more universal, his joyfulness more spiritual, and his temper more heavenly than any religious leader who ever lived, next to Christ, Himself.

II. The writings of the Apostle Paul.

1. Paul's 13 epistles are divinely inspired addresses either to congregations of his own founding, with the exception of Romans and possibly Colossians,

or to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon).

2. Several of them he wrote while enduring great trials, dangers, persecutions, imprisonment, and approaching death.
3. Yet they all breathe the same spirit of faith, hope, and joy, and the last ends with a shout of victory (II Tim. 4:6-7).
4. Paul's style of writing – He calls himself “rude in speech,” but not “in knowledge” (II Cor. 11:6). He carried the heavenly treasure in earthen vessels (II Cor. 4:7). “Paul's style was manly, bold, heroic, aggressive, and warlike; yet at times tender, delicate, gentle and winning” (Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, I, 753), sometimes rising to poetic beauty, as in passages such as Romans 8:31-39; 11:33-36; I Cor. 13, etc.
5. He speaks with the knowledge, authority and certainty of one whose words are not his own, but words given him by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13; I Thess. 2:13). He marshals these words as many warriors and sends them into battle against the stronghold of Satan and leads them on to victory, joy and peace (Eph. 6:10-20). “The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.”

III. The form of Paul's epistles – Generally they follow the same form, consisting of:

1. An introduction – usually containing an inscription and salutation, subject of the epistle, his co-laborers at time of writing, and thanksgiving for the faithfulness of those addressed.
2. A doctrinal section – discussion of spiritual teachings such as salvation, justification, righteousness, etc.
3. A practical section – application of the principles discussed to the life of those addressed.

4. A personal section – personal messages to various brethren.
5. Conclusion – a benediction or autograph to authenticate the epistle, or both, with other closing words.

IV. The order of Paul's epistles – They fall into four groups, separated by intervals of about five years each.

1. The epistles of the second missionary journey (52-53 A. D.)
 First Thessalonians, from Corinth (52 A. D.)
 Second Thessalonians, from Corinth (53 A. D.)
2. The epistles of the third missionary journey (57-58 A. D.)
 Galatians, from Ephesus (57 A. D.)
 First Corinthians, from Ephesus (57 A. D.)
 Second Corinthians, from Macedonia (57 A. D.)
 Romans, from Corinth (58 A. D.)
3. The epistles from the first, or early, Roman imprisonment (62-63 A. D.)
 Colossians, from Rome (62 A. D.)
 Philemon, from Rome (62 A. D.)
 Ephesians, from Rome (62 A. D.)
 Philippians, from Rome (63 A. D.)
4. The pastoral epistles (67 A. D.)
 First Timothy, from Macedonia (67 A. D.)
 Titus, from Ephesus (67 A. D.)
 Second Timothy, from Rome (67 A. D.)

V. Subject matter of each group of Paul's epistles.

1. Epistles of the second journey are ***eschatological***, dealing with the second coming of Christ.
2. Epistles of the third journey are ***soteriological***, dealing with the doctrine of salvation.
3. Epistles of the first Roman imprisonment are ***Christological***, dealing with the doctrine of the

person of Christ.

4. The pastoral epistles are *ecclesiological*, dealing with matters pertaining to the church.

VI. Great doctrines in Paul's epistles – “in which are some things hard to be understood.” (II Peter 3:16).

1. Righteousness – the quality of being right or just.
 - a. An attribute of God, his faithfulness and truthfulness (Rom. 3:5) and his dealing with sinners on the ground of the death of Christ (II Peter 1:1).
 - b. The system of salvation, the sum total of things appointed in the gospel by God to be acknowledged and obeyed by man (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 1:16-17).
 - c. The man who by trusting in Christ becomes “the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21), that is, becomes in Christ all that God requires a man to be, all that he can never be in himself.
 - d. Righteousness is not imputed to believers save in the sense that faith is imputed (“reckoned” is the better word) for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22). The obedience of faith produces righteousness of life; that is, conformity to the will of God (Rom. 1:4; 6:17-18).
2. Justification – from the same Greek root word that is also translated “righteousness.” It denotes the act of pronouncing one righteous, his sins forgiven, and he is acquitted from guilt. God receives those who are justified by faith in Christ as though they had never sinned (Rom. 3:28; Heb. 8:12).
3. Election – denotes God's selecting or choosing believers, even before the foundation of the world to salvation in Christ (Eph. 1:4-5). This does not

mean that God predetermined, without respect to one's will, who would be saved or lost. He did foreordain, or predestinate, the means of salvation, that all who accept the call of the gospel and obey it will receive adoption as sons and will be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30; I Thess. 1:4-6). The emphasis is upon "whosoever will" – one's choosing to obey Christ (Rev. 22:17). We must make our own calling and election sure by exercising the spiritual qualities and graces that make us fruitful in the knowledge of Christ (II Peter 1:5-11). God chose the plan by which He elects to save those who accept His plan of salvation. He chose the plan, not the persons who may accept or reject it. He foreordained the means of salvation and not the men to be saved.

4. Sanctification – refers to the separation of the believer from evil things and ways (I Thess. 4:3, 7; II Cor. 6:17-18), separation to God and His purposes (II Thess. 2:13), and the course of life befitting those so separated (Rom. 6:19, 22). We enter into this relationship with God through the efficacy of the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:10, 29; 13:12), by faith and obedience to the gospel (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:22).

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21).

Chapter 54

The Epistle To The Romans

I. KEYS TO ROMANS

(1) **Key word** – Righteousness.

(2) **Key verses** – Chapter 1:16-17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

(3) **Key phrase** – “Made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Chapter 1:5; 16:26).

(4) **Key chapter** – Chapter 12–Exhortations to Christian living–“Present your bodies a living sacrifice” (v. 1)...“Be not conformed to this world” (v. 2)...“As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and all members one of another” (v. 4-5)...“Let love be without hyposcrisy” (ASV) ...“Be kindly affectioned one to another” (v. 9-10)...“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (v. 21).

(5) **Subject** –Justification is by obedient faith in Christ.

(6) **Appeal** – The gospel of Christ is God’s only power of salvation, to every obedient believer, all who are baptized into Christ, and who walk in newness of life (Chapter 1:16; 6:3-4).

II. THE PURPOSE OF ROMANS

“Salvation” group of epistles. Romans belongs to Paul’s second group of epistles, which includes also

Galatians, and First and Second Corinthians. They were written on his third missionary tour, 57-58 A.D. It was written to Roman Christians (1:7), from Corinth, about twenty years after Paul's conversion. It is the sixth in order of Paul's epistles. But it is placed first in the New Testament collection because of its importance and perhaps because it was addressed to the church in the capital city of the world at that time.

All of the epistles in this group deal with the doctrine of salvation. The theme of Romans is that the gospel is God's power of salvation to every believer, to the Jew first, and also the Gentile. The theme is traced by the following chain of verses: 1:16-17; 3:22,23,28; 4:3; 5:1,18; 9:31-32; 10:2, 6-10. To the Greeks, Paul contrasts the *wisdom* of God with the wisdom of men. To the world-ruling Romans, he describes Christianity as the *power* of God, which by the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, conquers all nations.

The gospel is the good news of salvation by obedient faith. Paul's purpose in Romans is to present a systematic explanation of the gospel (Chapters 1-6); to justify preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews (Chapter 3:8-30); to give the clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrines of sin and of grace (3:8; 5:20-21; 6:1-2); to give the divine solution to the universal dominion of sin and death in the universal redemption through Christ (5:12-21); to overcome the bias of Jewish and Gentile brethren toward one another (2:1, 6-11; 14:3), and to instruct Christians in many practical duties (Chapters 12-16). In brief, the design of this epistle was to give to the Roman Christians a correct view of Christianity, to set forth "both the relationship of Judaism and heathenism to each other, and the relation of both to Christianity."

III. THE OCCASION FOR PAUL'S WRITING ROMANS

The need for it. Paul longed to go to Rome (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:13). He had not visited the Romans, and probably no other apostle had, either, since it was Paul's rule not to go where another had preached (Rom. 15:20; II Cor. 10:14-16). He hoped soon to go there (Rom. 15:24-33). Now he availed himself of the opportunity of sending a letter by Phoebe, who was journeying to Rome. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, saw the need of expounding to them the doctrine of justification, which was the theme, also, of his recent letter to the Galatians.

The church at Rome. When and how the church was begun in Rome is unknown. Perhaps some of those present on Pentecost carried the gospel back to Rome (Acts 2:10). It was now a strong, influential church and one with a world-wide fame (Rom. 1:8). Its membership included both Jews and Gentiles, and Paul regarded it as primarily a Gentile church (Rom. 1:5-7, 13-15).

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANS

Greatness of the Epistle. Romans is the greatest of Paul's epistles. It is more comprehensive, universal, dogmatic, and systematic than the others. Although it is general, the letter is also personal, since its appeal is to the individual to obey the gospel of salvation and to live faithfully; and in the Roman letter, Paul mentions and sends salutations to 27 persons (Chapter 16).

Tributes to the Epistle. Luther called Romans, "the chief book of the New Testament and the purest gospel." Coleridge: "the profoundest book in existence." Meyer: "the greatest and richest of all apostolic works," and Godet: "the cathedral of the Christian faith."

V. GREAT DOCTINES IN ROMANS

- (1) ***Righteousness*** – stresses ***righteous*** before God in heart and life.

- (2) **Justification** – stresses *forgiveness*, freedom from the guilt of sin.
- (3) **Election** – God's *choice* of those who are in Christ to be saved from sin.
- (4) **Sanctification** – stresses *separation* from uncleanness unto "the master's use."

These terms also denote the process by which these relationships are accomplished. In each case, obedience to the gospel is the divinely appointed means by which the spiritual state is attained.

Keys To Understanding Romans – Many students and teachers of the Bible fail to understand this book because of confusion on the following points, especially. Errors result mainly from a false belief that the Holy Spirit exerts a direct, supernatural influence upon the heart of the sinner, apart from the teaching of the written word.

(1) **The righteousness of God** – Not, the goodness or holiness of God, but God's *system* of righteousness, the divine means of making the sinner righteous, by forgiveness of sins through the gospel (1:16-17; 10:3).

(2) **God imputes righteousness** (Ch. 4:3, 5-6, 9, 11, 22-24) – This does not mean that God imputes, or imparts Christ's righteousness to the sinner. The term (*logizomai*), more correctly translated, "reckons," or "reckoning" is properly used of numerical calculation and metaphorically, "to take into account." It means simply that God counts one's obedient faith in Christ as the grounds for forgiveness and basis of righteousness.

(3) **Justification by faith** – Paul defines the kind of faith that saves as obedient faith (1:5; 16:26). It is never a matter of salvation by "faith only" (James 2:24).

(4) **"Led by the Spirit"** (Rom. 8:14) – The Holy Spirit leads us, saints and sinners alike, only by the word of God, which was given by inspiration of the Spirit (II Peter 1:21; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Cor. 2:13; Gal. 3:2; Rom. 10:17). "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit" (Rom. 8:16)

only as we accept the testimony of the word and obey the conditions of sonship set forth in the divinely inspired scriptures. His witness is always through the written word.

(5) ***“And so all Israel shall be saved”*** (Ch. 11:26) – This does not mean that all Jews will come to accept Christ or be restored as a world-ruling nation. The adverb “so” denotes the manner or way that the Jews might be saved. Whatever restoration of privileges the Jews may enjoy will be spiritual in nature, by their coming into the church of Christ, where they will receive salvation and every spiritual blessing (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:3). All Israel, that is, all who are saved, must be saved in the same way that all believing Gentiles are saved, by obeying the gospel of Christ, the divinely appointed plan of salvation for all men. The eternal salvation of a whole nation is both improbable and unreasonable.

VI. MAIN PROPOSITIONS OF THE BOOK

(1) “All have sinned” (3:23) – All unconverted men are guilty before God, lost in sin, Jews and Gentiles alike (Ch. 1:16-3:20).

(2) All men are in need of salvation – both the Gentiles, who “refused to have God in their knowledge” (1:18-32, ASV), and Jews, who sinned against the law and extraordinary privileges (2:1-3:20).

(3) Salvation is accomplished by Jesus Christ, by His atoning death and triumphant resurrection (Ch. 3:21-8:39).

(4) We all, through obedient faith, are one body in Christ, in whom we have redemption and the hope of eternal life (Ch. 6:3-4, 11, 17-18, 23; 12:4-5).

(5) We should show our gratitude for so great a salvation by surrendering ourselves to the service of God, which is true freedom (Chs. 12-16).

VII. GREAT PASSAGES FROM THE BOOK OF ROMANS

A sublime passage – Romans 8:31-39 is one of the grandest passages in all literature.

Outline of the book –

- I. Introduction – The gospel the power of God unto salvation (1:1-17).
- II. Doctrinal matters – justification by faith in Christ (1:18-11:36).
 1. Righteousness to all men through obedient faith (1:18-4:25).
 2. All who are justified are also sanctified (5:1-8:30).
 3. This doctrine as related to the rejection of the Jews (9:1-11:36).
- III. Practical applications of this doctrine to the Christian life (12:1-15:13).
 1. Duty to God (12:1-2).
 2. Duty to ourselves (12:3).
 3. Duty to the church (12:4-8).
 4. Duty to other Christians (12:9-13).
 5. Duty to our enemies (12:14-21).
 6. Duty to civil authorities (13:1-7).
 7. Duty to neighbors (13:8-14).
 8. Duty to weak brethren (14:1-15:13).
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27).
 1. Personal matters – Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (15:14-33).
 2. Farewell greetings and warnings (16:1-27).

Selected verses –

- 1:4 – “Declared to be the Son of God...by the resurrection.”
- 1:16-17 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel...”
- 3:23 – “For all have sinned...”
- 3:28 – “We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith...” (ASV).

- 5:1 – “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God...”
- 5:8 – “But God commendeth his love toward us...”
- 6:3-4 – “All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.” (ASV.)
- 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death...”
- 7:12 – “Wherefore the law is holy...” (Compare I Tim. 1:8).
- 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”
- 8:14 – “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...”
- 8:16-17 – “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit...” (ASV).
- 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”
- 8:37 – “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors...”
- 8:38-39 – “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life...shall be able to separate us from the love of God...”
- 10:9-10 – “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...”
- 10:17 – “So then faith cometh by hearing...”
- 11:33-36 – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”
- 12:1-21 – “I beseech you therefore, brethren...” (Great chapter on Christian duties. Memorize the entire chapter.)
- 13:1 – “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers...”
- 13:7 – “Render therefore to all their dues...”
- 13:8 – “Owe no man anything, but to love one another...”
- 13:11 – “Now it is high time to awake out of sleep...”

- 14:7 – “For none of us liveth to himself...”
14:11-12 – “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me...”
14:23 – “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”
15:4 – “Whatsoever things are written aforetime...”
16:16 – “The churches of Christ salute you.”
16:17 – “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions...”

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:16-17).

Chapter 55

First Corinthians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “Our Lord” occurs six times in the first ten verses, and the name “Lord” in many other passages (1:31; 2:8, 16, etc.).

Key verses – Chapter 1:2, 10:

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours...Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Key phrase – “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Key chapters – Chapter 13 – Love, the more excellent way: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal...And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Chapter 15 – resurrection – Christ’s victory over death.

Theme – The Lordship of Jesus. All personal sins and problems in the church are the result of our failure to honor Christ as Lord of our lives and of all things.

Application – Christians must respect Christ as Lord in the church, in Christian unity, in manner of life, in marriage, in worship, in the use of spiritual gifts, in brotherly love, in hope of the resurrection, in faithfulness, in steadfastness, and do all things to the glory of God. The

many sins in the Corinthian church came from their failure to recognize Christ as Lord. The practical appeal is – Ch. 15:58.

II. THE PURPOSE OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

One of the “salvation” group of epistles. This group includes Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians. The subject of this group of epistles is the doctrine of salvation, as stated in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” All were written on Paul’s third missionary tour, 57-58 A. D.

The occasion of writing First Corinthians. On his third tour, Paul spent three years at Ephesus (54-57 A. D.). While there, he received unfavorable news concerning the Corinthian church. Members of the household of Chloe (1:11), and other friends – Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17) – came to him and brought reports of their divisions and the evil practices of certain of their members. The church also wrote him a letter asking him to answer a number of questions concerning marriage and other matters (7:1).

Trouble in the church. The Corinthian church was troubled by a spirit of faction and by Judaizing teachers who cast doubts upon Paul’s apostleship. They were infected with a desire for worldly wisdom and by skepticism and moral laxity. The purpose of this epistle was to correct the wrongs being practiced and taught by the church, and to answer the written questions sent to Paul by the church. It is Paul’s strongest epistle of reproof.

The city of Corinth – Destroyed by the Romans in 146 B. C., Corinth was rebuilt as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar one hundred years later. It was the capital of Achaia and the chief city of Greece when Paul visited it.

Corinth was located on the bridge between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas on the Isthmus that connected the

Peloponnesus with Greece proper. Its inhabitants, numbering about 400,000 were Greeks, Jews, Romans and mixed multitudes from everywhere.

Through its two seaports, Lechaeum on the West and Cenchrea on the East, which were connected by a ship canal, the commerce of all nations flowed continually. Corinth was the “eye of Greece,” a great metropolis, celebrated for its wealth, magnificence, beauty and art.

Moral and Religious Conditions – Famous for its splendor, Corinth became infamous on account of its frightful immorality. It was notorious for its sinfulness. Its name was a synonym for the worst debauchery. In Corinth all the social forces of the age met. Sailors, merchants, adventurers, and refugees of all the world crowded the city, bringing them all the evils that were the shame of every other country.

“To live as they live at Corinth” meant a life of lust, lasciviousness and luxury. Religion and philosophy were prostituted to low uses. The city was devoted to the worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, identified by the Romans with Venus. More than 1,000 female slaves were housed as priestesses in the temple of Aphrodite, who were devoted to harlotry.

Paul’s first visit to Corinth (Acts 18) – Paul first came to Corinth in 52 A. D. on his second missionary tour, after having left Macedonia with his life in peril. At Athens he had waited for Timothy and Silas, and when they did not come, he went on to Corinth, where later they met him. Paul worked there for 18 months, preaching in the synagogue and making tents with Aquila and Priscilla, while abiding with them.

His preaching made many converts, including Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue. While in Corinth, Paul wrote I and II Thessalonians, his first epistles.

In a vision, the Lord assured Paul that no harm would come to him, “for I have much people in this city.” Shortly

afterward, the Jews brought Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, who promptly dismissed the case. When he left Corinth in the Spring of A. D. 54, Paul left there a flourishing church, whose members were partly Jews, but chiefly Gentiles (I Cor. 12:2). Evidently he made other trips to Corinth during his third journey (II Cor. 12:14; 13:1-2).

After Paul's departure, Apollos visited Corinth and greatly strengthened the work that Paul had begun there (I Cor. 3:6).

The Church at Corinth – Since many of the members were recent converts from heathenism, the church was far from perfect. However, there were among them true Christians who were ideal in their faith and character (I Cor. 1:4-8). For the most part they were poor and without pride of birth or learning (1:26). They were rich “in all utterance and knowledge” and “behind in no gift.” Yet, it was difficult for them to adjust to a life of godliness and chastity in the midst of idolatry and every kind of evil practice.

Date and place of writing – From Ephesus in A. D. 57. It was one of four doctrinal epistles written by Paul in A. D. 57-58 – Galatians, I and II Corinthians and Romans.

Some of the chief errors in the Corinthian Church –

(1) Divisions in the church (party spirit, exalting preachers).

(2) Immorality, lack of church discipline, and laws concerning marriage.

(3) Going to law with one another.

(4) Perversion of the Lord's supper.

(5) Eating of meats offered to idols.

(6) Irregularities in public worship.

(7) Contention over spiritual gifts.

(8) Mistaken view of the resurrection.

Theme – “The Lordship of Jesus.” The title, “the Lord Jesus Christ,” occurs six times in the first ten verses. The

name, "Lord," is very prominent. All the disorders that crept into their lives had arisen through failure to recognize Jesus Christ as Lord.

III. CENTRAL MESSAGES OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

(1) *The church is in the world but not of the world.*

Note the contrast in Paul's salutation: "The church of God, which is at Corinth" (1:2) – the church of God, a community governed by the will of God; Corinth, a city of the world, self-governed and ignorant of God. The spirit of the city had invaded the church. Therefore the spirit of the church could not effectively invade the city. Desire for the learning, luxury and laxity of their heathen neighbors led to religious license, moral laxity and social disorder within the church. They became carnal. The need of the church in every generation is not to catch the spirit of the age but to correct the spirit of the age. There will always be conflict between the community that is godless and the church that is God-centered.

(2) *Heavenly foolishness is superior to earthly wisdom.* The Greeks were proud of their language, literature, learning and logic. Paul began by renouncing wisdom (I Cor. 1:17; 2:1; etc.). This epistle is throughout a rebuke to the princes of the world confident in their wisdom, but fools in God's sight. "The world through its wisdom knew not God" (I Cor. 1:21, ASV). The natural man does not, cannot receive the things of the Spirit (Ch. 2:14). The highest truths are divinely inspired. They are foolishness to the unbelieving.

Practical appeal of the epistle – "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (I Cor. 15:58, ASV).

Brief Outline of First Corinthians

Introduction – Greeting and thanksgiving (1:1-9).

- I. Concerning divisions and the party spirit (1:10-4:21).
 1. Divisions prevented by Christ as the center of teaching, of life, worship and all things (1:10-31).
 2. Paul's example of spiritual mindedness (2:1-3:4).
 3. A right view of preachers (3:5-4:21).
- II. Correction of disorders in the church (5:1-6:30).
 1. Immorality (5:1-13).
 2. Lawsuits (6:1-11).
 3. Impurity – sins of the body (6:12-20).
- III. Answers to their questions and related matters (7:1-16:4).
 1. Concerning marriage (7:1-40).
 2. Concerning things offered to idols (8:1-13).
 3. Concerning abuse of spiritual liberty (9:1-10:33).
 4. Concerning head dress (11:1-16).
 5. Concerning the Lord's supper (11:17-34).
 6. Concerning spiritual gifts, with digression in the eulogy on love (13:1-13; 12:1-14:40).
 7. Concerning collection for the saints (16:1-4).
- IV. Personal matters and conclusion (16:5-18).
 1. Personal messages and exhortations (16:5-24).
 2. Salutations (16:19-20).
 3. Conclusion (16:21-24).

Some contrasts in the epistle – The church of God in “Sin City.”

- (1) Christian unity and the party spirit (1:10-17).
- (2) Earthly wisdom and heavenly foolishness (1:18-24).
- (3) Spiritual wisdom and the natural man (2:7-16).
- (4) Righteousness and worldliness (6:1-20).
- (5) Law of liberty vs. law of love (Ch. 9). The law of love is always higher than the law of liberty.
- (6) Victory in Christ over the power of sin and death (15:54-57).
- (7) Paul's tenderness and severity (2:3-4; 4:18-21; 9:22; 14:1; etc.).

IV. MAIN POINTS IN EACH CHAPTER OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

- Chapter 1 – Division; God's wisdom in the cross.
2 –Christ crucified; inspiration (v. 13).
3 –Carnality; "preacheritis."
4 –Servants of Christ; "be ye imitators" (v. 15-16).
5 –Sin in the church; "not to company with fornicators"
(v. 9).
6 –Going to law with brethren; "such were some of you;"
temple of Holy Spirit.
7 –Marriage and celibacy.
8 –Meat offered to idols; knowledge vs. love.
9 –Support of preachers; urgency of preaching the gospel
(v. 16 and 22).
10–"Take heed lest ye fall" (v. 12); abuse of Christian
liberty; "do all to the glory of God" (v. 31).
11–Women in the church; the Lord's supper.
12–Spiritual gifts in the church.
13–Enduring love the greatest thing.
14–How to use and abuse spiritual gifts.
15–The gospel that saves; the resurrection; Christ's
victory over death.
16–The contribution; "watch ye" (vs. 13-14); anathema,
Maranatha.

V. NOTABLE PASSAGES FROM FIRST CORINTHIANS

- 1:10– "...that ye all speak the same thing..."
1:13– "Is Christ divided?..."
1:25– "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than
men..."
2:1-2– "...Christ, and him crucified."
2:13– "...words...which the Holy Spirit teacheth..."
3:6– "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave
the increase."

- 3:21- "Therefore let no man glory in men..."
- 4:1- "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ..."
- 4:10- "We are fools for Christ's sake..."
- 5:6- "...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."
- 6:19-20- "...Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit..."
- 7:39- "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth..."
- 8:1- "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."
- 9:16- "...Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"
- 9:22- "...I am made all things to all men..."
- 10:6,11- "Now these things were our examples..."
- 10:13- "...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able..."
- 10:31- "...do all to the glory of God."
- 11:26- "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."
- 12:13- "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."
- 13:1- "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."
- 13:13- "And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
- 14:15- "...I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."
- 14:19- "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding...than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."
- 14:33- "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
- 14:40- "Let all things be done decently and in order."

- 15:1-4– "...the gospel...by which also ye are saved..."
- 15:19– "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."
- 15:22– "For as in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall all be made alive."
- 15:50-58– "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God..."
- 16:13-14– "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love." (ASV).

VI. TRUE VIEWS OF SPIRITUAL TRUTHS IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Sublime passages –

1. True views of spiritual love – Ch. 13.
2. True view of the resurrection – Ch. 15.

True view of ministers of Christ –

- (1) As preachers of the gospel (1:17; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; 15:1-4).
- (2) As gardeners (3:6-8).
- (3) As co-laborers with God (3:9).
- (4) As master-builders (3:10).
- (5) As stewards (4:1-2).
- (6) As sufferers for Christ's sake (4:9-13).
- (7) As examples (4:16-17).

True view of inspiration –

(1) *The nature of inspiration* – 2:12-13: "Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but that which the Holy Spirit teacheth." The scriptures were inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16). "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). This was more than a general thought form of inspiration. It was complete and verbal inspiration. Paul said that his words were those which the Holy Spirit teacheth (I Cor. 2:12-13). As the Holy Spirit guided the men of God "into all truth," he influenced their choice of words, while allowing them to use their own style

of language expressing the things of God. It was “word-for-word” inspiration, yet it was not mechanical dictation from the Holy Spirit. The penmen explained spiritual things in spiritual words, and their message became “the form (pattern) of sound words,” which we are to hold fast (II Tim. 1:13).

(2) ***Were some of Paul’s teachings not divinely inspired?*** (I Corinthians 7:10-12) No. Some of his writings were direct quotations of Christ’s words, as in Acts 20:35. Other writings were Paul’s, as given to him by the Holy Spirit, with which teaching Paul and the others who were inspired were in accord (Acts 15:22, 28). Nevertheless, all the recorded teachings of the apostles were inspired of the Holy Spirit, and consequently were Christ’s teaching as well (John 16:13-15).

True view of difficult passages

(1) ***Was there a lost epistle to the Corinthians?*** (I Corinthians 5:9: “I wrote you in ***an*** epistle” (KJV), or “in ***my*** epistle” (ASV); also translated, “in ***this*** epistle” (Macknight). Very likely this is a reference to Paul’s charge for them to “purge out therefore the old leaven” (v. 7) and not to an earlier epistle.

(2) ***The believer married to an unbeliever*** (7:12-16). We need more than this passage to determine whether God is pleased when a Christian marries a non-Christian. He specifically enjoins widows to marry “only in the Lord” (v. 39). Many of the Corinthians were new converts, whose mates doubtless were yet unconverted. In such a case, God does not require the believer to leave the unbelieving companion. “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace” (v. 15). This does not give the believing companion the right to marry another. “If she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband” (v. 11). The “bondage” in verse 15 from which the innocent companion is freed does not refer to the bond of

marriage, but the bond of peace or companionship with the one who departs. The Christian cannot force the unbelieving mate to remain and keep the bond of peace between them against his or her will.

(3) ***Eating meats sacrificed to idols*** (8:1-13; 10:14-33). This practice was forbidden in the first brief epistle to Gentile Christians (Acts 15:22, 29). Although dumb idols had no power to defile the meats that the heathen sacrificed to them, Christians were to exercise great care in eating these meats lest they cause their weak brethren to stumble. This care involved certain principles:

(a) They must not eat meat at all in an idol's temple.

(b) They were free to buy and eat meat sold in the shambles (meat markets), which were usually located near the heathen temples, and in which some of the meat was often from their offerings. The Christian was not permitted to use this liberty if the meat was "advertised" as having been sacrificed to an idol.

(c) When Christians ate in the house of the heathen, they were at liberty to eat meat if no mention were made of idol worship in connection with the meat. But if someone said, "This has been offered in sacrifice," the believers were forbidden to eat. For conscience sake, the Christian should not ask where the meat came from.

(4) ***Women's head covering in worship*** (11:2-16). The Bible is not a book on styles and fashions. The teaching here, as elsewhere, is that the woman is to be in subjection unto the man. In the early church, when some women had the spiritual gift of prophecy, as in the case of Philip's daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9), they were not to usurp authority over the men (I Tim. 2:12). Women were to keep silent in the assembly (I Cor. 14:34). As a sign of her subjection, she was to have her head covered. In that day, only the lewd women appeared in public uncovered and with shorn hair. The principle of modesty and submission on the part of women is unchanged, but the custom by which

it was demonstrated has changed, just as the spiritual gifts ceased.

(5) ***Miraculous gifts*** (Chapters 12 and 14). In the early church, only the apostles had the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit that enabled them to perform all kind of miracles and impart spiritual gifts to others (Mark 16:17-20; Acts 8:14-17). Others who received spiritual gifts could perform only one kind of miracle, and all were to use their gifts for the profit of the whole church (I Cor. 12:4-11). Speaking in tongues was for the purpose of instructing those who spoke different languages (14:4-6). "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (14:19).

(6) ***Miraculous gifts were to cease*** (13:8-10). Since the spiritual gifts were given only one gift to a person, all were "parts" of the temporary arrangement in the early church for teaching and "building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, ASV). The things that were "in part" were to continue only until "that which is perfect is come" (I Cor. 13:10). Spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, supplied the church with divinely inspired instruction during the period that the New Testament was being written. The written word is the church's permanent and all sufficient source of "instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16-17). The New Testament is complete, "that which is perfect," which James calls "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). With its completion, gifts disappeared. They were no longer needed.

(7) ***"Let him be anathema. Maranatha"*** (16:22). "Anathema, Maranatha" were the words with which the Jews began their greatest excommunications. "Anethema" means accursed, devoted to destruction, as upon those who would pervert the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). "Maranatha" means "O Lord, come!"

Chapter 56

Second Corinthians

I. KEYS TO SECOND CORINTHIANS

Key words – Comfort and ministry: (1) the nature and source of comfort (1:3-5; 2:7; 7:6-7, 13; 13:11), and (2) the message and performance of the church's ministry (3:6, 8; 4:1, 4-5; 5:18).

Key verses – Chapter 1:3-4 and 4:5-6:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God...For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Key phrase – “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (5:17).

Key chapter – Chapter 5 –

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...For we walk by faith, not by sight...Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him...And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Theme – All Christians are ministers of comfort (1:3-4), and of the New Testament (3:6).

Appeal – This is a personal epistle from Paul to the church at Corinth, in which he defends his true apostleship and shows his great faith in God, love for the church and loyalty to Christ. The book contains exhortations to mutual encouragement, liberality, separation from this world, and patience in suffering, as we wait for our “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

II. THE PURPOSE OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

“Salvation” epistles. This is the third in the group of Paul’s four epistles that deal with the doctrine of salvation – Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians.

The occasion of writing Second Corinthians. After writing the first epistle to the Corinthians and sending it by Titus, Paul anxiously waited to hear of the reception and result of his first letter. From Ephesus, he travelled to Troas and across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia, where he was met by Titus (2:12-13; 7:5-6). From him, Paul learned that his first letter had served its purpose, causing both the church and the immoral brother to repent and correct their sins (2:1-11; 7:7-16).

Why this epistle was necessary. Titus also informed Paul that Judaizing teachers had arrived at Corinth, preaching false doctrines and denouncing the apostleship of Paul. Therefore, Paul wrote this second epistle: (1) To praise them for obeying his first epistle (7:4, 15); (2) to urge them to express their love and encouragement to the repentant brother (2:6-9); (3) to warn them of false teachers (11:3-4, 13), and, (4) to vindicate his apostleship (chapters 11 and 12).

Two main themes. This letter stresses the Corinthians’ favorable reaction to the first epistle and Paul’s true apostleship. He affirms that in nothing was he “behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (12:11-12).

Second Corinthians was written by Paul on his third

missionary tour, in 57 A. D., from Macedonia, probably from Philippi.

Three great lessons – (1) Paul's great faith in God, (2) his constant love for the church and for the souls of men, and (3) his unswerving loyalty to Christ.

Character of the epistle – It is the least systematic of Paul's writings, is full of digressions in subject and difficult in analysis. It is not calm and definite like I Corinthians, but abounds in emotion and is intensely personal. From it we learn more of Paul's life and character than from any other source.

III. BRIEF OUTLINE OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

- I. Paul's ministry – his trials, principles, and consolations as a preacher (1:1-7:16).
 1. The God of all comfort; Paul's tribulations in the gospel (Ch. 1).
 2. Church discipline works; Paul's service to God and men (Ch. 2).
 3. Believers are epistles of Christ; the old law abolished; the new covenant, ministration of death came by Moses; the ministration of life and the Spirit came through Christ (Ch. 3).
 4. The gospel in earthen vessels; we speak what we believe; Paul's sufferings were "but for a moment" (Ch. 4).
 5. We walk by faith; the ministry of reconciliation (Ch. 5).
 6. Workers together with God; unequal yoke; purity of life (Ch. 6).
 7. Paul's joy at their reception of the word; godly sorrow and true repentance (Ch. 7).
- II. The collection for the saints (8:1-9:15).
 1. The appeal for liberality; giving ourselves to God (Ch. 8).

2. The blessedness of liberality; God's unspeakable gift (Ch. 9).

III. Paul's apostolic authority (10:1-13:14).

1. Discredited by one element in the church; carnal vs. spiritual weapons; unwise comparisons (Ch. 10).
2. Paul's concern for the purity of the church; the devil's work; Paul's list of sufferings (Ch. 11).
3. Paul's vision of paradise; his thorn in the flesh; God's sufficient grace (Ch. 12).
4. Self-examination enjoined (Ch. 13).

Paul's Apostleship authenticated:

- (1) By the appearance of Christ to him (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8).
- (2) By his appointment from the Lord (II Cor. 1:1, 21-22; 3:5-6; 4:6).
- (3) By unparalleled sufferings for the gospel (6:4-10; 11:23-27).
- (4) By wonderful revelations received (12:1-5; Gal. 1:11-12).
- (5) By mighty deeds performed (II Cor. 12:12).

Characteristics of Paul's ministry – This epistle shows that Paul's ministry was comforting, suffering, sincere, self-sacrificing, steadfast, victorious, motivated by love of Christ, spiritual, persuasive, earnest, and authoritative.

The ministry of the whole church – Every Christian is a priest. Therefore, we are all ministers of the gospel. The ministry of the evangelist to the church is to build up the church in its ministry. "The church's equipment for its ministry is that of obedience to the word which is preached; separation from the world which is saved; and conformity to the will of the Lord which is revealed." (G. Campbell Morgan: **Living Messages of the Books of the Bible**, II, 143).

We serve tables too much to give ourselves to the proper ministry of the word. We allow ourselves too constantly to

be turned from the main line of our service. "We have been so busy doing excellent nothings that we have been able to do nothing excellently" (op cit., II, 146). Compare Philippians 3:8.

The responsibility of the evangelists to the Church – Christ addressed the seven letters to the churches of Asia in care of the "angel," or evangelist of each congregation (Rev. 2:1-3:22). The work of these ministers within the church was for the "perfecting of the saints" both in their manner of life and their ministry. "The authority of the minister is not the authority of the office conferred; it is the authority of the Word that is committed to him to preach; that great and sacred deposit which he holds on trust for the church, and by exposition of which he perfects the church for its work of ministry" (Morgan, op. cit., II, 136).

IV. GREAT MESSAGES FROM SECOND CORINTHIANS

Some vivid, glowing passages –

1. "We are the fragrance of Christ ascending to God – both among those who are in the path of Salvation and among those who are in the path of Ruin" (II Cor. 2:15) **(20th Century Version)**.

2. "Ye are...the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (3:3).

3. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit" (3:18, ASV).

4. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of God, and not of us" (4:7).

5. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (5:1).

6. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (10:4).

7. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." (13:14). Compare this benediction with the one in Jude 24-25.

V. SOME GREAT LESSONS FROM SECOND CORINTHIANS

(1) ***Church discipline*** – In I Corinthians 5, Paul commanded them to withdraw from the immoral brother. Why? To obey Christ, to keep the church pure, to let the world know that the church stands for righteousness, and to bring the erring one to repentance. Their reaction, given in II Corinthians 2, proves that discipline works. We are slack on this important phase of the Lord's work, but the New Testament leaves us no alternative. We must exercise discipline in the church (Acts 5:1-14; Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5; II Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10-11).

(2) ***The triumph over death*** (II Cor. 4:16-5:10) – As in I Corinthians 15, Paul shows that God gives us victory over death through Christ. It is better "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

(3) ***Separation from the world*** (II Cor. 6:14-7:1) – As in his salutation in I Corinthians, Paul again greeted them as "the church of God which is at Corinth" (II Cor. 1:1). Here we see the great conflict between a city that is godless and the church which is God-centered. The church must be a "pure virgin" in the midst of a world of idolatry and debauchery. In order to save the world the church must preach the word of the cross, maintain purity in heart and life, and live by Christ's law of love. The church must invade the world with the Spirit of Christ and not allow the spirit of the world to invade the church. The influence of the

church is the influence of the members. We must be transformed into the image of Christ (II Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2) and not conformed to the methods, maxims, manners, and morals of the world.

(4) ***Paul's thorn in the flesh*** (II Cor. 12:7) – Some have suggested that this was his persecution; others that it was mental distress. It was not spiritual or mental, but was something pertaining to the flesh. Some have affirmed that his trouble was with his eyes (Gal. 4:15), but this phrase is a proverbial expression. Others think that it was a speech impediment (II Cor. 10:10; 11:6). Whatever it was, Paul was not permitted to cure it with miraculous power (12:7-9). It did not stop him from constant, loyal service to God.

(5) ***The list of sufferings endured by Paul*** (II Cor. 11:24-33) – Paul's overwhelming persecutions for Christ should make us ashamed to complain about our petty sufferings. His patient and optimistic endurance of his trials is a wonderful inspiration and encouragement to us to have the same attitude toward our "light afflictions" (II Cor. 4:7-18).

VI. OTHER NOTABLE VERSES

(Suitable for memory work)

(1) "Blessed be God...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort..." (1:3-5).

(2) "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand" (1:24).

(3) "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (3:2).

(4) "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (3:5).

(5) "For if our gospel be hid, it is hid in them that are lost" (4:3).

(6) "I believed, and therefore have I spoken" (4:13).

(7) "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day..." (4:16-18).

(8) "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (5:7).

(9) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..." (5:10).

(10) "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (5:11).

(11) "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (5:14).

(12) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..." (5:17).

(13) "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (5:21).

(14) "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (6:14).

(15) "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (7:1).

(16) "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (7:10).

(17) "Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (8:7).

(18) "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (8:9).

(19) "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (9:6).

(20) "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (9:7).

(21) "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (9:15).

(22) "For he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (10:17).

(23) "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (10:18).

(24)“For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy...” (11:2-3).

(25)“...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light...” (11:13-15).

(26)“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (12:9).

(27)“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (13:5).

(28)“For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (13:8).

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Corinthians 4:18).

Chapter 57

The Epistle To The Galatians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

1. **Key words** – Liberty, or freedom. Other words that are the essence of the epistle are “the law,” which occurs 31 times, “flesh” (18 times), “spirit” (15 times), “faith” (21 times), “the promise” (10 times), “bondage” and related words (11 times), and “the cross” (6 times).

2. **Key verse** – Chapter 5:1:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith
Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled
again with the yoke of bondage.

3. **Key phrase** – “Faith which worketh by love” (5:6).

4. **Key chapter** – Chapter 3: Justification by obedient faith, as in Romans 3:28, and Galatians 2:16...God’s promise to Abraham that “...in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...” (Gen. 22:18), “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (v. 16)...The purpose of the law (vv. 19-25). “...It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made...” (v. 19)...“...the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (vv. 24-25)...“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (vv. 26-27).

Message. Christ is our deliverer. His gospel is the message of salvation. “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto

salvation" (Rom. 1:16). There is not another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). We get into Christ by obedient faith, when we are baptized into him (3:27). Christ fulfilled the law of Moses and took it out of the way (Col. 2:14). He replaced the law with his gospel, through which we are justified by "faith which worketh by love" (5:6). By faith we are baptized into Christ. In Christ, we have freedom from sin, from the law of Moses, and from the doctrines of men. There is no true spiritual freedom outside of Christ, and there is no other means of obtaining freedom except by obedience to the one gospel of salvation.

Sowing and reaping. The rule to live by is obedient faith in Christ. We must live by faith, as Paul did (Gal. 2:20). "...we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). Faith comes only from God's word (Rom. 10:17). Saving faith is always an obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Justification is "not by faith only" (James 2:24). To walk by faith is to walk in the truth that makes men free (John 8:32; III John 4). Christians can fall away and forfeit all of the blessings of freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:4). We must continue to be faithful. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free" (5:1). Jesus promised, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). All men should heed the warning of God's unchanging law:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (6:7-8).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The country and its people. Galatia was a Roman province in Asia Minor. It took its name from the Gauls, the Celtic people who migrated there from the country now

known as France. They waged successful military campaigns against Rome in the 4th century B. C. and settled in Galatia after their defeat by the Syrians in 238 B. C. They were famous for their courage and enthusiasm, and equally so for their quick impressions, sudden change, and fickleness. They were also hospitable and generous.

The churches of Galatia. How and by whom these churches were established we do not know, possibly from work done by Paul or from the seed of the gospel sown by some of those present on Pentecost. Paul visited them on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6) and preached to them while unable to travel because of illness (Gal. 4:14-15). He visited them again while on the third tour (Acts 18:23) and established them in the faith. Paul left them, but Judaizing teachers soon came in and, acting upon their unstable nature, greatly corrupted the simplicity of their faith.

Occasion and purpose of the epistle. The Judaizers admitted that Jesus was the Messiah, but claimed that the Jewish law was binding upon Christians, and therefore, that salvation was obtained by works of the law. In order to win the Galatians over to their position, the false teachers sought to weaken their confidence in Paul as an apostle. The need for the epistle thus grew out of the controversy which broke out at Antioch after the first missionary journey and was the occasion for the conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Paul's purpose in the epistle was to root out the errors of the Judaizers and to establish his apostolic authority. He also shows the value of Christian freedom. In accomplishing these purposes, he gave us an inspired classic upon the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith.

Relation to Romans. The Galatian letter was the forerunner of Romans. The theme stated briefly in it is expanded in the latter epistle. Both deal with the doctrines of sin and redemption and the relation of the law to the gospel. Galatians "takes up controversially what Romans

puts systematically.”

Paul's surprise. Paul marvelled at the sudden change of the Galatians from the true gospel (1:6). “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you...” (3:1).

...how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements...I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain (4:8-11).

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you (4:19-20).

Date and place of writing. Paul wrote this epistle, probably from Corinth, in A. D. 57.

Message. Christ, the Deliverer. In Christ, we have freedom from sin, from the law of Moses, and from the doctrines of men.

Main themes. (1) The old law was replaced by the gospel; (2) justification is by faith in Christ, not by works of the law, and (3) Paul defends his apostleship.

Characteristics of the epistle. One of Paul's most severe letters, yet it has an undertone of tenderness, as Paul strives to win them back to the simplicity and truth of the gospel. This is Paul's only epistle in which he gave his brethren no commendation in his salutation and no reference to their standing in Christ. He greeted them simply, “The churches of Galatia,” and not, “that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,” as he did others. Paul's reference to the large letters, or characters, with which he wrote (6:11) may have been a reference to his taking the pen in his own hand to write his personal conclusion, after he had dictated the body of the letter to an amanuensis, as he did other epistles (Rom. 16:22; I Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; II Thess. 3:17). Or, in this case, he may have penned the entire epistle and here calls their attention to his use of large letters for emphasis.

Liberty in Christ. Galatians is called the Magna Charta, or Manifesto, of Christian liberty. It is God's emancipation proclamation for sinners. Having been emancipated by the gospel, the Galatians were brought again into bondage by the Judaizing teachers. Paul pleads with them to throw off the yoke of false teaching and return to the life of liberty that is in Christ (5:1). He shows also that liberty is not license. Therefore, "...use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh..." (5:13). Galatians was Luther's chief inspiration for the Reformation. "This was the pebble from the brook with which, like another David, he went forth to meet the papal giant and smite him in the forehead" (Godet). The chain showing the central message of freedom in Christ is found in these verses: 1:16; 2:11-16; 3:1-11; 4:9-11; 5:1-7; 6:15.

Key doctrine. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ..." (2:16).

The gist of Galatians. Paul defends his independent apostleship (1:1-2:14) and his teaching (2:15-4:31), and closes with exhortations to hold fast to Christian liberty without abusing it and to show the fruits of faith by holy living (chapters 5 and 6).

The rule to walk by. Faith working by love (5:6; 6:16; II Cor. 5:7)

The three crosses of Galatians. (1) The cross of Christ, by which "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law..." (3:13); (2) the cross on which the world of sin is crucified (6:14), and (3) the cross for one's self, by which we are crucified with Christ (2:20).

Three great facts of Galatians. Life, law and love.

1. The fact of life—Spiritual life is supplied by faith in Christ (2:20; 5:6).
2. The fact of law—Liberty is not license. There is a law of liberty (James 1:25). Christian life is under law, the new law of grace and truth, which is the law of

Christ (John 1:17; I Cor. 9:21).

3. The fact of love—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love..." (5:22; See also 5:14).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM GALATIANS

Theme of each chapter-

Chapter 1—Paul a minister of the certified gospel (v. 11, KJV) by the revelation of Christ and not from men (vv. 12-17).

Chapter 2—Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was dead to the law, alive unto God, crucified with Christ and now living by faith in Christ (vv. 7-10, 19, 20).

Chapter 3—God's covenant with Abraham came 430 years before the law, Christ the seed of Abraham, the law added because of transgressions to bring men to Christ that they might be justified by obedient faith.

Chapter 4—Sinai or celestial Jerusalem, the law or the gospel?

Chapter 5—Freedom or bondage, works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit?

Chapter 6—"...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (v. 7).

Great Truths in Galatians-

1. The gospel cannot be changed—1:6-9.
2. To teach that righteousness comes by obeying the law of Moses is to frustrate, or make void the grace of God—2:21.
3. We receive the Spirit "by the hearing of the faith" (3:2, 5); therefore, by the word of God (Rom. 10:17), and not by any direct, supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit.
4. We become children of God by faith in Christ after we are baptized into him (3:26-27).
5. The Spirit cries, "Abba, Father." This is not the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of our sonship, the testimony of God's word. It is not a supernatural influence apart from the inspired Word (4:6-7; Rom. 8:16).

6. One who would be justified by the law is fallen from grace (5:4).

7. We are saved by "faith which worketh by love" (5:6).

8. They who practice the "works of the flesh...shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (5:19-21).

9. We must bear the fruit of the Spirit (5:22).

10. Christians must bear one another's burdens (6:2).

11. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (6:8).

12. Christians must "do good unto all men" (6:10).

The sufficiency of the Gospel—If righteousness were by the law, or by any means other than the gospel of Christ, then Christ and his gospel would not be sufficient for our salvation. But he is an all sufficient Savior. In him is "the fulness." There is no lack in him. He is the author of the all-sufficient faith (Heb. 12:2). His gospel is all-sufficient for our salvation and righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17). His word is all-sufficient for life, godliness, and every good work (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:3-4).

The allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Gal. 4:21-31)—The allegory is similar to the parable in that it teaches a lesson in story form. It is a figurative story, an extended metaphor, the presentation of one thing under the image of another. Its meaning is veiled and implied; therefore more difficult than the parable.

This allegory is the story of the two women, Sarah, the wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac, the son of promise, and of Hagar, her handmaiden and mother of Ishmael, born of the flesh, a slave. The women represent the two covenants; Hagar, the law of Moses, and Sarah, the gospel of Christ. The plan of salvation for all men in Christ came through God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16) and not by the law of Moses. Thus, Hagar, the bondmaid, represents the law which came from Mt. Sinai, and like Hagar, bears slaveborn children. Sarah represents the gospel

covenant, which like Sarah, bears freeborn children according to God's promise. Hagar is, in a figure, earthly Jerusalem, the city that succeeded Mt. Sinai and whose children, the Jews, were kept in bondage by the law. Sarah answers to the free city, heavenly Jerusalem from whence came the gospel, which city is the mother of us all and whose children are members of the kingdom of heaven, the church, and are free.

IV. MEMORY VERSES FROM GALATIANS

Chapter 1:8-9–

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed...

Chapter 2:16–“...a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...”

Chapter 2:20–

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Chapter 3:23-25–“...Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith...”

Chapter 3:26-27–

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

Chapter 4:4-5–

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law...

Chapter 5:1–

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith
Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled
again with the yoke of bondage.

Chapter 5:6–

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth
any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which
worketh by love.

Other verses from Chapter 5–v. 13, v. 16, vv. 19-21, vv.
22-24.

Chapter 6:2–“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil
the law of Christ.”

Chapter 6:4–“But let every man prove his own work...”

Chapter 6:7-8– “...for whatsoever a man soweth, that
shall he also reap....”

Chapter 6:9-10–

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due
season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have
therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men...

Other verses from Chapter 6–v. 14, v. 16, v. 17.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,
peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,
faith, Meekness, temperance: against such
there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Chapter 58

The Epistle To The Ephesians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “In Christ.” Paul used this expression 200 times in his epistles, 30 times in Ephesians. Other words that occur frequently are “together,” “in heavenly places,” “riches,” “unity” and “one” indicating unity, and “love.”

Key verse – Chapter 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Key phrase – “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (5:25).

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – Those who were once dead in sin are made alive in Christ...“For by grace are ye saved through faith...For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (vs. 8-10)...Christ abolished the law of Moses by His death on the cross in order to reconcile both Jew and Gentile “unto God in one body by the cross” (vs. 14-18)...In His one body, the church, all members are saints in the household or family of God, “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (vs. 19-22).

Subject – The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the church, “which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (1:22-23). The church is also the

temple of God (2:21), and the family of God (3:15). Christ “is the savior of the body” (5:23). He loved the church and gave Himself for it in order to “sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; that it should be holy and without blemish” (5:25-27). The Father prepared not only a physical body for His Son to suffer in, but also a spiritual body in which He should be glorified.

Application – All spiritual blessings are in Christ (1:3). By faith we are baptized into Christ where we obtain forgiveness of sins and all other spiritual blessings (Gal. 3:26-27). To be in Christ is to be in His spiritual body, the church of which he is head (1:22-23). Therefore, every spiritual blessing is in the church. Christians must glorify God “in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (3:21). Christ has only one body; therefore, only one church. We must endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3); “speaking the truth in love,” and “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (4:15). Christians must not walk as sinners do, for they have put off the old man, their former manner of life, and now as new creatures in Christ, “renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (4:17-24). We must no longer walk in darkness, for we are now “light in the Lord,” and must “walk as children of light” (5:8-9) “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (5:11). We must redeem the time and “understanding what the will of the Lord is” (5:16-17). “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (6:10-11).

II. BACKGROUND OF EPHESIAN LETTER

The city – Ephesus was the capital of Asia, the leading city of Asia Minor, and the seat of the imperial pro-consul. Next to Rome, it was the most important city visited by Paul. Her principal glory was the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Built of shining marble on a hill overlooking the harbor, it was an impressive sight for the many visitors to Ephesus. Thus the city was the center of the influence of Diana, which was a source of economic gain as well as of gross immorality. There a large group of silversmiths manufactured and sold portable shrines, small silver models of the temple, to the many worshippers who made pilgrimages to Ephesus.

With the spread of Christianity, the influence of Diana decreased. The temple was destroyed in 262 A. D. and never rebuilt. The city soon lost its importance. In 1308, the Turks took possession of the little that remained and deported or murdered its inhabitants. J. T. Wood, for the British Museum, made extensive excavations in the ruins of the city and in 1870 found the foundation of the temple, all that remained, buried under several feet of earth.

Paul's work at Ephesus – Paul visited Ephesus briefly on the return from the second missionary tour and left Aquila and Priscilla there (Acts 18:18-21). On the third missionary journey, he spent three years in Ephesus, his longest ministry in one place (Acts 19:1-41; 20:31). He first taught in the synagogue for three months and then in the school of Tyrannus for two years. During this ministry he had enough influence to check the worship of Diana and to convert many of the magicians who were prevalent there. Demetrius and other silversmiths, whose lucrative business was threatened, stirred up opposition to Paul among the worshippers of Diana and made it necessary for Paul to depart for Macedonia (Acts 20:1). On the return from his third tour, Paul stopped at Miletus, thirty miles away, and sent for the elders at Ephesus, to whom he delivered his

touching farewell address (Acts 20:16-38).

“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20). Thus, in the center of paganism, the seeds of Christianity were sown by the great apostle to the Gentiles and the church was firmly established. Ephesus became one of the chief fortresses of Christianity, as it was also the stronghold of idolatry. It was the third capital of Christianity, the center through which were founded all the churches of Asia, especially the seven churches that Jesus sent the messages of Revelation. Jerusalem, the birth place of the church, is the first, and Antioch, the center of mission work, is the second capital.

The epistle – Ephesians is one of the four epistles that Paul wrote while a prisoner in Rome in A. D. 62 or 63. It contains no salutations or personal references as do other epistles. Paul does not mention any experiences in Ephesus and he does not deal with any conditions peculiar to that city or with any prevailing errors. Since the epistle is general in its teaching, Paul probably intended it as a circular letter for the churches of Asia, including Laodicea (Col. 4:16).

“Ephesians is, in some respects, the most profound and difficult (though not the most important) of his epistles. It certainly is the most spiritual and devout ... It is the Epistle of the Heavens ... an ode to Christ and his spotless bride, the Song of Songs of the New Testament. The aged apostle soared high above all earthly things to the invisible and eternal realities in heaven” (Philip Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, I, 779-780).

It is the “best and noblest book of the New Testament” – Martin Luther.

“The sublimest composition of man” – Coleridge.

“The greatest and most heavenly work of one whose very imagination is peopled with things in heaven” – Alford.

“The epistle of the Ascension, the most sublime, the most profound and the most advanced and final utterance of that mystery of the gospel which it was given to St. Paul

for the first time to proclaim in all its fulness to the Gentile world.” – Farrar.

Explanation of key words and phrases of Ephesians

(1) “In Christ” – Paul used this expression 200 times in his epistles; 30 times in Ephesians (1:3, 6, 12, 15, 20; 2:6, 10, 13, 21-22; 3:11; 4:21).

(2) “Together” (1:10; 2:5-6, 21-22).

(3) “In heavenly places” (literally, “in the heavenlies”) – (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10).

(4) “Riches” – (1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16).

(5) “Unity” and “one,” indicating unity (2:15-16; 4:4-6; 4:13).

(6) “Love” – (1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2).

(7) “Church” – (1:22-23, etc.).

Ephesians and other epistles

(1) It is very similar to Colossians. Both epistles were written at the same time and both delivered by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Both deal with Christ and the church. Yet, Ephesians emphasizes the church as the body of Christ, while Colossians stresses Christ as the head of the body.

(2) In Ephesians Paul presents some ideas that he treats more completely in Romans, such as salvation by grace and the union of the believer with Christ.

(3) Ephesians resembles the writings of John in the emphasis that Paul gives to love, unity, and to the Holy Spirit.

Two major divisions of Ephesians

I – Doctrinal part, chs. 1-3 – The church and the plan of salvation. The church is the body of Christ, chosen, redeemed and united in Christ.

II – Practical part, chs. 4-6 – What the divine plan calls for on the part of the church. Let all the members walk in unity, love, and newness of life, in the armor of God.

Paul’s picture of the church in Ephesians

Ch. 1 – The church is the body, the fulness of Christ, in

whom there is every spiritual blessing.

Ch. 2 – The church is the one body in which both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God. It is the household of God, the temple of the Lord.

Ch. 3 – The church, by its very existence, declares the wisdom and eternal purpose of God, for whom the whole family is named.

Ch. 4 – The unity and perfection of the church.

Ch. 5 – The church is the spotless bride of Christ.

Ch. 6 – The church is the army of God.

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM EPHESIANS

Some difficult passages

(1) ***Sealed with the Holy Spirit*** – (1:10-14) – The function of the Holy Spirit is presented here in the dispensational connection (v. 10). The salvation of the Gentiles by the word of truth was a part of God's predestined and fulfilled plan. It was the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal, seal, and guarantee this divine plan. The seal is the stamp of authority, which God set first upon Christ (John 3:33-34) and that the Holy Spirit set upon the apostles (II Cor. 1:21-22). By the signs that the Holy Spirit did through the apostles, He confirmed the authority of their word as the word of God. By the same word he guarantees the gospel of our salvation. The "earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14) is not a down payment of the direct indwelling of the Spirit, but the assurance or pledge of the blessings of the gospel, which we receive through the inspired word. Thus he is the Holy Spirit of promise according to His word (v. 13; Acts 2:39).

(2) ***"In the heavenly places"*** – (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10) – Literally, "in the heavenlies," in chapter 1:3 and 2:6, the phrase means the church, which is the kingdom of heaven. Thus, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the church (1:3) and have sat down together with Christ in the church (2:6). In chapter 1:20 and 3:10, the expression refers

to heaven itself. This harmonizes with the thought that the church will not attain its perfect state until it is translated to the regions above at the coming of Christ (Col. 1:21-23; Rev. 3:21).

(3) ***“The fulness of him that filleth all in all”*** – (1:23) – Colossians represents Christ as the true fulness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9), the totality of divine attributes and powers. Ephesians exhibits the ideal church as the body of Christ, the reflected fulness of Christ. The Greek word for fulness is **pleroma**, the complete spectrum and supply. Thus, the plenitude of Christ’s graces, blessings, glory and work resides in the church. Christ is everything to the church – builder, purchaser, head, savior, foundation, bridegroom, rewarder, captain, king, lawgiver, high priest, example, and roll-keeper (Acts 2:47; Rev. 3:5). “Christ’s fullness is God’s fulness; the church’s fullness is Christ’s fullness. God is reflected in Christ, Christ is reflected in the church” (Philip Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, I, 777).

(4) ***The mystery of Christ*** – (1:9; 3:3, 9; 6:19) –Mystery simply means that which was concealed or covered, not made known. Revelation denotes that which is uncovered, brought to view, and made known. Here, the mystery refers to the gospel plan of salvation, which in ages past was hidden from even the prophets through whom God foretold it (I Peter 1:10-12). Paul’s dispensation was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and make known the mystery to them. Thus, it was, and is no longer a mystery but is God’s revelation, His divinely proclaimed scheme of redemption for all mankind, as Paul frequently stated (Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; I Tim. 3:16, etc.).

(5) ***The wisdom of God made known through the church*** – (3:10-11) – The meaning here is not that the church is God’s teaching agency, to make His wisdom known to the world, although there are other passages which do give this as God’s arrangement (Matt. 28:19-20; I Tim. 3:15;

Heb. 5:12). In this passage, Paul declares that the existence of the church is evidence of the execution of God's eternal purposes for mankind, accomplished in the coming of His Son, in His death and resurrection, and in the establishment of His church in which both Jews and Gentiles are saved and receive every spiritual blessing. Thus, through the establishment of the church in accordance with His eternal purpose, the manifold wisdom of God was made known even to the angels, who inhabit "the heavenly places" and who desire to look into these things (I Peter 1:12)

Exaltation of the family – (5:22-6:4) – Paul bases the family on high and holy ground when he says that the relation of husband and wife is like that of Christ and the church. The ideal family is a miniature of the church, or the household of God. Accordingly husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loved His bride, the church, and gave Himself for Her. Wives are to obey their husbands as the church is subject to Christ, the head. Parents are to love their children as God and Christ love individual Christians. Children are to love and honor their parents as Christians are to love and honor Christ. The realization of this ideal relationship in the family would be heaven on earth. Genuine **agape**, divine love (I John 4:8, 16), is the foundation for all other genuine love – whether nuptial, family, brotherly, or spiritual love.

IV. CHOICES SELECTIONS FROM EPHESIANS

- (1) The exaltation of Christ (1:20-23).
- (2) Christ is our peace (2:14-16).
- (3) The household of God (2:18-22).
- (4) Paul's prayers for the church (1:16-23; 3:14-21).
- (5) Christian unity (4:3-6, 13).
- (6) Spiritual growth "unto a perfect man" (4:11-16).
- (7) The new life in Christ (4:17-32).
- (8) The spiritual armor (6:10-17).

The longest sentence – In chapter 1:3-14, we have

one sentence, the longest in the New Testament, in which Paul emphasizes the blessings in Christ, that we receive in His body, the church: "in Christ" (v. 3); "in him" (v. 4); "through Christ" (v. 5); "in the beloved" (v. 6); "in whom" (v. 7); "in him" (v. 9); "in Christ" (v. 10); "in him" (v. 10); "in whom" (v. 11); "in Christ" (v. 12); "in whom" (twice in v. 13).

Memory verses

1:3 – "...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

1:7 – "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

1:22-23 – "... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church..."

2:1 – "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

2:8-10 – "For by grace are ye saved through faith..."

2:14-16 – "For he is our peace, who hath made both one..."

3:3-4 – "...as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."

3:10-11 – "To the intent that...might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose..."

3:14-15 – "...of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

3:16-19 – "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge..."

3:20-21 – "Now unto him that is able..."

4:3 – "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

4:4-6 – "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling..."

4:15 – "Speaking the truth in love..."

5:1-2 – “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love...”

5:11 – “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

5:14 – “Awake thou that sleepest,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ shall give thee light.”

(Perhaps part of an ancient hymn.)

5:15-16 – See then that ye walk circumspectly...redeeming the time...”

5:17 – “...understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

5:18-19 – “...speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs...” (See Col. 3:16-17 for a parallel passage).

5:22-23 – “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord...”

5:25-27 – “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”

6:1-4 – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord...And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath...”

6:10-11 – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God...”

Christ abolished the Law of Moses – Throughout the epistles, Paul shows that Christ fulfilled the law and took it out of the way that he might establish a new covenant. The superiority of the law of Christ to the law of Moses is the theme of Hebrews. In Ephesians, the law is described as a wall that separates Jew from Gentile and kept the Gentiles from the covenants of promise (2:12-14). Christ abolished in his flesh, that is his death, the law of commandments so that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile “unto God in one body by the cross” (2:15-16).

Some other references to the law and the gospel:

(1) “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28).

(2) "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament...the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones...the ministration of condemnation...For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (II Cor. 3:4-11).

(3) "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25).

(4) "Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

(5) "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14).

(6) "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12).

(7) "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6).

(8) "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament" (Heb. 9:15).

(9) "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come..." (Heb. 10:1).

(10) "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9).

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Chapter 59

The Epistle To The Philippians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – Joy and love. The words “joy,” and “rejoice” occur 16 times in Philippians.

Key verse – Chapter 1:21 – “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Key phrase – The mind of Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5).

Key chapter – Chapter 4 –

My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved...Rejoice in the Lord always...Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication...think on these things...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content...I can do all things through Christ...But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Message – Jesus Christ is the source of all blessings and spiritual fruit, the basis of unity and the perfect example of selfless love. Therefore, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21).

Appeal – All Christians should strive for love and unity (1:27-2:18; 4:1-9). We should “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (1:27). “Be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, one mind” (2:2). “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more” (1:9). “Stand fast in the Lord” (4:1). Following Paul’s example, we “rejoice in the Lord always,” joyously pursuing peace and purity. Every

Christian must “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (2:12).

Purpose – Paul’s purpose was two-fold: to gratefully acknowledge their kindness to him, and to gently promote concord among two women in the church who were in disagreement (4:2-3).

II. BACKGROUND OF PHILIPPIANS

The Church – The church in Philippi resulted from the “Macedonian call.” By a vision from God, Paul went to Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:9-12), accompanied by Silas, Timothy and Luke. This was his first visit to Europe. His first preaching in Philippi was at a prayer meeting where Lydia and her household were converted. Later he cast an evil spirit out of a young maiden, whose masters brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates, who had them beaten and imprisoned.

While they were praying and singing at midnight, they were released from prison by a great earthquake, which resulted in the conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:19-36). From this nucleus the church grew to a fully organized congregation with bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1). After five years absence, Paul in 57 A. D., paid a second visit to Philippi (Acts 20:1; II Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-6), and spent the passover there (Phil. 4:16-18). Noted for their generosity, the Philippian saints were Paul’s “joy and crown” (Phil. 4:1).

The city – Philippi was a city of Macedonia (Northern Greece), founded in 358 B. C., by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Named for its founder, the city was situated on the highway between Europe and Asia, in a fertile region near rich gold and silver mines. It was the place where Mark Antony defeated Brutus (42 B. C.), thus overthrowing the Roman republic and beginning the empire. After that event, Philippi had the rank of a Roman military colony. Although the population was chiefly Greek, with its

large number of Roman magistrates and colonists, Philippi was a "little Rome," where Roman citizenship was highly esteemed (Acts 16:12, 38). Apparently few Jews were there, since Paul does not mention a synagogue.

Character of the epistle – This was one of the four epistles that Paul wrote during his imprisonment in Rome, about 62 A. D. On his third missionary tour he had said, "I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). Later, on the eve of his departure for Caesarea, to stand trial before Felix the governor, the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). Paul fulfilled this, not as a free man, but as a prisoner, as he wrote to the Philippians.

The things which happened unto me have fallen
out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So
that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the
palace, and in all other places (1:12-13).

Paul's letter reflects his relations to the Philippians, which rested upon the love of Christ. It is an informal, spontaneous outpouring of tender love and gratitude, full of joy and cheerfulness in the face of life and death. It is like his midnight hymn of praise in the prison at Philippi. Paul found in the Philippians constant reason for rejoicing, as the keynote of the letter suggests, "Rejoice in the Lord always."

Now that Epaphroditus, who had brought their gift to him, was ready to return from Rome to Philippi, the apostle sent them this letter of thanks (Phil. 4:18). Containing less of censure and more of praise than any other, this has been called "Paul's love letter to the church at Philippi." The only blemish noted was an apparent estrangement between Euodia and Syntyche, which may have threatened the unity of the congregation (4:2-3). "This is an epistle of the heart, a true love letter, full of friendship, gratitude and confidence."

The book is a reflection of Paul's life:

- (1) His surrender to the gospel (3:4-11).
- (2) Preaching Christ even in prison – “fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (1:12, 18).
- (3) Living Christ, at whatever cost – “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21). “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all” (2:17).
- (4) Pressing on toward Christ (3:14).
- (5) Serving Christ – with joy and confidence (4:11-13).

The gospel in Philippians:

- (1) The preaching of the gospel (1:15-18).
- (2) The defense of the gospel (1:17).
- (3) Manner of life worthy of the gospel (1:27, ASV).
- (4) Friends of the gospel – Timothy, Epaphroditis, and the Philippians.
- (5) Enemies of the gospel (3:18-19).
- (6) Fellowship in the preaching of the gospel (4:15).
- (7) Power of the gospel – even in Caesar's household (4:22).

Notable Points:

- (1) There is no quotation from the Old Testament in it.
- (2) The word “joy” or “rejoice” is found in every chapter (1:4, 18, 25-26; 2:16, 18; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10).
- (3) The word “all,” as opposed to disunion, occurs frequently (1:3, 7, 25, etc., ASV).
- (4) There are pressing exhortations to unity, or likemindness (1:27; 2:1-4; 3:15-16; 4:2).
- (5) The word “mind” recurs often, stressing the necessity of the saints being of the same mind and possessing the mind of Christ (1:27; 2:2-3, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 7).
- (6) The Spirit is mentioned only three times, but significantly – the supply of the Spirit (1:19); the fellowship of the Spirit (2:1), and worship by the Spirit (3:3).

III. CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

Christological passages – Three of the great passages concerning Christ are in the prison epistles:

(1) Far above all rule, head of the church (Eph. 1:20-23).

(2) The mind, the self-humiliation, and the exaltation of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11).

(3) The preeminence of Christ (Col. 1:14-20).

Our relation to Christ appears in every chapter –

Chapter 1 – Christ is our life; He controls our life.

Chapter 2 – Christ is our example, the pattern for our life.

Chapter 3 – Christ is our object, the goal of our life.

Chapter 4 – Christ is the source of joy, the strength of our lives.

Rejoicing in Christ – Christ is the source of contentment and joy. In Him we must “rejoice evermore.”

Chapter 1 – Rejoice in evangelism and in facing death.

Chapter 2 – Rejoice in lowly service and in brotherhood.

Chapter 3 – Rejoice in sufferings and heavenly citizenship.

Chapter 4 – Rejoice in anxiety and privation.

IV. GREAT MESSAGES FROM PHILIPPIANS

(1) Paul’s prayer for them (1:9-11).

(2) Paul’s imprisonment opened new doors for the gospel (1:12-14; 4:22).

(3) Paul rejoiced that “Christ is preached” (1:15-18).

(4) “Be likeminded, having the same love” (2:1-4).

(5) The mind of Christ, His example of self-humiliation and selfless love – one of the most sublime passages in the Bible (2:5-11).

(6) “Blameless and harmless” (2:14-16).

(7) Paul’s loss for Christ and his gain in Christ (3:1-11).

(8) The goal of the Christian life (3:12-16).

(9) Overcoming anxiety (4:4-7).

(10) The secret of contentment (4:11-13).

The power of God in Philippians – The preachers, the message, and the results (1:5, 12, 16, 27; 2:12, 15-16, 22; 3:4-9, 20; 4:3, 15, 22).

Verses suggested for meditation and memorization –

1:21 – “For me to live is Christ...”

1:27c – “That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

2:3 – “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind...”

2:5 – “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

2:12-13 – “...work out your own salvation...”

3:13-14 – “...this one thing I do...”

3:20-21 – “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven...”

4:7 – “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep...”

4:8 – “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true...think on these things.”

4:11 – “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

4:19 – “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Brethren...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God... (Philippians 3:13-14).

Chapter 60

The Epistle To The Colossians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – Christ, and fullness. “Christ” occurs 19 times, with 53 other references to Him.

Key verses – Chapter 2:9-10 –

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Key phrase – “Christ who is our life” (3:4).

Key chapter – Chapter 3 –

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth (ASV)...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him...Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a complaint against any: even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness(ASV)...And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Theme – The supreme glory and preeminence of Christ. Christ is the Son of God’s love, the image of God,

the creator and sustainer of the universe, the head of the church, the firstborn from the dead, the fulness of God, and the redeemer of the world (1:13-20). Christ is our life. He is all and in all. The church is His body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23). In him the faithful are made perfect, by means of His word "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:17).

The new man – "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (2:8). Put off the old man, put on the new man. Seek the things above. Put to death the works of the flesh. Bring to life the fruit of the Spirit. Continue steadfastly in prayer. Walk in wisdom. Know how ye ought to answer each one. Be reconciled to God in Christ, so that you will have "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27).

II. BACKGROUND OF COLOSSIANS

The city – Colossae was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus on the great highway from Ephesus to the Euphrates Valley. It was one of a group of three cities of Phrygia. Laodicea and Hierapolis were the other two, mentioned in Colossians 4:13. At the time Paul wrote, Laodicea was the greatest of the three, Colossae having lost much of its former importance. It was the home of many Jews. The inhabitants of Phrygia were chiefly worshippers of Bacchus and Cybele, the mother of the gods. In their worship they practiced all sorts of debauchery.

The Church – Although Paul, Silas and Timothy passed through Phrygia and Galatia on the second missionary tour, there is no record of Paul's preaching in Colossae (Acts 16:6). The church there may have been established by Epaphras, under Paul's direction (Col. 1:6-7; 4:12-13). It seems that Paul had never been in Colossae (2:1), but he was kept informed about conditions in the church (1:3-4, 9). Philemon lived there. Although Paul knew only a few of them personally, he was loved by the Colossian

brethren (1:7-8).

The occasion and purpose of the epistle – From Epaphras Paul learned that the greater part of the Colossian Christians were faithful. But certain false teachers had persuaded some of them to worship angels, to abstain from eating meats, to observe Jewish rites and to mortify their bodies by long continued fasts (2:16-23). Paul wrote to correct these errors and to exalt Christ as head of His church.

Errors corrected by the epistle – Four aspects of **Gnosticism** are combatted in the epistle: (1) philosophic (2:3-4, 8); (2) ritualistic, or Judaistic (2:11, 14, 16-17); (3) visionary, or angel worship (2:18), and ascetic practices (2:20-23). The false doctrine held that all matter is evil and the source of evil. Therefore, our bodies are evil and God could not have created the body. Only by punishing the body can we hope to save it (2:20-23). Since the body is material and evil, none of its deeds are to be spiritually accounted for, and we are free to indulge in every form of evil conduct (3:5-8). Since, also according to this philosophy, all flesh is evil, Christ could not have become man – deity would not have touched sinful flesh. These false theories limited the greatness and authority of Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of redemption in Him (2:9-10).

Theme of Colossians – The person and preeminence of Christ (1:13-20). Its message is the Deity and supreme dignity and glory of Christ (1:18). Christ is first, the fullness of the Godhead, the source of life, and in Him we are made full.

Modern applications of the Colossian heresy – Cereemonialism, or ritualism, as practiced by Catholics and other formalistic religions is one example. They teach that the mere observance of the form or act, of certain sacraments and liturgy imparts spiritual blessings and powers to the participants. Also, speculation, as seen in Christian Science, and low standards of righteousness, as seen in modern Holiness and Sanctification movements, reflect these errors.

Some who teach the “once saved, always saved” doctrine also contend that God will not hold the “elect” accountable for sinful conduct, another example of the Colossian heresy.

The epistle – Written by Paul from Rome in 62 A. D., it is very similar to Ephesians. The former emphasizes the church as the body of Christ, while Colossians exalts Christ as the head of the church. While some claim that this was the lost letter to the Laodiceans (4:16), most scholars maintain that Ephesians and the letter to Laodicea were the same epistle. If Ephesians was a circular letter, as it seems to have been, Paul probably did not write an epistle to Laodicea, but it was the Ephesian letter that came “from Laodicea” to Collosae.

Appeal of Colossians – “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (2:8).

Outline by chapters:

Chapter 1 – The exaltation of Christ; the fulness of Christ; “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Appeal: Live up to the teaching of the gospel; recognize the difference between Satan’s domain and Christ’s kingdom (v. 13-14); the blood of Christ is the line of separation (v. 20; Eph. 1:7).

Chapter 2 – Philosophy and traditions of men vs. the gospel of Christ; Christians are “made full,” complete, in Christ; in Him we are dead to the world, buried with Him in baptism, and raised with Him.

Chapter 3 – Christ is our life; He is all, and in all; put off the old man, put on the new man; seek things above; put to death the works of the flesh; bring to life the fruit of the Spirit; above all, put on love.

Chapter 4 – Practical Christianity – Continue steadfastly in prayer...Walk in wisdom...Know how ye ought to answer each other...Final greetings.

Singing in Christian worship – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Ch.

3:16). This is a parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18-19. Note the similarity. "Be filled with the Spirit (let the word of Christ dwell in you)." The Spirit speaks to us, dwells in us, only through His word. "Speaking to yourselves (teaching and admonishing one another)." One purpose of our singing is to encourage one another. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (the same in both passages). Songs suitable for worship must appeal to the spirit and not to the flesh. "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord)." We are to make melody in the heart, not on some mechanical instrument. All music in Christian worship must be congregational singing, vocal, **a capella**, accompanied only by the instrument specified – the heart. "To the Lord" (same in both passages). God is the object of all our worship.

III. CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS

I. Names of Christ in Colossians.

1. Christ – 19 times.
2. Christ Jesus – 3 times.
3. Lord – 8 times.
4. Lord Jesus Christ – 2 times.
5. He, Him, His – 30 times.
6. Whom – 4 times.
7. Firstborn – 2 times.
8. The head – 2 times.
9. The Son – once.
10. Master – once.

II. The preeminence of Christ.

1. He is the image of the invisible God (1:15).
2. First born of every creature (1:15).
3. By Him were all things created (1:16).
4. By Him all things consist (1:17).
5. He is before all things (1:17).
6. He is the head of the body, the church (1:18; 2:19).
7. Who is the beginning (1:18).

8. The firstborn from the dead (1:18).
9. That in all things he might have the preeminence (1:18).
10. That in Him should all fulness dwell (1:19).
11. In whom are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).
12. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (2:9).
13. He nailed the law to the cross (2:14; Rom. 10:4).
14. He spoiled principalities and powers (2:15).

III. Christ and His church.

1. The body is the church (1:18, 24; 2:17).
2. The church is His kingdom (1:13).
3. Christians are saints (1:2).

IV. The teaching of Christ.

1. The word of the truth of the gospel (1:5).
2. Which is in all the world (1:6).
3. The faith (1:23).
4. Preached to every creature which is under heaven (1:23).
5. The mystery of the gospel (1:26-27; 2:2; Eph. 3:3-6).
6. Traditions of men are "not after Christ" (2:8).
7. Whom we preach (1:28).
8. A minister of Christ (1:7, 25; 4:3-4).

V. Obedience to Christ.

1. Steadfast faith in Christ (1:4; 2:5).
2. Must bear afflictions of Christ (1:24).
3. Buried with Him in baptism (2:12).
4. Seek the things above, where Christ is (3:1-2).
5. Put on the new man (3:10, 12-14).
6. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts (3:15).
7. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (3:16).
8. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (3:17).
9. Husbands, wives, parents, masters, servants – fitting...well-pleasing...in the Lord...fearing God (3:18-22).

10. Do it heartily, as to the Lord (3:23).
11. Manner of life in Christ – walk worthily of the Lord (1:10; 2:6-7)...continue in prayer...walk in wisdom...redeeming the time. Let your speech be with grace (4:2-6).

VI. Relationship to Christ.

1. In whom we have redemption (1:14).
2. Reconciled through Him (1:20, 22).
3. In whom also ye are circumcised (2:11).
4. Raised with Christ (3:1).
5. Ye also have a Master in heaven (4:1).

VII. Blessings in Christ.

1. Peace through His blood (1:20).
2. Christ in you the hope of glory (1:27; v. 5, 23).
3. Complete in Him (2:10).
4. Alive together with Him (2:13).
5. Your life is hid with Christ (3:3; Rom. 6:11).
6. Christ is our life (3:4).
7. Renewed in His image (3:10).
8. Christ is all, and in all (3:11).
9. Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward (3:24).

Christ is the center of the Christian life –

1. Chapter 1:27 – “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
2. 2:9 – “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.”
3. 2:10 – “Ye are complete in him.”
4. 3:1-3 (ASV) – “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is.”
5. 3:4 – “Christ who is our life.”
6. 3:11 – “Christ is all, and in all.”
7. 3:15 – “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”
8. 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you.”
9. 3:17 – “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
10. 3:23 – “Work heartily, as unto the Lord.”
11. 4:2, 5 (ASV) – “Continue steadfastly in prayer...Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.”
12. 4:6 – “Let your speech be always with grace...”

IV. OTHER GREAT LESSONS FROM COLOSSIANS

(1) "Having heard of your faith...love...and hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (1:3-5, ASV).

(2) "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will..to walk worthily of the Lord...bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power..." (1:9-11, ASV).

(3) Through Christ's blood, we have "the inheritance of the saints"...deliverance from darkness, citizenship in the kingdom, redemption, and forgiveness of sins (1:12-14).

(4) In time past, alienated by sin, now reconciled in his body (1:21-22).

(5) "If so be that ye continue in the faith" (1:23, ASV).

(6) "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake" (1:24, ASV).

(7) Hearts comforted, knit together in love (2:2).

(8) Beware: enticing words, philosophy, vain deceit, traditions, rudiments of men, anything that leads away from Christ (2:8, 16-19).

(9) Buried with Christ in baptism (2:12).

(10) He nailed the law to the cross (2:14).

(11) Put off the old man of sinful practices (3:5-9).

(12) Put on the new man, renewed after the image of Christ (3:10-14).

(13) Let the word of Christ dwell in you...teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace... (3:16).

(14) "Remember my bonds" (4:18).

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Chapter 61

First Epistle To The Thessalonians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key word – Hope.

Key verses – Chapter 1:9-10 –

Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Other verses that refer to the second coming of Christ are 3:12-13 and 4:13-18.

Key phrase – “The word of God” (2:13).

Key chapter – Chapter 5 – “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”...“Ye, brethren, are not in darkness...ye are all children of light.”...“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.” Many exhortations for Christian manner of life and service.

Subject – Christ is coming again for the faithful.

Theme – The hope of the faithful at the coming of Christ. The greatest consolation in our affliction and the greatest incentive for faithfulness in life is our belief in the coming of our Lord.

The message – The theme both of First and Second Thessalonians is the second coming of Christ. The message of the first epistle is the assurance of the Lord’s coming for His people, the basis of hope in the midst of persecution. The second letter gives warning of the certain punishment of the disobedient at Christ’s coming.

II. BACKGROUND OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

The city – In Paul's day, Thessalonica was the chief city of Macedonia, about 100 miles west of Philippi, a seaport on the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea, situated on the great northern military highway from Rome to the East. It was the seat of the Roman proconsul. Until its capture by the Turks in 1430, Thessalonica remained a bulwark of Oriental Christendom and was called the "Orthodox City." Still an important seaport, its modern name is Saloniki.

The church – On his second missionary tour, Paul, accompanied by Timothy and Silas, went from Philippi to Thessalonica and founded the church there during a stay of only about a month (Acts 17:1-9). The church was made up mostly of Gentiles (Acts 17:4; I Thess. 1:9), although many Jews inhabited the city. The church was firmly established and quickly grew to feed on the "strong meat" of the word, such as the doctrine of election (1:4), the Holy Spirit (1:6), the Godhead (1:1,6), second coming of Christ (1:10), and sanctification (4:1-8).

Paul and the Thessalonians – Paul's success in converting the Gentiles aroused the envy of the Jews, who stirred up persecution against him. Driven from Thessalonica by this opposition, Paul went to Berea, about 50 miles to the west, then to Athens and on to Corinth, where he preached for eighteen months (Acts 18:11). While in the last city, he wrote the letters to the Thessalonians, following the report Timothy brought him from them (I Thess. 3:1-8). Paul had sought to return to them but was hindered by Satan (2:17-18).

Their persecution – They "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1:6). Their persecutions continued, as Paul had forewarned them (3:3-4). The trouble makers followed Paul to Berea and there, also, stirred up opposition that made it necessary for Paul to leave (Acts 17:13-14). He sailed immediately to Athens.

The faithfulness of the Thessalonians in the presence of great affliction was a joy to Paul and an example to all believers (I Thess. 1:7-8; 2:19).

The epistles – In response to Timothy's good report of their faith and love, Paul wrote the first epistle in A. D. 52 and the second a few months later in A. D. 53. These were Paul's first writings and perhaps the first books of the New Testament. His object was to comfort them in their trials and to correct certain misapprehensions that they held concerning the return to Christ.

First Thessalonians – This letter is characterized by simplicity, gentleness, and affection. Here there is no controversy, as in later epistles, where Paul had to defend his apostleship (II Cor.), prove the abrogation of the law (Gal.), and define the doctrine of justification by obedient faith (Rom.). Its key words are hope and comfort (4:13,18). The twin ideas of the epistles are "affliction" and "advent." Our greatest consolation in every trial and our greatest incentive for faithfulness is belief in the coming of Christ.

Paul's purpose in writing First Thessalonians –

- (1) To encourage the church in the midst of persecution (2:14).
- (2) To defend his conduct while there against slanderous charges (2:1-10).
- (3) To assure them of his love for them, of his desire to see them, and of his delight at Timothy's report (2:17-20; 3:6-8).
- (4) To warn them against the sins of the flesh, so common among the heathen (4:1-8).
- (5) To rebuke idleness on the part of some (4:11-12; II Thess. 3:10-12).
- (6) To comfort the bereaved (4:13-18).
- (7) To exhort them to watchfulness, in view of Christ's return (5:1-11).
- (8) To encourage brotherly concern, faithfulness, and unselfish service while waiting patiently (5:12-24).

Paul's commendation of the Thessalonian brethren –

- (1) For their acceptance and practice of the gospel (1:1-10).
- (2) For their work and patience (1:3).
- (3) For their genuine Christian character, as an example to all (1:7).
- (4) For their faith (1:8; 3:6).
- (5) For their evangelistic zeal (1:8).
- (6) For their teachableness (2:13-14).
- (7) For being longsuffering (2:14).
- (8) For their love and remembrance of Paul (3:6).
- (9) For walking to please God (4:1).
- (10) For their genuine love of the brethren (4:9-10).

Uniqueness of the epistle –

(1) Each of the five chapters ends on the note of Christ's second coming (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16; 5:23).

(2) One short passage (5:14-22) contains fifteen exhortations. This brief list of Christian duties is a companion to Romans 12. Those "little arrow-flights of sentences, unique in their originality, and pregnant in meaning" are unmatched for their terseness.

(3) There is no quotation from the Old Testament in either epistle.

The inspired Word – In this epistle, the divine authorship of the message is clearly affirmed:

- (1) The gospel came to them in the power of the Holy Spirit (1:5). Compare I Cor. 2:4-5; II Cor. 4:5, 7.
- (2) It is the gospel of God (2:2-3, 8).
- (3) They "sounded out the word of the Lord" (1:8).
- (4) It is not the word of men, but the word of God (2:13).
- (5) Christ's second coming is made known "by the word of the Lord" (4:15).
- (6) These are words of comfort (4:18).
- (7) It is to be read by all the brethren (5:27). Compare I Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3.

Christ in the epistle – The word “Lord” occurs at least 25 times. In four places (1:3; 5:9, 23, 28) we have the full expression, “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Side by side with the Father, “our Lord Jesus” is addressed in prayer (3:11). He died for us (5:10) and was raised from the dead (1:10; 4:14). He is in heaven, whence He will come again to gather to Himself the faithful, both the living and the dead (4:16-18).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM FIRST THESSALONIANS

Leading Thoughts

(1) Faith, love, and hope, linked with work, labor and patience (1:3). Other passages in which faith, hope and charity (love) appear are I Thessalonians 5:7-8; Colossians 1:4-5; I Corinthians 13:13; Hebrews 10:22-24. The Thessalonians’ work of faith was their reception of the gospel (I Thess. 1:6; 2:13; John 6:29); their labor of love was their turning from idols to serve the living God (I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:3), and their patience of hope was their waiting for the Lord (1:10).

(2) “Ye turned,” past tense, “to serve,” present; “and to wait,” future (1:9-10). We turn in faith, serve in love, and wait in hope.

(3) Note the similarity between Ch. 2:10 and Titus 2:12. One should live holily in relation to God, righteously in relation to others, and unblamably in relation to himself.

(4) Some striking words and phrases – “no need” (1:8; 4:9; 5:1); “gentle as a nurse” (2:7); “as a father with his own children” (2:11); “without ceasing” (2:13; 5:17); “coming” (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23).

(5) Spirit, soul, and body (5:23) – “Soul” and “spirit” are often used interchangeably to designate the spiritual side of man as distinct from “body.” Here, “soul” seems to refer to physical life and “spirit” to that which shall never die (See Gen. 1:27; 2:7; Eccl. 12:7).

(6) There are seventeen words in the epistle that occur

nowhere else in the New Testament – “Blamelessly” (2:10; 3:13; 5:23); “to await” (1:10); “having been bereaved” (2:17); “disorderly” (5:14); “I adjure” (5:27); “has-sounded-out” (1:8); “taught-of-God” (4:9); “a shout of command” (4:16); “flattery” (2:5); “faint-hearted” (5:14); “wholly” (5:23); “yearning-over” (2:8); “remain” (4:15,17); “be moved” (3:3); “country-men” (2:14); “a nurse” (2:7); “exceedingly” (5:13). (W. Graham Scroggie, **Know Your Bible**, 110).

“Fallen Asleep” (4:14, ASV) – This is our Lord’s beautiful description of the faithful Christian’s death (Matt. 27: 52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; I Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; II Peter 3:4). It is found often in Christian epitaphs in the catacombs. There is an intermediate state of conscious bliss for the righteous dead, while they await the resurrection of the body (Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:6-8; Luke 16:22-23).

The second coming of Christ – It is remarkable that the first epistles, perhaps the first writings, of the New Testament treat of the last topic, the return of Christ. The author anticipates the end from the beginning. The Lord’s coming (advent) is clearly stated as His second coming in Hebrews 9:28 and is mentioned or referred to in almost every New Testament book. The fact of Christ’s return is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, in one of twenty verses from Matthew to Revelation. The Bible closes with the declaration, “Come Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). Thus, the first and last books of the New Testament confirm the hope of our Lord’s coming again for His people. Chapters that explain His return most fully are Matthew 24 and 25, Luke 21, I Thessalonians 4 and 5, and II Peter 3. In dealing with the subjects of hope and doom at the second coming of Christ, First and Second Thessalonians are similar to First and Second Peter.

The Thessalonians and Christ’s coming – The hope of the Lord’s return was the greatest source of consolation to the infant church amid their trials and persecutions. Some of them held erroneous ideas about His coming. A part of

them thought that He was coming immediately. Paul explains that Christ's coming will be sudden (I Thess. 5:1-3), but this does not necessarily mean soon. No one knows when that will be (Matt. 24: 36; 25:13). Their expectation should not check their industry and zeal, but they should live sober, orderly, diligent, and prayerful lives while waiting for the Lord to come.

Some were troubled also over the future of loved ones who had died before the Lord's coming. How would they get any benefit from His return? Had they perished? Would they ever be with Jesus? In I Thessalonians 4 and II Thessalonians 1, Paul was inspired to write clearly upon this subject. The words of comfort (I Thess. 4:13-18) show that those "who are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (v. 14), and that the rest (the wicked) have no hope (v. 13). Christ will return in the clouds (v. 16-17), in the same manner as He went away (Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7). He will come in His glory and all His angels with Him (Matt. 25:31).

The dead in Christ shall be raised first. These are the blessed, who "die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). Death will not prevent our being with the Lord. The faithful who are alive at His coming will be changed (I Cor. 15:51-52) and together with their resurrected brethren will be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). "First" here does not refer to the righteous before the unrighteous, but to the righteous dead before the righteous who are still living at Christ's coming.

In II Thessalonians 1:4-10, we learn that the disobedient will be punished at the same time that the righteous are rewarded. Both the reward and the punishment will be everlasting (Matt. 25:46). There is one resurrection for both the good and the bad (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

Importance of believing in Christ's second coming – The blessed hope of our Lord's coming for His people should inspire and uplift the faithful. The

Thessalonians' belief in His return resulted in their conversion (Ch. 1), service (Ch. 2), purity in heart and life (Ch. 3), consolation (Ch. 4), and alertness (Ch. 5).

As seen in First Thessalonians, according to Robert Lee in **The Outlined Bible**, p. 52, the Lord's coming is:

- (1) An inspiring hope for the young convert (ch. 1).
- (2) An encouraging hope for the faithful servant (ch. 2).
- (3) A purifying hope for the believer (ch. 3).
- (4) A comforting hope for the bereaved (ch. 4).
- (5) A rousing hope for the sleepy Christian (ch. 5).

In reference to the dearth of teaching about the second coming on the one hand and the wild speculation about it on the other hand, G. Campbell Morgan says this is "the light that has failed" in the church. The attitudes of the Christian life, the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord (1:3) result from expectation of His return. Conversely, lack of awareness has the effect of unbelief, return to idols, indolence, impatience, sin and everlasting doom.

Notable verses – I Thessalonians 1:3, 6-7, 9-10; 2:4, 7-8, 10-13, 19-20; 3:7-8, 12-13; 4:3, 9, 11-14, 16-18; 5:2, 5-6, 8-10, 12-13, 14-22, 23.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thessalonians 2:13).

Chapter 62

Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key word – Judgment (1:5). Similar to I and II Peter.

Key phrase – “The day of Christ” (KJV), or “the day of the Lord” (ASV) (2:2).

Key verses – Chapter 1:7-10 –

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Chapter 3:5 –

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Key chapter – Chapter 2 – Do not be deceived concerning the day of Christ’s return; warning of the man of sin, the son of perdition, the importance of believing, loving, and obeying the truth. We are called unto salvation by the gospel. The everlasting consolation and good hope in Christ.

Subject – The righteous judgment of the Lord and the doom of the disobedient when Christ comes again.

Warning – The warning of everlasting punishment for those who obey not the gospel and the promise of rest for the faithful are strong incentives for every Christian to be worthy of this calling, to please God and to fulfill “the

work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:11-12).

The message – The message of the first epistle is the comfort in the midst of affliction afforded by the hope of the Lord's coming for His people. The second epistle continues that comfort for the faithful and warns of everlasting punishment for the disobedient.

II. BACKGROUND OF SECOND THESSALONIANS

The epistle – This is Paul's briefest epistle to a church and except for his note to Philemon, the shortest of all his letters. There seems to be more variation between the King James Version and the American Standard Version than in his other epistles. These differences should be studied. Paul wrote this epistle from Corinth in A. D. 53, a few months after the first epistle, to correct their misapprehensions concerning the Lord's return. They concluded that Christ's coming was imminent (2:1-2). Paul mentioned three possible sources of their mistaken view of the second coming – by spirit, word, or "letter as from us" (2:2). This suggests that they were misled by false teachers who claimed to be divinely inspired, who quoted traditional sayings to support their view, and who misrepresented Paul's first letter concerning the Lord's coming. His previous statements that "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (I Thess. 4:15, 17) and "let us not sleep, as do others" (5:6) could have been misconstrued to mean that Christ would come during their lifetime. As a consequence of all this, the church was excited and troubled. The purpose of the epistle was to correct the error as to the Lord's return and the disorderly conduct arising out of such error and thus to restore tranquility to the church. It is an appeal to courage, calmness, and industry.

Comfort to the faithful – Paul again commends their

love, faith and patience in the presence of continued persecution (1:3-5). He reassures them with the promise, “to you who are troubled rest with us” at the Lord’s coming (v. 7). The happiness of heaven will include rest from all affliction, sorrows, pains, persecutions, labors, injustice and even death (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 14:13; 21:4).

Righteous judgment – Paul wrote that “your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure...is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God” (1:4-5). The patience and faith of the Thessalonians was a pledge of that coming day when God will disclose the righteousness of His judgments and rectify all violations of justice (Eccl. 3:16-17; 13:14; Phil. 1:28). In that day, all who “know not God, and obey not the gospel” will be punished with everlasting destruction” (II Thess. 1:8-9); the man of sin will be destroyed (2:8), and the adversaries devoured with fire (Heb. 10:27), “for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29).

Prayers – The epistle contains four prayers and one request for prayer: (1) That God would count them worthy of their calling (1:11-12); (2) comfort and establish them (2:16-17); (3) for love and patience (3:5); (4) for peace always (3:16), and (5) for Paul, “that the word of the Lord may have free course” (3:1).

Their calling – The Thessalonians were chosen of God “to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2:13). God did not arbitrarily elect them unto salvation. As in the case of every other convert since Pentecost (Acts 2), without an exception, they were called by the gospel of Christ (2:14), which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). They had received the word “in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (I Thess. 1:6), “not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (2:13).

The day of the Lord – The central teaching of this

epistle is to give the correct view concerning the day of the Lord. This phrase was used frequently by the prophets, usually to denote a day of divine retribution against the nations as punishment for their cruelty and other forms of wickedness. In the New Testament it refers to the day when the Lord "shall be revealed from heaven" (1:7; I Cor. 1:7-8; 5:5; II Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; I Thess. 5:2; II Peter 3:10). His coming will be sudden, but not necessarily soon. When He comes, all the dead shall be raised (John 5:28-29); all will be judged by the Lord (Matt. 25:31-32; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10-12); the faithful, both the living and the dead, will be gathered together with Him in the clouds (I Thess. 4:17; II Thess. 2:1); the unrighteous will be cast into everlasting fire (Rev. 20:14), and the heavens and the earth and all the works therein will be burned up (II Peter 3:10). There will be only one more coming of the Lord, one resurrection, one judgment, one hope, one heaven, and one hell. Christ has but one kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13), and one reign on earth which began at Pentecost and will end at His coming (Acts 2:33; I Cor. 15:23-26). "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). There will be no "Rapture," no future reign of Christ on earth at His coming. All the saved will "meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17).

Striking expressions –

(1) "Shaken in mind" (2:2); "shaken from your mind" (ASV). The expression means to unsettle, as loosening a ship from its moorings by a storm. One renders it "shaken out of your wits." The Thessalonians were mentally disturbed over the prospect of Christ's coming immediately.

(2) Other remarkable phrases – "faith groweth exceedingly" (1:3); "flaming fire" (1:8); "everlasting destruction" (1:9); "the glory of his power" (1:9); "to be admired," or, "marvelled at" (1:10, ASV); "all the good pleasure of his goodness" (1:11); "the working of Satan" (2:9);

“them that perish” (2:10); “everlasting consolation” and “good hope” (2:16); “unreasonable men” (3:2); “all men have not faith” (3:2); “disorderly” (3:6); “peace always by all means” (3:16).

(3) Eleven words occur in this epistle and nowhere else in the New Testament: “flaming” (1:8); “boast” (1:4); “a manifest token” (1:5); “to be glorified” (1:10, 12); “increases exceedingly” (1:3); “disorderly” (3:6, 11), not the same word as in I Thessalonians 5:14; “behaved not disorderly” (3:7); “being busy-bodies” (3:11); “well-doing” (3:13); “note” (3:14), and suffer (1:9, ASV). Other Greek words may be translated elsewhere by the same English words as some of those listed, but the original terms are not found elsewhere.

III. SOME IMPORTANT DOCTRINES IN SECOND THESSALONIANS

The man of sin – Paul taught that the day of the Lord was at hand (Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5), as did other of the apostles (I Peter 4:7; Rev. 1:3), but not “just at hand.” Paul foretold two events that must take place before the Lord comes; namely, the falling away of the church and the man of sin revealed. The apostasy was well known to the church, having been announced by Christ (Matt. 24:10-12) and reiterated by Paul (I Thess. 5:1-2; II Thess. 2:5). See also Acts 20:29-30; I Tim. 4:1.

The man of sin, the son of perdition, is identified with the antichrist of I John 2:18. He is distinguished from Satan (II Thess. 2:9), yet is an incarnation of Satan. He was a person, but there is nothing to forbid us from regarding him an official rather than an individual, as for instance a presumptuous line of bishops who choose to speak for God and usurp the authority of Christ. Similarly, the one that “withholdeth” (restraineth), of verse 6, may refer to a line of emperors, or generation of rulers. The man of sin would exalt “himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God,

showing himself that he is God" (v. 4). All false churches (Matt. 15:13) have his spirit. He would deceive the people "with all power and signs and lying wonders;" that is, false miracles (v. 9). The temple is the church (I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). After the church fell away from the New Testament pattern, the Bishop of Rome declared himself to be universal bishop, or pope. The claims of such potentates are sufficient to fulfill the description of the man of sin. The same as the great harlot and false prophet of Revelation. He claims to be a Vicar, or infallible substitute for Christ, and encourages His followers to speak of Him as "our Lord God the Father...doeth whatsoever he listeth...and is more than God." (For a fuller discussion of this passage, probably one of the best commentaries in print on this section; see J. W. McGarvey, **Standard Bible Commentary, Thessalonians**, etc., 33-43.)

The mystery of lawlessness – All sin is lawlessness (I John 3:3-4). Paul wrote that "the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) doth already work" (II Thess. 2:7). In the New Testament a mystery is something formerly hidden that God had revealed, or would reveal, such as the mystery of the gospel, which was made known through the apostles (Eph. 3:3-6; I Peter 1:12). "The Wicked" or lawless one (v. 8) had not been revealed when Paul wrote, but the mystery of lawlessness was already at work. The spirit of pride and self-will, hidden in the heart, will find expression in rebellion and self-exaltation against the authority of Christ. This spirit was already at work in the church, especially among the false teacher and elders.

The idleness of the Thessalonians (II Thess. 3:10-12). Contrary to the opinion of many scholars, J. W. McGarvey (**op cit.**, 46) reasons with good logic that their idleness was the result of a false view of life. Because of the prevalence of slave-labor, the people were disposed to look upon all manual labor as degrading. This attitude produced a "multitude of parasites that then swarmed into every large

city of the empire.” To restore labor to its proper place of dignity, Paul made tents and supported himself by his hands while at Thessalonica. In spite of his example and instruction, idleness appears to have increased.

McGarvey also observes that there is no hint in the text that the Thessalonians had become idle because of their erroneous idea that the Lord was about to return. This seems to be correct, since idleness existed when Paul wrote his first epistle (I Thess. 4:11-12). “On the whole, it is best to suppose that the Christian spirit of love opened the hearts of the wealthy to liberal charities, and the parasitical tendency took advantage of it” (*Ibid*).

Withdrawing fellowship – In chapter three Paul tells how to deal with the disorderly and the idle (3:6, 12, 14-15). The disorderly are those who are out of step with God’s word, who do not obey the apostles’ teaching (v. 14). Some were idle. They neglected their own business to make a business of being busy-bodies (v. 11). Paul does not exhort, but commands that we “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (v. 6). “Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (v. 14-15). The purpose of withdrawing fellowship is to cause the sinful brother “to be ashamed,” to save him (I Cor. 5:5), and to keep the church pure (I Cor. 5:7-8).

Notable verses –

1:7 – “To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.”

1:7-8 – “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel...”

1:10 – “...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints...”

2:1-2 – “Now we beseech you...that ye be not soon shaken in mind...as the day of the Lord is (just) at hand.”

2:7 – “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.”

2:10 – “...in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

2:12 – “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

2:13-14 – “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...whereunto he called you by our gospel.”

2:15 – “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

3:5 – “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

3:6 – “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

3:10 – “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

3:13 – “But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.”

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Chapter 63

First Epistle To Timothy

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key word – Minister, ministration.

Key verses – Chapter 3:15-16 –

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Key phrases – “This is a faithful saying” (1:15, etc.); and “Be thou an example” (4:12).

Key chapter – Chapter 4 –

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ...godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come...Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity...Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.

The order of the church – The true function of the church, and in particular of the evangelists, elders and deacons. That function is to proclaim the truth, to live godly lives consistent with the truth, and to carry on the affairs of the church after the scriptural order.

II. TIMOTHY A GOOD MINISTER

Good ministers – The church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (3:15). It must uphold and display the truth. Preachers are to be “good ministers of Jesus Christ” in proclaiming the truth by teaching, exhortation and example (4:6, 11-13). Elders must exhort the church in the true doctrine, duty, and diligence, and protect the church from false teaching, vain worship and sinful practices (3:2, 5; Titus 1:9).

The pastoral epistles – Paul’s last three letters were, in order of writing, First Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy. They are called “the pastoral epistles” because they give the qualifications and some of duties of the elders, or bishops, who are shepherds of the flock. Written not to congregations but to two young evangelists, they are also referred to as the minister’s manual. The date and place of writing for First Timothy and Titus are uncertain, although it is evident that Paul wrote Second Timothy from prison in Rome and that he was soon to be martyred for Christ (II Tim. 4:6). Since the same spiritual conditions are dealt with in the three epistles, Paul must have written them about the same time, First Timothy and Titus about 66 A. D., and Second Timothy in 67 A. D.

Seven points – The pastoral epistles have to do with practical matters. The main points are:

- (1) Qualifications of elders.
- (2) Qualifications of deacons.
- (3) Instructions to various groups in the church – men and women, widows and virgins, the young and the aged, servants, backsliders and heretics.
- (4) Preach the word.
- (5) Live as an example.
- (6) Keep the church pure.
- (7) Rebuke and refuse false teachers.

Timothy – Timothy and Luke were Paul’s two most constant companions. Timothy was the apostle’s son in the

gospel and his dearest friend. He was a native of Lycaonia, most likely of the city of Lystra, where Paul was stoned and left for dead. His father was a Greek, but his mother and grandmother were Jews, who taught him the scriptures at an early age (II Tim. 3:15). He was probably converted during Paul's first visit to Lystra (Acts 14:8-20), and after Paul's second visit, he spent most of his time with Paul (Acts 16:1-4). He did much valuable service for Paul and for the churches (Acts 17:14; 18:5; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10). His name is associated with Paul in epistles to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, Colossians, and Philipppians. Paul expressed his high esteem for Timothy in Philipppians 2:19-22, "For I have no man likeminded...that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." Timothy probably was not more than fifteen years of age when he obeyed the gospel, because it was about fifteen years later when Paul referred to Timothy's youth (I Tim. 4:12).

Timothy's ordination – Timothy was appointed to be an evangelist by the Holy Spirit, by Paul and by the elders. The "prophecies" of I Timothy 1:18 (see also 4:14) probably refer to the Holy Spirit's call of Timothy, just as he separated Barnabas and Saul from the prophets and teachers in Antioch for the first missionary tour (Acts 13:1-3). Paul must have then laid his hands on Timothy and given unto him the spiritual gift of prophecy or teaching, one of the miraculous gifts in the early church, which the apostles alone could impart (II Tim. 1:6; Acts 8:14-17; I Cor. 12:4-11). The elders sanctioned Timothy's ordination by laying their hands on him (I Tim. 4:14) and doubtless by fasting and prayer (Acts 13:3), but the presbytery could not impart any miraculous gifts, unless one of them was also an apostle, as in the case of Peter (I Peter 5:1). Thus, before the New Testament was completed as the perfect rule of faith, God set teachers, prophets, and overseers in the church, endowed with spiritual gifts "for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph.

4:11-13; I Cor. 12:28). Paul circumcised Timothy, not in obedience to the law of Moses, for it had been abolished (Eph. 2:15), but in deference to the Jews, in whose synagogues the evangelists would preach the gospel in many places (Acts 16:3). Later on, Timothy also was to be imprisoned for Christ (Heb. 13:23).

III. PAUL AND TIMOTHY

Paul's later life – Paul was imprisoned in Rome in 61 A. D., and the book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul's dwelling there for two years. It is clear that Paul was in prison when he penned his last letter, the second to Timothy. Was he released from prison for a time and later arrested again? This seems to have been the case, and that assumption would allow time for Paul to re-visit the churches and possibly to go to Rome and on to Spain, as he had purposed to do (Rom. 15:24; Phil. 1:25-26; 2:24; Philemon 22). If such did occur, then Paul left Rome in 63 or 64 A. D., and journeyed to Asia, Macedonia and Achaia, strengthening the churches. He left Titus in Crete to set the church in order (Titus 1:5), and Timothy in Ephesus to exhort the church to faithfulness and to stop false teachers (I Tim. 1:3-4; 4:6-7). From Macedonia or Corinth Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus about 66 A. D. According to tradition, Paul was arrested a second time in 67 A. D. and returned to prison in Rome. From there he wrote his last epistle, the second letter to Timothy, in the fall of that year and was beheaded at the order of Nero outside the city in the spring of 68 A. D.

Against the opinion that Paul visited the churches after his imprisonment, some argue that his words to the Ephesian elders "that they should see his face no more" (Acts 20:38) precluded the possibility of his later going to Ephesus. Here Paul was giving only his own persuasion, not dictated by the Holy Spirit, because on the same occasion he said, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not

knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me” (Acts 20:22-23).

Spiritual conditions in Ephesus – The church was in peril because of false doctrine, worldliness, and godlessness. False teachers had brought in many heresies and ungodly practices contrary to the sound doctrine. They taught a form of Gnosticism, which takes its name from the Greek word, **gnosis**, meaning knowledge. Paul referred to it as “science (knowledge) falsely so called” (I Tim. 6:20). The Gnostics believed in a hierarchy of spiritual beings between God and man, to which Paul answered, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ” (2:5). They taught that all matter is inherently evil. In answer, Paul wrote that “every creature of God is good” (4:3-4). The heresy in Ephesus was the Judaizing type of Gnosticism that consisted of legalism and unwise speculations (1:3-11; 4:1-5; 6:20-21; Titus 1:14-15). They were teachers of the law, though they understood not their own teaching (I Tim. 1:7). They were given to Jewish fables (Titus 1:14), disputes connected with the law (Titus 3:9), foolish questions (II Tim. 2:23), endless genealogies (I Tim. 1:4), forbidding to marry and abstaining from meats (I Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:14-15). They opposed sound doctrine, denied the resurrection and overthrew the faith of some (I Tim. 1:10; II Tim. 2:18; Titus 1:9).

Paul’s charges to Timothy – Paul committed a very solemn charge to the young evangelist:

- (1) To war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience (I Tim. 1:18-19).
- (2) “To put the brethren in remembrance of these things” (4:6).
- (3) To be an example to the believers (4:12).
- (4) To “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (4:16).
- (5) “To flee youthful lusts...follow after righteousness...

- fight the good fight of faith” (6:11-12; II Tim. 2:22).
- (6) “Keep this commandment” (I Tim. 6:13-14).
- (7) “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned” (II Tim. 3:14).
- (8) “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (II Tim. 4:1-2).

Main points from each chapter in First Timothy –

- 1:15 – Christ came to save sinners.
- 2:4 – God wants all to be saved.
- 3:15 – The church is the bulwark of the truth.
- 4:16 – Be concerned with saving self and others.
- 5:22 – Keep thyself pure.
- 6:12 – Fight the good fight of faith.

The order of Paul’s epistles – Paul’s letters are arranged in the New Testament in the order of our spiritual needs and experience – from justification (Romans) to glorification (Thessalonians). The order of their revelation to Paul is from the future hope in Thessalonians to the present duties in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

The epistles fall into four groups, both in date of writing and in content that may be compared to the “day” of Paul’s ministry:

- (1) The morning of his ministry – the brightness of hope in anticipation of Christ’s coming (I and II Thessalonians).
- (2) The noontide of conflict with error concerning justification, or salvation (Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians).
- (3) The afternoon of calm reflection upon the person and glory of Christ (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon).
- (4) The evening of his ministry – attention to duty in I and II Timothy and Titus.

IV. GREAT MESSAGES IN FIRST TIMOTHY

The church of the living God (3:14-15) – The three main topics of First Timothy are false teachers, church

government, and outward conduct. Thus Paul wrote Timothy to “charge some” to teach nothing “contrary to sound doctrine” (1:3,10); to encourage men to desire the office of bishop and develop the necessary qualifications (3:1-7), and to know how to behave oneself in the church (3:15).

As stated here, “the house of God” is “the church of the living God.” It is “the church of God” (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1); “the church of the Lord” (Acts 20:28, ASV); “the church which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus” (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1), and “the churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). It is “the temple of God” (Eph. 2:19-22; II Thess. 2:4). God’s house is not a material structure, but a spiritual building in which every member is a “living stone” (I Peter 2:5).

The pillar and ground of the truth – All members collectively are the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is built upon the foundation of Christ, who is truth (I Cor. 3:11; John 14:6). It is the primary work of the church to proclaim truth by word and by example, just as Paul previously wrote the Ephesians to walk worthily of their calling (Eph. 4:1) and to teach the truth “for the perfecting of the saints” (v. 11-12). The church is “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14-16), “holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:16). The temple of God is the pillar and support of the truth, in contrast to the temple of the lifeless image of Diana at Ephesus, which was the pillar and support of falsehood, idolatry and vice.

The truth – This word occurs often in this epistle as it does throughout the New Testament. The lost must “come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4), believe and love the truth (II Thess. 2:10-12), and obey the truth (Rom. 2:8; I Peter 1:22). We must know the truth (I Tim. 4:3), study and rightly divide the truth (II Tim. 2:15), acknowledge the truth (v. 25), and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Many are “destitute of the truth” (I Tim. 6:5), err from the truth (II Tim. 2:18), resist the truth (3:8), never come to the knowledge of the truth (3:7), “turn away their

ears from the truth" (II Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14), and will suffer God's wrath for obeying not the truth (Rom. 2:8-9).

The faith and the truth – "The faith" or simply "faith," occurs 19 times in First Timothy, eight times in Second Timothy, and five times in Titus (I Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:11; II Tim. 1:5, 4:7; Titus 1:4, etc.). The word, the truth, the gospel, and the faith are used interchangeably in the New Testament, and all refer to the divine system of salvation in Christ (Acts 6:7; Jude v. 3; Col. 1:5; I Peter 1:22-25). We must "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15), "preach the word" (II Tim. 4:2), and "hold fast the form of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13). We "walk by faith" (II Cor. 5:7) when we walk "in the truth" (III John v. 3-4). Paul warned that "some shall depart from the faith" (I Tim. 4:1), and Peter wrote, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Peter 2:21). Our teaching and manner of life must be "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (I Tim. 1:11). Paul was a "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (2:7).

Qualifications of elders – The terms, "elder" and "bishop" refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). The office of a bishop is "a good work" (I Tim. 3:1). The word, "bishop" means overseer, and they are also pastors or shepherds (I Peter 5:1-4). A true overseer will feed the flock "according to the integrity of his heart" and guide "them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:72). There must be a plurality of elders and deacons in each congregation (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1). The scriptural qualifications for both should be prayerfully studied and carefully followed in their selection and performance of duty. The members must know the elders, respect and honor them, obey them, and "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:12-13; I Tim. 5:1, 17-20; Heb. 13:7, 17).

The work of evangelists – The preacher's duty in

respect of his teaching and his personal life is summed up in the charges that Paul gave to Timothy, as outlined earlier in this lesson. In regard to Timothy's teaching, Paul wrote, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 4:6); "these things command and teach" (v. 11); "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (v. 13); "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them" (v. 16). The truth must be incarnate in the life of a teacher. He must charge false teachers "That they teach no other doctrine" (I Tim. 1:3-11); withdraw from false teachers (6:3-5); teach the church to pray "for all men" (2:1-8); instruct women in regard to modest apparel, godliness, and subjection (2:9-15; 3:11); teach the church how to behave "in the house of God" (3:15); warn against the falling away from the faith (4:1-5); refuse fables, genealogies, and other false doctrines (1:4; 4:7); receive not an accusation against an elder except "before two or three witnesses" (5:19); "them that sin rebuke before all" (v. 20); teach the church to "honor widows that are widows indeed" (5:3); teach younger women to marry (v. 14); servants must "count their own masters worthy of all honor" (6:1-2), and "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God...that they do good" (6:17-19). "These things teach and exhort" (6:2).

The preacher's personal life – Paul urged Timothy to maintain a spotless life. "Keep thyself pure." "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1:5); "holding faith and a good conscience" (v. 19). "Be thou an example" (4:12). "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (4:7). "Doing nothing by partiality...neither be partaker of other men's sins" (5:21-22). In the most solemn section of this epistle (6:11-16), the apostle charged Timothy to **flee** worldly things, to "follow

after righteousness,” godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, to “fight the good fight of faith.” “This is the flee-follow-fight” formula for every successful Christian life. “O Timothy, keep that which was committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (6:20-21).

Sound doctrine – These words occur several times in First and Second Timothy and Titus. “Sound” means “healthful” or “wholesome,” a medical term, which Luke, the beloved physician may have supplied. It occurs nine times in these epistles. “Doctrine” means “teaching,” and it occurs eight times in First Timothy, three times in Second Timothy, and four times in Titus. The word that is translated “sound” is found only in these epistles, in reference to mind, words, doctrine, faith and speech (I Tim. 1:10; II Tim. 1:7, 13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 8).

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy (I Timothy 6:17).

Chapter 64

Second Epistle To Timothy

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – Unfeigned faith, faithfulness.

Key verses – Chapter 3:14-17 and 4:1-4:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Key phrase – “Preach the word” (4:2).

Key chapter – Chapter 1 –

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord...greatly desiring to see thee...that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and

thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also...God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner...Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (v. 1-13).

Message – This epistle is the conclusion of Paul's autobiography. His last message, written to his most faithful co-worker, is for Timothy and all other faithful servants of Christ to preach the word and keep the faith. Paul's charge to his loyal and useful companion for many years, is for Timothy to preach the word and do the work of an evangelist. The letter is an encouragement to all Christians to be vessels suitable for the master's use, prepared unto every good work, and to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith.

II. THE PURPOSE OF SECOND TIMOTHY

Personal message – Paul wrote to encourage Timothy to do the work of a faithful evangelist, to hold fast the sound doctrine, to preach the word, and to bid him to come with haste to Rome (1:13; 4:2, 5; 4:9, 21).

Paul in prison – Paul's situation had changed since writing his first letter to Timothy and to Titus. When he wrote the second epistle, he was a prisoner in Rome, probably in a cold, damp dungeon, suffering loneliness because of the threat of death by Nero to all who were known to be Christians. Paul's current confinement and

deprivation were in contrast to the good treatment that he received during his earlier imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31). Paul wrote that he expected soon to be offered and that all had forsaken him, with the exception of Luke (4:6, 11, 16).

Paul's last epistle – This is the last will and testament of the great apostle to all future ministers and soldiers of Christ. It is less formal and more personal than his other epistles. “The writer’s heart beats in the writing.” In it, Paul mentions 23 persons, some unfaithful, as was Demas (4:10), but mostly they were fellow Christians who were very dear to him, among whom were Onesiphorus, Mark, Luke, Titus, Tychicus, Aquila and Prisca, and others.

Appeal for faithfulness – The highest goal and attainment of the Christian life is to be “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2). Paul’s example is our inspiration, as he faced martyrdom with these words: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Tim. 4:7-8).

III. MAIN POINTS OF SECOND TIMOTHY

Major points of each chapter:

Chapter 1 – Do we really know the one whom we have believed? (v. 12).

Chapter 2 – Study God’s word and handle it properly (v. 15).

Chapter 3 – God’s inspired word is profitable, perfect, and all sufficient (v. 16-17).

Chapter 4 – Preach the word, keep the faith (v. 2, 7).

The power of the inspired Scriptures – (3:16-17). This is both a faith building and character building passage. Every need of the soul is supplied by the word of God. The inspired scriptures are all sufficient. God’s word is the

authoritative teaching upon which we can depend and can build a life well pleasing unto God. Reproof “suggests the letting down of a plumbline on the side of a building to test its straightness. Correction means pulling the thing that is out of line in the straight. Instruction means construction...carrying the building higher” (G. Campbell Morgan, **Living Messages of the Bible, Matthew to Revelation**, II, 68). Teaching refers to imparting the truth, and instruction to training in applying the truth, thus growing both in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). Truly the inspired scriptures are profitable, “that the man of God may be made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Through his all-sufficient word, God grants “unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” and the “exceeding great and precious promises” (II Peter 1:3-4). Paul regarded the inspired word of Christ as the most excellent thing, for which he gladly gave up all other things. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8).

Ashamed – We must not be ashamed of the Lord, His gospel, or His suffering saints (1:8, 12, 16; Rom. 1:16); by study become workmen unashamed (2:15), and the Lord will not be ashamed of us, or to stand by us and own us as brethren (4:17; Heb. 2:11; 11:16).

Committed – Three times in his letters to Timothy, Paul referred to things committed, using a word that means “deposit,” found in the New Testament only in these passages. Twice he charged Timothy to keep “the good thing” which was committed to his trust (I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:14); that is, his ministry. In II Timothy 1:12, Paul spoke of that which he had committed unto Christ, literally, “my deposit.” Some scholars think that this should read, “that which he hath committed unto me.” If it is the latter meaning, Paul

had in mind his apostleship to the Gentiles, which he had received as a trust or stewardship from Christ (Acts 9:15-16; Eph. 3:2, 8-9). The former reading, however, is the commonly accepted one. Paul had placed his destiny, his very soul, on deposit with Christ, and he was persuaded that the Lord is able to keep it safely unto the day of His coming. See also I Peter 4:19.

IV. PAUL'S LAST MESSAGES

The last days – In both epistles, Paul described the perilous times that would come “in the last days.” “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (I Tim. 4:1-5). Men shall become high-minded, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Tim. 3:1-9, 13). They would be lovers of self, ungodly, despisers of good, lovers of pleasure more than of God, would oppose the gospel, would deceive and be deceived, and become worse. Paul urged Timothy to withstand these evil doers, maintain purity, and to endure persecution with patience.

Preach the Word – Paul's last solemn charge to Timothy was to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Tim. 4:1-2). How the church needs preachers today who will heed this message! There are too many members who “will not endure sound doctrine...and...turn away their ears from the truth” (v. 3-4). The word of God is the only message that Christ has authorized us to preach. Only the inspired scriptures can save us and make us perfect (3:16-17).

Other great passages:

(1) Paul's commendation of loyal, courageous Onesiphorus, who sought out the apostle at the risk of his own safety, when others had forsaken him (1:15-18).

(2) Objects of love (3:2-4) – of self (v. 2), pleasure (v. 4),

God (v. 4). Some love the world (4:10), and some love money (I Tim. 6:10).

(3) The spirit of the Lord's servant (2:24-26) – he “must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing...”

(4) Paul's example in teaching, manner of life, patience, endurance of persecutions, forgiveness, and faith (3:10-11; 4:16).

(5) Paul's great faith and confidence in Christ, even in the face of death (4:6-8, 17-18).

(6) Timothy's godly upbringing (1:5-6; 3:15).

(7) Illustrative figures in chapter two: son (v. 1), soldier (v. 3-4), athlete (v. 5), husbandman (v. 6), workman (v. 15), vessel (v. 20-21), and servant (v. 24).

(8) How few personal belongings that Paul valued – his cloak, books, and parchments (4:13).

(9) The certainty of persecution for all who live godly lives (3:12).

(10) The church must be the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15), not of falsehood, godlessness and worldliness (II Tim. 3:1-9; 4:1-4).

Paul's last appeals and charges to Timothy:

(1) Stir up the gift of God (1:6). Literally, to kindle into flame, the only place in the Greek text where this word occurs.

(2) Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner (1:8).

(3) Endure affliction and hardship (1:8; 2:3).

(4) Hold fast the form of sound words (1:13).

(5) Keep (guard) the good thing committed to thee (1:14).

(6) Be strong (strengthened) in the grace (2:1).

(7) Commit teaching to faithful brethren (2:2).

(8) Consider what I say (2:7).

(9) Remember Jesus Christ (2:8).

(10) Put them in remembrance of these things (2:14).

(11) Study...rightly divide (handling aright) the word of

truth (2:15).

(12) Shun profane and vain babblings (2:16).

(13) Flee youthful lusts...follow righteousness... (2:22).

(14) Refuse foolish and unlearned (ignorant) questions (2:23).

(15) Continue in the things which thou hast learned (3:14-15).

(16) Preach the word...instant (urgent) in season, out of season (4:1-4).

(17) Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of (fulfill) thy ministry (4:5).

(18) Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me (4:9).

(19) Bring the cloak, and the books, especially the parchments (4:13).

(20) Come before winter (4:21).

Some inspirational thoughts:

(1) Here, as in his first epistle, Paul added the word, "mercy," to his usual greeting, "grace and truth" (I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2).

(2) "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (1:7).

(3) Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (1:10). See also Heb. 2:14.

(4) "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2:10).

(5) "If we believe not (are faithless), yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2:13).

(6) "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2:19).

(7) "If a man therefore purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2:21).

(8) "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known...And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (4:17-18).

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Timothy 4:7-8).

Chapter 65

Paul's Epistle To Titus

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “Good works” is used seven times in this epistle (1:16; 2:7, 14, 3:1, 8, 14). Other words used frequently are: (1) **savior** and **salvation**, used seven times (1:3; 2:10-11, 13; 3:4-6); (2) **sound doctrine**, seven times in this form or as sound in the faith, incorruption in doctrine, sound speech, or doctrine of God (1:9, 13; 2:1, 7-8, 10); (3) **sober minded**, found six times at least in thought (1:8; 2:2, 4, 6, 12).

Key verses – Chapter 2:11-15 –

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Key phrase – “Be ready to every good work” (3:1).

Key chapter – Chapter 2 –

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine...sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women...That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in

doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,
sound speech, that cannot be condemned...

Topic – Salvation is for those who are sound in the faith, pure in life, and zealous of good works.

Application – In this epistle, God gives the ideal pattern for the church and for faithful workers in the church. The ideal for the church is orderly organization, soundness in faith and manner of life, and to maintain practical works of godliness and piety. The ideal for Christians is a love for orderliness, commitment to truth, and soberness in speech and conduct.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE OF TITUS

Date and place of writing – Paul wrote Titus from Macedonia or Corinth, shortly after he wrote the first epistle to Timothy, in 66 A. D.

Titus – We do not know much of the work of Titus. Like Timothy, he was a gifted young evangelist, intimate with and appreciated by Paul, and also one of Paul's converts (Titus 1:4). From Galatians 2:1-5, II Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:2-16; 8:6; Titus 1:5 and 3:12, we learn: (1) that Titus was a Gentile, whom Paul took with him to Jerusalem (see also Acts 15); (2) that the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem did not require Titus to be circumcised; (3) that he was capable and energetic and of great assistance to Paul; (4) that Paul had left him in Crete to finish the work which the apostle had begun there. Although Timothy is prominent in Acts, Titus is not. In several of his epistles, Paul associates Timothy with himself, but never Titus.

The church in Crete – Crete was a large island in the Mediterranean, due south of the Aegean Sea. The Cretans were notoriously evil (Titus 1:12-13). We have no definite knowledge of how Christianity was introduced to the island, but most likely it was by obedient Jews from Crete who were present on Pentecost (Acts 2:11). It seems

that Paul was released from prison in Rome and visited Crete, where he left Titus to organize the church and correct the errors that threatened the church (Titus 1:5, 13).

The book – Paul wrote to Titus to counsel him concerning the work he had left him to do (1:5). The five main points are the same as those of I and II Timothy: (1) qualifications of elders, (2) preaching the truth, (3) keeping the church pure, (4) living as an example, and (5) rebuking false teachers. The emphasis in chapter one is on church order (v. 5); in chapter two, sound doctrine (v. 1, 10), and in chapter three, good works (v. 1, 8, 14).

Comprehensive passages:

(1) Qualifications and work of elders (Titus 1:5-11; I Tim. 3:1-7).

(2) The meaning of genuine conversion (Titus 2:11-14).

(3) The meaning of regeneration (the new birth) (3:4-7; See also John 3:3-5; Heb. 10:21-23; I Peter 1:22-25; 3:20-21).

(4) Lofty ideals that become “sound doctrine” for aged men, aged women, young women, young men, the evangelist, and servants (2:1-10).

Other notable points – (1) Only here does Paul call himself “a bondman of God” (1:1, ASV footnote); (2) Paul is the only N. T. writer who quotes from heathen writers (Titus 1:12; Acts 17:28); (3) “The blessed hope and glorious appearing...of Christ” (Titus 2:13; I Thess. 4:13-18). Other choice verses: 1:15-16; 2:1-7,8; 3:8, 14).

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you (Titus 2:7-8).

Chapter 66

Paul's Epistle To Philemon

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “Receive” (v. 12, 15, 17). Paul exhorted Philemon to receive Onesimus as “mine own bowels (my very heart),” (v. 12); “receive him forever,” (v. 15); “receive him as myself,” (v. 17). “Brother” is another key word (v. 16).

Key verses – Verses 9, 15-17 –

Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

Key phrase – “Our dearly beloved.”

Subject – The transforming power of the gospel. This brief letter shows the power of the gospel to win and transform a poor slave and to bridge with Christian love the different classes of ancient society. Thus it illustrates the effectiveness of Christianity in the lives of all men in every generation. All Christians should strive to share the joy and consolation of brotherly love. “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3), without respect of persons.

Philemon – Probably a convert of Paul, Philemon lived in Colossae. He was a slave owner, whom Paul addresses not as an apostle in authority, but as a friend to a friend, as brother to brother in Christ.

Onesimus – A slave of Philemon, Onesimus ran away, possibly with money he stole from Philemon (v. 18). He fled to Rome, where he was converted by Paul. He endeared himself to Paul by his grateful and devoted service (v. 11-13). Since Onesimus was Philemon's lawful slave, Paul did not think it right to keep him, but that he should return to his master. That conviction was the occasion of the letter. Onesimus delivered it himself, accompanied by Tychicus, who delivered the epistle to the church in Colossae (Col. 4:7-9). Paul appealed further to Philemon in Onesimus' behalf by commending him to the whole congregation (Col. 4:9). Youthful and beloved brother.

II. OCCASION AND CONTENT OF PHILEMON

The epistle – Written by Paul from prison in Rome in 63 A. D., this letter has but 334 words in the Greek text, the briefest of Paul's epistles. It is the only private correspondence we have from his pen. Various tributes speak of the noble character of the epistle: It "far surpasses all the wisdom of the world"... "gleams like a pearl of the most exquisite purity in the rich treasure of the New Testament"... "the noblest Christian spirit"... "a pattern of tact, feeling, and graciousness"... "a model of truest Christian courtesy"...

It falls into four divisions: (1) Greeting (v. 1-3); (2) splendid character of Philemon commended (v. 4-7); (3) intercession for Onesimus (v. 8-21); (4) salutation and conclusion (v. 22-25).

Paul appeals to Philemon to take back the slave as a beloved brother in Christ, promising that he will repay anything Onesimus may owe his master (v. 18-19).

Spiritual lessons from Philemon

(1) The reforming power of the gospel in life – it will make one desire to correct any wrongs he has done and to be willing, as was Onesimus, to go to the one wronged and make confession.

(2) The transforming power of the gospel – It may raise one from worthlessness to great usefulness (v. 11), not only useful to others in temporal matters, but profitable in spiritual things as well (v. 13).

(3) The pattern for soul-winners and spiritual helpers – We will not try to hide or cover up a man's past faults, although we will sympathize even with the sinner who has a bad record. We will encourage and help the convert to right the past and will be courteous, recognizing the rights of others, as in the case of Philemon. We will not force one to do his duty, but will use love and persuasion to bring him to it.

(4) The inestimable value of spiritual blessings – How great was Philemon's debt to Paul for preaching the gospel to him, and to Christ for saving him! The social and economic situation was not as important with Philemon as the spiritual relationship between brethren in the Lord.

(5) The Bible answer to human slavery – Christianity abolishes slavery by making master and slave brothers in Christ. The gospel does this, and corrects all other social injustices, by the quiet leaven of spiritual influence, and not by the dynamite of violent revolution.

Paul's character – We can learn more accurately the real character of a man from his private letters than from his public correspondence. In Philemon we see the consistency of Paul's character. This has been called "the courteous epistle." In it, Paul is courteous, lovable, humble, holy and unselfish.

Paul's example of tact and wisdom – Philemon is a masterpiece and model of grateful and tactful pleading.

(1) Paul touches Philemon's heart by mentioning that he was a prisoner (v. 1, 9).

(2) He acknowledges Philemon's excellencies, making it difficult for him not to forgive Onesimus (v. 4-7).

(3) He refuses to command with apostolic authority, but pleads as a friend (v. 8-9, 20).

(4) By earnest entreaty, he refers to Onesimus as “my son” (v. 10) and assumes that Philemon will do as asked (v. 21).

(5) He acknowledges the wrong done (v. 11) and promises to make good any loss (v. 18-19).

(6) Paul could vouch of a thorough change in Onesimus – no longer unprofitable, but now profitable (v. 11).

(7) He reminds Philemon of the providential aspect of the matter (v. 15).

(8) Paul mentions his hope of being released and seeing Philemon (v. 22), and how could he face Paul if he did not do as requested?

Paul’s play on words – Onesimus means “profitable.” In verse 20, Paul says, “Let me have joy (**onaimen**, help or profit) of thee in the Lord.” He uses other words in verse 11: “in time past was to thee unprofitable (**achreston**), but now profitable (**euchreston**) to thee and to me.”

Persons mentioned – Besides Onesimus, the central character of the epistle, Paul mentions five persons at the beginning and five others at the end, including Timothy, Mark and Luke.

Tychicus – The companion of Onesimus as they journeyed from Rome across the Adriatic and Aegean Seas, Tychicus was one of Paul’s most useful helpers. He accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4), and during Paul’s release from his first Roman imprisonment, as we infer, Tychicus was sent to Ephesus (II Tim. 4:12), and to Crete (Titus 3:12). The greatest service of his life was the bearing of Colossians and Ephesians to their destinations (Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21), with such additional oral messages as Paul may have given him for the brethren of Asia.

Chapter 67

The Book Of Hebrews

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key word – “Better.”

Key verses – Chapters 1:1-4; 8:6; 12:2 –

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...who...sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...

Key phrase – “By faith.”

Key chapter – Chapter 11 –

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him....By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went...Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised...By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises

offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure...By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt...By faith he forsook Egypt...Through faith he kept the passover...By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land...By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days...And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Subject – The superiority of Christ over Moses, prophets, and angels, and the superiority of His new covenant (the gospel) over the old covenant (the Law of Moses), and the superiority of his priesthood over that of the Levitical priesthood.

Message – This book encourages Christians to be faithful. It warns against apostasy. By showing the superiority of Christ over all things and the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, it encourages Christians to continue to live by obedient faith. The correct view of the glory and work of Christ, presented here, is the cure for faintheartedness and backsliding. Christ is supreme; His people must be faithful unto death.

II. PURPOSE OF HEBREWS

The occasion of writing the book. Because of bitter persecution, the Jewish Christians addressed seemed to think that in espousing Christ they had lost everything. They had a tendency to disbelieve Christ and to undervalue their blessings and privileges in Christ. Absorbed with their

sufferings, they were in danger of falling away from Christ. By filling their minds with the glory of Christ, and the grandeur of His work, the writer shows that instead of losing all, they had gained all.

Analysis of the book of Hebrews – encouragement to faithfulness. Christianity is superior to Judaism because Christ is superior to the messengers of Judaism (Chapters 1-6); its priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood because Christ is superior to Aaron (chap. 7:1-10, 18); its blessings are superior to those enjoyed by the Jews, because under the law of Moses, their sacrifices could not take away sin (chap. 10:19-12:29), and the work and privileges to all Christians are superior to those of the Jewish system (chap. 13).

III. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Author, date and to whom addressed. The author is unknown. Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos and others have been suggested. A popular opinion is that Paul was the author and Luke his secretary. This theory would help to explain the differences in vocabulary and style of Hebrews from that found in the thirteen epistles attributed to Paul. The date also is uncertain, but it was before 70 A. D., since the temple was still standing (9:6-8; 10:1). It was addressed to Hebrew Christians who had steadfastly endured persecution, although they had not yet resisted unto blood (12:3-4). They knew the writer and Timothy, and the author expected to visit them soon, with Timothy (13:18-19, 23).

Value of the book of Hebrews – This book is classed with Romans and Revelation as one of the three most profound books in the New Testament. Its lessons are to be understood in the light of its central truth: ***Christianity is superior to Judaism and to all other religions.*** This is true because Christ, the author of Christianity, is superior to the messengers of Judaism, and its priesthood, worship,

blessings and promises are better than those of the Jewish system and all religions of men. Romans proves the necessity of the gospel. Hebrews proves the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses. Revelation shows the ultimate triumph of those who live by the gospel and who overcome Satan “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:11).

IV. CHRIST IN HEBREWS

Highlights of each chapter:

Chapter 1 – The supremacy of Christ.

Chapter 2 – Christ the captain of our salvation, the great salvation.

Chapter 3 – Christ the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.

Chapter 4 – Christ our comfort and example.

Chapter 5 – Christ a High Priest after order of Melchizedek; the danger of remaining babes in Christ.

Chapter 6 – Exhortation on growth and warning against falling away.

Chapter 7 – The priestly order of Melchizedek contrasted with the Levitical priesthood.

Chapter 8 – Christ the mediator of a new and better covenant.

Chapter 9 – His new testament of force after His death; his sacrifice of himself for the sins of all mankind.

Chapter 10 – The old law done away.

Chapter 11 – Heroes of faith; definition and necessity of faith.

Chapter 12 – The purpose of discipline; warning against rejecting God’s grace.

Chapter 13 – Practical admonitions concerning brotherly love, manner of life, teaching, worship, and respect for elders.

The Old Testament in Hebrews – There are nearly 100 Old Testament references in Hebrews, all of which are

from the Septuagint version. Exodus and Leviticus, the law and the priesthood, are particularly helpful in understanding the book. The example of Melchidezek, the forerunner of Christ, is found in Genesis 14. Hebrews 3 and 4 have their setting in the book of Numbers. The epistle refers its citations neither to the scripture, nor to its authors, but to God or the Holy Spirit, with only two exceptions (2:6 and 12:21). We believe that the Holy Spirit guided all the writers of the scriptures and enabled the author of Hebrews to give a divine interpretation of the Old Testament types and examples for the edification of all Christians of every generation to the end of time.

Christ fulfilled the law – In his epistles, especially in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul shows that Christ abolished the law, while Hebrews stresses his fulfillment of the types and institutions of the law. He is as much greater than they as the substance is greater than the shadow. The three great offices in the previous dispensation were those of prophet, priest and king. Christ fulfills them all. He is both priest and offering (1:3; 9:11-12). Aaron offered the blood of animals; Christ offered His own blood. Those offerings could not take away sin, but Christ's offering does (10:1-4, 11, 14, 18; 9:26). Aaron offered for his own sins (9:7), Christ had no sins. Aaron served in an earthly sanctuary; Christ serves in heaven (9:1, 24). Those sacrifices sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; Christ's offering cleanses the conscience (9:13). The Levitical atonement availed for one year only; but Christ offered Himself once for all (9:7, 12, 24-26; 10:12).

The superiority of Christ in Hebrews:

- (1) He is superior to the prophets (1:1-4).
- (2) Superior to angels (1:4-2:18).
- (3) Superior to Moses (3:1-19).
- (4) Superior to Joshua (4:1-8).
- (5) He offers a superior rest (4:9-13).
- (6) Superior to Aaron (4:14-5:10).

- (7) Superior priesthood (6:13-10:18).
- (8) Superior covenant (8:6-10:18).
- (9) Superior atonement (9:1-10:18).
- (10) Superior tabernacle (sanctuary) (9:1-10:18).
- (11) Superior way (10:19-11:40).
- (12) Superior relationship to God (12:1-29).
- (13) Superior work and worship (13:1-21).

V. GREAT MESSAGES FROM HEBREWS

Important doctrines –

- (1) Finality of the word of Christ – It is complete, his last will and testament to man (Heb. 1:2; Matt. 17:5; Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9; 9:15-17; 12:2; II Peter 1:3-4; Rev. 22:18-19).
- (2) The great salvation (Heb. 2:1-4; Matt. 28:18-19; I Cor. 15:1-4).
- (3) We fall away because of our unbelief (Heb. 3:12-13; I Tim. 4:1-4).
- (4) The power of God's word (Heb. 4:12-13; Rom. 1:16).
- (5) We must grow spiritually and become teachers (Heb. 5:11-14).
- (6) Danger of sinning willfully (Ch. 6:1-8; 10:26-31).
- (7) Christ, our great high priest, through whom, as priests, all Christians have access to God (Ch. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:25-28; 9:11-14; 13:15; I Peter 2:5, 9).
- (8) He is the personal guarantee of the blessings of the gospel (Heb. 7:22; Eph. 1:3, 13-14).
- (9) Christ is the mediator of a New Testament (covenant) (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-17; 10:9).
- (10) The new and living way, Christ Himself, through the cross, by means of the gospel plan of salvation (Ch. 10:19-22; John 3:3-5; 14:6; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Titus 3:5; I Peter 3:21).
- (11) Faithfulness in life and duty (Heb. 10:23-25; 36-39).
- (12) We should not forsake the Savior because He will never forsake us (Ch. 10:25; 13:5-6).
- (13) The greatness and necessity of faith; heroes of faith

(Ch. 11:1-40).

(14) Spiritual athletics, the Christian race (Ch. 12:1-2; I Cor. 9:24-27). All Christians are in the arena. We are not spectators, but participants.

(15) The purpose of chastening (discipline) (Heb. 12:4-13; Prov. 13:24).

(16) Proper reverence for God (Ch. 10:30-31; 12:27-29).

(17) Respect for elders (Ch. 13:7, 17; I Thess. 5:12-13).

(18) True worship (Ch. 13:15-16; John 4:24).

Seven warnings in Hebrews –

(1) Against neglecting the great salvation (Heb. 2:1-4).

(2) Against hardening one's heart by unbelief (3:7-19).

(3) Against failing to enter into rest (heaven) by disobedience (4:11-13).

(4) Against failure to "go on unto perfection" (5:11-6:20).

(5) Against wilful sin (10:26-31).

(6) Against turning away "from him that speaketh from heaven" (12:25-29).

(7) Against "strange doctrines" (13:9-15).

"We Have" – Note the things that we have in Christ:

(1) A great high priest (4:14-16; 8:1).

(2) Hope as an anchor of the soul (6:19).

(3) Everlasting possessions in heaven (10:34).

(4) An altar (Christ's sacrifice of Himself) for our forgiveness (13:10).

(5) No abiding city here, but the promise of the heavenly city hereafter (13:14; 11:10).

Better things of the gospel:

(1) Better revelation (1:1-4).

(2) Better expectation (6:9).

(3) Better priesthood (7:7-11; 20-28).

(4) Better hope (7:19).

(5) Better testament, covenant (7:22; 8:6).

(6) Better promises (8:6).

(7) Better sacrifices (9:23, 26).

(8) Better possessions (10:34, ASV).

- (9) Better country (11:16).
- (10) Better resurrection (11:35).
- (11) Better things (11:40; 12:24).
- (12) More excellent name, ministry, and sacrifice (1:4; 8:6; 11:4).

“Let Us” – A series of eleven exhortations in Hebrews:

- (1) Fear (4:1).
- (2) Labor (4:11).
- (3) Come boldly to the throne of grace (4:16).
- (4) Go on unto perfection (6:1).
- (5) Draw near (10:22).
- (6) Hold fast (10:23).
- (7) Consider one another (10:24).
- (8) Lay aside every weight and run with patience (12:1).
- (9) Have grace (12:28).
- (10) Go forth (13:13).
- (11) Offer the sacrifice of praise (13:15).

Perfect things in Hebrews – “Perfect” in one or other of its grammatical forms occurs fourteen times. (1) Meaning full-grown or of full age in 9:11 and 5:14; (2) Make perfect, or consecrate (10:14; 2:10; 5:9; 7:19; 10:1; 11:40; 9:9; 12:23; 7:28); (3) Perfection (6:1; 7:11); (4) Finisher (12:2).

Eternal, or forever – These words occur about fifteen times. (1) Eternal, everlasting (5:9; 6:2; 9:12, 14-15; 13:20); (2) Forever (5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21; 13:8; 7:28, 24); (3) Forever and ever (1:8; 13:21).

Other key words – (1) **Partakers**, occurs nine times (3:1, 14; 6:4, 12; 2:14; 10:33; 12:10); (2) **Heaven, heavenly** – these words occur seventeen times (1:10; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:23-24; 10:34; 12:23, 25-26; 11:16; 3:1; 6:4; 11:16; 12:22; 8:5; 9:23); (3) **Once** – (7:27; 9:12, 26-28; 10:2, 10).

Old Covenant
 Shadow
 A remembrance of sins
 Animal sacrifices
 Temporary

New Covenant
 The substance
 Sins forgiven
 Christ's blood
 Permanent

Moses, the mediator
Aaron, high priest
Only Levites priests
Imperfect
Abolished
Entrance by natural birth

For Jews only

Christ, the mediator
Christ, high priest
Every Christian a priest
Perfect
Age-lasting
Entrance by spiritual
birth (John 3:3-5)

For believers of all
nations

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Chapter 68

The Epistle Of James

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “Faith” occurs 12 times; “works,” 13 times; “doer,” five times.

Key verses – Chapter 2:21, 24, 26 –

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Key phrase – “Be ye doers of the word” (1:22).

Key chapter – Chapter 1 –

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally...But let him ask in faith...Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him...

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning...Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls...

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Message – This the is “Christian book of proverbs.” Practical Christian living is the theme. Its central teaching is the life of obedient faith. Faith in God produces life according to the will of God, and life contrary to the will of God denies faith in God. Faith is shown by its works. The appeal of James is to prove your faith by your works and to perfect your patience by proving your faith. We must live what we preach.

II. BACKGROUND OF JAMES

Seven general epistles (James-Jude) – These letters were written by four authors – two by the Apostle Peter, three by the Apostle John, and one each by James and Jude, who were brothers of Jesus. They were addressed to Christians in general, and not as Paul's epistles to certain individuals and particular churches. All but the epistles of John were written before the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. James was probably one of the earliest books of the New Testament, written around A. D. 44-47; I Peter, A. D. 63-64; II Peter, A. D. 64-68; and Jude, A. D. 67-68. The three epistles of John were written probably from Ephesus about A. D. 95-98.

Comparisons – In a comparison of New Testament writers, Dean Stanley and Dean Farrar state that “Paul insists mainly on faith, James on works, Peter on hope, and John on love.” The subjects of the seven general epistles are: (1) Of James, prayer and practice; (2) of Peter, hope and knowledge; (3) of Jude, faith and conflict, and (4) of John, love and truth.

The author – There are three men called James in the New Testament: (1) the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19); (2) the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18); and (3) one of Jesus’ brothers (Mark 6:3). The Lord’s brothers did not believe on Jesus until after the resurrection (John 7:2-9; Acts 1:13-14). This James had an important place as a leader in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; Gal. 1:19; 2:9-12). He must be the author of this epistle.

To whom written – This letter was addressed to Jewish Christians, who were scattered abroad (1:1-2; 2:1), some of them rich and some poor (2:1-10). James reproves them for failing to do the Lord’s work (1:22-27), and for their lust, greed and pride (4:1-12). He also exhorts them to patience under the trials to which they were exposed, the persecution from unbelieving Jews (2:6).

The epistle – James wastes no words. His style of writing is down to earth, bold, stern, and abrupt. His epistle has a Jewish tone and resembles the Hebrew wisdom books. It seems almost as disconnected as Proverbs. Yet a wonderful order exists when all the lessons of James are viewed as a practical treatise on the nature and works of faith. Our faith is tested by our temptations (1:2-15). Our faith is shown by our works (1:22-2:26), by our words (1:19-21; 3:1-12), by our seeking heavenly wisdom (3:13-18), by our unworldliness (4:1-17), by our patience under cruel wrong (5:1-12), and by our believing and effectual prayer (5:13-20).

Main points of each chapter:

Chapter 1 – **Pure religion** – Lessons of the chapter: joy in trials, need for patience and wisdom, asking in faith,

the case of the poor and of the rich, temptation, the Father of lights, the practice of the word, the perfect law of liberty, the mirror of the soul, vain and pure religion.

Chapter 2 – **Faith and Works** – Lessons: the sin of showing respect of persons, the law of true judgment, and the relation of works to faith.

Chapter 3 – **The control of the tongue** – Lessons: the great need of control, the lack of control, and wisdom from above, the true means of control.

Chapter 4 – **Sin** – Lessons: the nature of evil, the real seat and remedy of evil, choose God and resist evil, speak no evil, the uncertainty of tomorrow, and the brevity of life.

Chapter 5 – **The discipline of life** – Lessons: misery of the selfish rich, need for patience, the sin of swearing, effectual fervent prayer, and soul saving.

True and false religion – Most of the subject matter of James may be arranged under two headings, true and false religion.

(1) *The marks of true religion* include joy and patience in trials (1:2-4), unwavering faith (1:5-8), joyful acceptance of one's lot in life (1:9-11), overcoming temptation (1:12-15), recognition of the divine source of all blessings (1:16-18), spiritual hearing and speech (1:19-20), forsaking all evil and receiving the truth in meekness (1:21), practicing the truth (1:25), helping the helpless and keeping oneself pure (1:26-27), good works as a demonstration of faith (2:18-26), and respect for heavenly wisdom (3:17-18).

(2) *The marks of false religion* are careless and forgetful hearing of the word (1:22-24), the semblance of religion accompanied by the unbridled tongue (1:26), respect of persons by honoring the rich and despising the poor (2:1-9), partial obedience (2:10-12), unmercifulness (2:13), mere profession of faith without acts of mercy (2:14-16), inactive faith (2:17-20), the unbridled tongue (3:1-12), envy, strife and devilish wisdom (3:14-16), unholy passions and worldliness (4:1-4), pride, impurity and double mindedness

(4:5-9), evil speaking and judging (4:11-12), leaving God out of our plans (4:13-16), neglect of known duty (4:17), hoarding wealth, withholding wages of the poor, and living a life of pleasure (5:1-6).

Ten main subjects in James:

- (1) The test of temptation (1:2-18).
- (2) Hearing and doing the word of God (1:19-27).
- (3) Respect of persons (2:1-13).
- (4) Faith and works (2:14-26).
- (5) The use of the tongue (3:1-12).
- (6) True and false wisdom (3:13-18).
- (7) Marks of worldliness (4:1-12).
- (8) Dependence upon God (4:13-17).
- (9) Oppression and judgment (5:1-6).
- (10) Patience and prayer (5:7-20).

Important passages – Although James is a book on doing rather than doctrine, the following passages are of outstanding importance in their teaching.

- (1) Origin and end of evil (1:13-15).
- (2) Faith and works (2:14-26).
- (3) The tongue (3:1-12).
- (4) The two wisdoms (earthly and heavenly) (3:13-18).
- (5) Patience and reward (5:7-11).
- (6) Prayer (5:13-18).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM JAMES

Doer – Since practical Christian living is the theme of James, one of the key verses is, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (1:22). The Greek term for doer (**poiotes**) occurs in this form only six times in the New Testament, four times in James (1:22, 23, 25; 4:11). Paul used it in Romans 2:13, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” The same word occurs in the speech he gave on Mars’ hill, and it is there translated, “poets” (Acts 17:28). The doer of the word is the

greatest of all poets. By his faithful life he makes a beautiful poem for all the world to see and read.

James and Paul – Some Bible skeptics claim that James and Paul contradict each other in their position concerning faith and works. Paul wrote “that a man is justified (saved) by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). Paul has in mind obedient faith, and never faith only (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 5:6). By “the law” he means the law of Moses, which Christ abolished in his death upon the cross (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14), and by which no one can be justified (Gal. 2:20). When James writes of justification by works (James 2:14-26), he has in mind works of faith, which God appointed for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10) and teaches us to do through the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17). There is no contradiction between James and Paul, but perfect harmony. Paul speaks of the faith that works, and James of the works of faith. Thus faith and works are both essential to salvation.

James and the Old Testament – Just as Paul observes that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4), so James draws many spiritual lessons for Christians from Old Testament principles and events. He makes reference to Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah; to the law and some of the commandments; and there are references or allusions to passages in all the books of the Pentateuch, Joshua, I Kings, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and to no less than seven of the twelve minor prophets.

Old Testament references and phraseology include “the flower of grass” (1:10; Isa. 40:6), “swift to hear” (1:19; Prov. 17:27; Eccl. 5:1), “respect of persons” (2:1; Lev. 19:15; Prov. 24:23), “love thy neighbor as thyself” (2:8; Lev. 19:18), commandments of the law (2:11; Exod. 20:13-15; Deut. 5:17), Abraham’s offering of Isaac (2:21; Gen. 22:2, 9). “Abraham believed God” (2:23; Gen. 15:6), Rahab (2:25; Josh. 2:1; 6:17, 23), man made in God’s image (3:9; Gen. 1:26), “God resisteth the proud” (4:6; Prov. 3:34), oppression of laborers (5:4; Deut.

24:15, 17; Mal. 3:5), “day of slaughter” (5:5; Jer. 12:3), patience of the husbandman (5:7; Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1), patience of Job (5:11, Job 1:21-22; 42:1-17), Elijah’s prayer in regard to rain (5:17-18; I Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41), covering a multitude of sins (5:20; Prov. 10:12).

James and the Sermon on the Mount – More than any other book of the New Testament, James reflects the language of the Sermon on the Mount, as the following passages show: The blessings of persecution (1:2; Matt. 5:10-12), “be ye perfect” (1:4; Matt. 5:48), the prayer of faith (1:5; 5:15; Matt. 7:7-12), the brother of low degree (1:9; Matt. 5:3), wrath (1:20; Matt. 5:22), showing mercy (2:13; Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15), obedience (2:14-16; Matt. 7:21-23), peaceableness (3:17-18; Matt. 5:9), cannot serve two masters (4:4; Matt. 6:24), “humble yourselves” (4:10; Matt. 5:3-4), judge not (4:11; Matt. 7:1-2), riches corrupted (5:2; Matt. 6:19), example of prophets’ patience in suffering (5:10; Matt. 5:12), “swear not” (5:12; Matt. 5:33-37).

Striking phrases – “A wave (surge) of the sea” (1:6); “a double-minded (two-souled) man” (1:8); “the Father of lights” (1:17); “religious, religion” (1:26-27); “how great a matter,” literally, “how much wood” (3:5); “the course of nature,” literally, “the wheel of being” (3:6). James also uses the word, “perfect,” six times (1:4, 17, 25; 2:22; 3:2).

Omissions – James does not mention the gospel and Christ only twice. There is no reference to the incarnation, the work of redemption, the resurrection or the ascension. The reason for this is his intension to produce, not a doctrinal treatise, but a practical appeal for godly living. Thus he treats of such relevant subjects as temptation, pride, greed, strife, works, wisdom, speech, poverty, wealth, prayer, selfishness, patience and faith.

Heavenly wisdom (3:13-18) – Seven qualities are given (v. 17). The wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without

partiality, without hypocrisy. Compare this with Solomon's description of true wisdom, which is more precious than rubies (Prov. 3:13-22; 4:5-7; 8:10-21).

Warnings in James, against:

- (1) Angry words (1:19-20).
- (2) Being hearers only of the word (1:21-25).
- (3) Vain religion (1:26-27).
- (4) Respect of persons (2:1-13).
- (5) Barren profession of faith (2:14-26).
- (6) The dangers of the tongue (3:1-12).
- (7) False wisdom (3:13-18).
- (8) Quarrels, greed and pride (4:1-12).
- (9) Boasting of tomorrow (4:13-16).
- (10) Laying up treasures on earth (5:1-6).

Things not to do – In addition to the warnings listed above, James advises us: Not to waver, or doubt (1:6), not to say we are tempted of God (1:13), not to err (1:16), not many to be masters, or teachers (3:1), not to utter blessing and cursing (3:10), not to speak evil one of another (4:11), not to grudge one another (5:9), and to swear not (5:12).

Things to do – James advises us to rejoice in trials (1:2), have patience (1:4; 5:7), ask wisdom of God (1:5), ask in faith (1:6), rejoice in our station (1:9-10), be doers of the word (1:22), bridle our tongues (1:26), “love thy neighbor” (2:8), speak and do as judged by law of liberty (2:12), show meekness of wisdom in good works (3:13), resist the devil (4:7), draw nigh to God (4:8), take the prophets as an example of patience (5:10), “let your yea be yea” (5:12), sing psalms (5:13), “confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another” (5:16).

A difficult passage (5:14-15) – The elders praying for the sick here doubtless is a reference to the early period of the church, when certain ones had spiritual gifts including the gifts of healing (I Cor. 12:9). Such gifts were done away when the perfect law of liberty came with the completion of God's revelation to man (I Cor. 13:8-10; James 1:25), which

is all sufficient for our spiritual needs (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3-4), and is final (Rev. 22:18-19). The anointing with oil was probably symbolic of the miraculous nature of the healing, a ceremonial practice common among the Jews (Matt. 6:17).

Conclusion –In this practical book on Christian living, we learn vital truths for our daily conduct. James shows clearly that pretence without practice is empty. Just claiming to be religious does not suffice (1:26). One who hears the word without obeying it, deceives himself (1:22). Saying we have faith is not enough, if we have no works of faith (2:14-26). Pretending to serve the Lord while showing respect of persons is sinful (2:1-10). Using our tongues to praise God while, with the same tongues cursing men, is shameful hypocrisy (3:9-12). Professing to know the Lord while refusing to do His will is vain (4:17). Claiming to be a friend of God while having friendship with the world is enmity with God (4:4). Following earthly wisdom robs us of purity and heavenly blessings (3:13-18). One who gains wealth by oppressing the poor will reap sorrow and misery (5:1-6). Professing patience while murmuring and doubting is to forfeit spiritual joy and security (1:2-4; 5:7-11). Serving Christ while neglecting effectual fervent prayer is to deny oneself the abundance of God's blessings (5:16-17).

Memory verses – The joy of trials (1:2-4); ask in faith (1:5-6); “blessed is the man that endureth temptation” (1:12); “God cannot be tempted with evil” (1:13); every good and perfect gift (1:17); “let every man be swift to hear” (1:19); “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (1:22); “whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty” (1:25); “pure religion and undefiled” (1:27).

“Have not the faith...with respect of persons” (2:1). “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?” (2:5). That worthy name (2:7); the royal law (2:8). “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (2:24).

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (3:2). "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things" (3:5). "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing" (3:10). "Who is a wise man?" (3:13). "The wisdom that is from above is first pure" (3:17).

"Ye have not, because ye ask not" (4:2). "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (4:4). "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7). "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (4:8). "There is one lawgiver" (4:12). "What is your life?" (4:14). "If the Lord will..." (4:15). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (4:17).

"Ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries" (5:1). "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (5:7). "Ye have heard of the patience of Job" (5:11). "But above all things, my brethren, swear not" (5:12). "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (5:13). "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another" (5:16). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16). "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (5:19-20).

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22).

Chapter 69

The First Epistle Of Peter

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – “Suffering,” and its equivalent, occur 21 times in this epistle. The sufferings of Christ are mentioned in every chapter and are our example for patience in trials (2:21-24; 4:1). This epistle teaches us how to suffer patiently, joyously and to the glory of God. “Hope” is another key word.

Key verses – Chapter 1:3-4, 25; 3:15, 21; 4:11, 16:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you... the word of the Lord endureth forever (1:3, 4, 25).

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear...The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (3:15, 21).

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (4:11, 16).

Key phrase – “Called out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9).

Key chapter – Chapter 1 –

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...to the elect...who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation...that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls...

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy...ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Message – The living hope of the living church is the key thought of the First epistle of Peter. The need for patience and hope in the midst of tribulation is the theme. The epistle is a message of encouragement, instruction, and admonition. It is a great source of consolation, and in all ages it has strengthened Christians who are undergoing trials. Peter wrote to encourage Christians in their suffering and to exhort them to faithfulness and duty. In Christ we can suffer persecution patiently, joyously, and to the glory of God.

Peter's purpose – The apostle states that he had written “exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God” (5:12). In doing so, he obeyed two commands which Jesus had given him: (1) To encourage and strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:32), and (2) to feed Christ's flock (John 21:15-17).

II. BACKGROUND OF FIRST PETER

The author – Peter, whose name before he became a disciple was Simon, lived in Capernaum where he was a fisherman. He was brought to Jesus by Andrew, his brother, and became one of the first four of Christ's disciples. Christ made him one of the twelve, and Peter became one of the leading apostles, the first to preach the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). He was the first of the apostles to confess that Jesus was the Son of God (Matt. 16:16), and the first to deny him (Matt. 26:69-75). He fled when His Master was crucified, but was among the first to visit the tomb (Matt. 26:56; John 20:1-6). The risen Christ sent a message to him and specially appeared to him (Mark 16:7; Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5). During his personal association with Jesus, Peter was impetuous, courageous, restless and ambitious. In his work as an evangelist and in his epistles, we see him still as brave and energetic, but also patient, trustful, and loving, an example of the transforming power of the gospel of Christ. He was never elevated above the twelve. Never Christ's Vicar, and never head of the church.

Those addressed – Peter wrote to the elect scattered throughout Asia, both Jewish (1:1-2) and Gentile Christians (2:9-10; 4:3). They were strangers, sojourners (1:1, 17; 2:11), who were persecuted (3:17; 4:12-19), whose persecution came not from the Jews but from pagans (4:3-4). They had certain faults and wrong tendencies, such as malice and hypocrisy (2:1), fleshly lusts (2:11), maliciousness (2:16), discord (3:8-12), lack of the true spirit of hospitality (4:9), and elders

lording it over the flock (5:2-3). Written from Babylon, between 63 and 68 A. D.

Main points in each chapter:

Chapter 1 – Salvation.

Chapter 2 – Spiritual growth and behavior.

Chapter 3 – Honoring Christ.

Chapter 4 – Suffering for Christ.

Chapter 5 – The true grace of God.

Christ in every chapter:

Chapter 1 – Christ, our source of hope and redeemer (v. 3, 18-19).

Chapter 2 – Christ, the chief cornerstone, our example and sin-bearer (v. 6, 21, 24).

Chapter 3 – Christ, our Lord (v. 15, 22).

Chapter 4 – Christ, our sufferer (v. 1, 13).

Chapter 5 – Christ, our chief Shepherd (v. 4; 2:25).

Great things in each chapter:

Chapter 1 – Ours is a living hope through Christ. The trial of our faith is precious. Salvation revealed by the preaching of the gospel, redeemed by the blood of Christ, souls purified by obeying the truth.

Chapter 2 – Requirements for spiritual growth. Christ, the chief corner-stone (Isa. 28:16), and the rock of offense. We are living stones in God's spiritual house. Our responsibilities in the Lord. Christ left us an example that we must suffer for Him as He suffered for us.

Chapter 3 – Christian wives can win their husbands to Christ. Inward vs. outward beauty. Hindered prayers. Loving life and seeing good days. When prayers are heard and answered. Giving an answer for our hope. Noah and Christ. Baptism saves us.

Chapter 4 – Christ suffered for us. Therefore, let us live for Him. Sinners astonished at purity of Christians. Genuine hospitality. Speaking as the oracles of God. Persecution will come to Christians. The name Christian (Isa. 62:1-2; Acts 11:26; 26:28). We must obey the gospel (v.

17; Rom. 1:16; 6:16-17; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Chapter 5 – Elders’ duty as shepherds. The chief Shepherd (v. 4; 2:25; Heb. 13:20). Need for humility. Cast all care upon the Lord. Withstand Satan. The true grace of God.

Leading words in First Peter:

(1) “Precious” – Seven precious things are mentioned in this and Second Peter: the trial of our faith (1:7), the blood of Christ (1:19), the living stone (2:4), Christ, Himself (2:6), “preciousness” (2:7), meek and quiet spirit (3:4), “like precious faith” (II Peter. 1:1), and divine promises (II Peter 1:4).

(2) “Hope” appears several times (1:3, 13, 21; 3:15). Paul is the Apostle of Faith, John the Apostle of Love and Peter the Apostle of Hope.

(3) Peter is great on election (1:2; 2:9), foreknowledge (1:2, 20), and the Godhead (1:2).

(4) Salvation and saved (1:5, 9-10; 3:20-21; 4:18).

(5) Our redemption through Christ’s suffering is a major topic (1:2, 18-19; 2:21, 24; 3:18; 4:1).

(6) Joy and rejoicing (1:6, 8; 4:13).

(7) Love (1:8, 22; 2:17; 3:8, 10).

(8) Faith and believe (1:5, 7, 9, 21; 2:6-7; 5:9).

(9) Submission and subjection (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5).

(10) Well doing (2:15; 3:17; 4:19).

III. GREAT MESSAGES OF FIRST PETER

The true grace of God – In stating the purpose of this epistle, Peter wrote, “I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (I Peter 5:12). His purpose is to exhort and testify, his subject, “the true grace of God,” and his appeal, “to stand fast therein.” He began with the familiar Jewish greeting, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1:2). The prophets foretold the grace of God that provided salvation (1:10) and it was supplied by the coming of Christ

and his work of redemption (1:12-13). The God of all grace has “called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (5:10). He gives grace to the humble (5:5). Christian wives are joint heirs together with their husbands of “the grace of life” (3:7). Those who had spiritual gifts were to minister “the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (4:10). The central theme of the epistle is the grace of God, by which we are saved (Eph. 2:8), that brings salvation to all men through the gospel (Titus 2:11-12), and that is sufficient for all (II Cor. 12:9).

Things Peter had learned – In his epistles Peter used many things that he had learned from Christ. This takes nothing away from his full, divine inspiration (II Peter 1:21). References to the influence of Christ’s teaching upon Peter’s writing in First Peter include the following:

- (1) God is no respecter of persons (1:17; Acts 10:15, 34).
- (2) Christ, the rock, the chief cornerstone (2:4-8; Matt. 16:18).
- (3) Rock of offense (2:8; Matt. 16:23).
- (4) Obedience to law (2:13-16; Matt. 17:24-27).
- (5) Christ, the good shepherd (2:25; John 10:11).
- (6) Forgiveness (4:8; Matt. 18:28-35).
- (7) Lessons from Noah’s day (3:20; Matt. 24:37).
- (8) Crown of glory (5:4; Matt. 19:28).
- (9) Feeding the flock of God (5:2; John 21:15-17).
- (10) Clothed with humility (5:5; John 13:4-5, 13-15).
- (11) Satan our adversary (5:8; Luke 22:31).
- (12) Believing in Him whom we have not seen (1:8; John 20:29).
- (13) Commit soul to God (4:19; Luke 23:46).
- (14) Peter’s exhorting the brethren (5:12; Luke 22:32).

Peter’s loyalty to Christ – To this great apostle, everything depends upon Christ. His coming brought salvation through the gospel (1:7-13). We are redeemed by the blood of Christ (1:18-19). He bore “our sins in his own body on the tree” (2:24). He left us an example in His

suffering for us (2:21; 3:18; 4:13). By the resurrection of Christ, God begat us unto a living hope (1:3-4, ASV). Christ is exalted with eternal glory at the right hand of God, and we should glorify Him in all things (3:22; 4:11; 5:11). He is the precious, living stone, the chief corner stone of the church (2:4-8). We must cling to Christ's teaching in all things, by our obedience to the gospel (3:21; Mark 16:15-16), submission to civil authority (2:13-19), respect for elders (5:1-5), by having fervent love for one another (1:22; 3:8; 4:8), by our humility (5:5), and by our spiritual development (2:2).

God's own people – The church is God's spiritual house, in which every Christian is a living stone. It is a holy priesthood, with every Christian a priest (2:5, 9). We are a peculiar people (2:9), or "a people for God's own possession" (ASV). Before the church began, God had no such people, but now Christians are the people of God (2:10). God no longer has a chosen race, as were the Jews in the former dispensation, but now all members of the church are "a chosen generation" (2:9), "one new man," one body, the church, "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:15-16, 21-22).

Our calling unto holy living – As a holy nation, a holy priesthood, we must be holy in all manner of living, as He who called us is holy (1:15-16; 2:5, 9). We must be obedient children (1:14), abstaining from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having a behavior that befits our calling, showing forth the praises of God (2:9, 11-12). The word, "church," means the "called out" (Greek, **ekklesia**). We are called by the gospel (II Thess. 2:14), called "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9), from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16).

Our hope – Hope is the keynote of First Peter. We are begotten "unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible,

and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1:3-5). Our faith and hope are in God (1:21). We must "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you" (3:15). It is the one hope (Eph. 4:4), laid up in heaven (Col. 1:5), heard in the gospel (Col. 1:5), the hope of salvation (I Thess. 5:8), the good hope (II Thess. 2:16), blessed hope (Titus 2:13), an anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), and the hope by which we are saved (Rom. 8:24). It is only for those who continue in the faith and are "not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6). Only those who live and die in Christ have this hope (Rev. 14:13; I Thess. 4:13). The rest will be punished with everlasting destruction (II Thess. 1:7-9). These have no hope at all, but will be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil, for all evil-doers, and "whosoever was not found written in the book of life" (Rev. 20:15; 21:8).

Peter and the Old Testament – There are more quotations from the Old Testament in First Peter, proportionately, than in any other book of the New Testament. The Old Testament is reflected in references to sprinkling of blood, election, inheritance, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, God's own people, temple, altar, and sacrifice. Some of these are:

- (1) "Proved by fire" (1:7; Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10).
- (2) Salvation for which prophets searched (1:10-12; Dan. 12:8-9).
- (3) "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1:16; Lev. 11:44-45).
- (4) Sojourners (1:17; 2:11; Lev. 25:23; Psalm 39:12; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 11:8-9, 13, 16).
- (5) Lamb without spot (1:19; Exod. 12:5; Lev. 9:3).
- (6) The living word (1:23; Dan. 6:26).
- (7) "All flesh is as grass" (1:24-25; Isa. 40:6-9).
- (8) "Tasted that the Lord is gracious" (2:3; Psalm 34:8).
- (9) Holy priesthood (2:5; Isa. 61:6; 66:21).

- (10) The precious cornerstone (2:6; Isa. 28:16).
- (11) The rejected stone (2:7; Psalm 118:22).
- (12) The stone of stumbling (2:8; Isa. 8:14).
- (13) God's chosen people (2:9; Deut 10:15; Isa. 43:20-21).
- (14) Darkness into light (2:10; Isa. 42:16).
- (15) Not a people, now the people of God (2:10; Hosea 1:10; 2:23).
- (16) The day of visitation (2:12; Isa. 10:3).
- (17) Fear God, Honor the king (2:17; Prov. 24:21).
- (18) No guile in his mouth (2:22; Isa. 53:9)
- (19) "Reviled not again" (2:23; Isa. 53:7).
- (20) Bore our sins (2:24; Isa 53:4).
- (21) "Sheep going astray" (2:25; Isa. 53:6).
- (22) Sarah called Abraham, Lord (3:6; Gen. 18:12).
- (23) Outward adorning (3:3; Isa. 3:18-24).
- (24) "For he that will love life..." (3:10-12; Psalm 34:12-16).
- (25) Followers of good (3:13; Psalm 16:7).
- (26) The days of Noah (3:20; Gen. 6:3-22).
- (27) Eight souls saved by water (3:20; Gen. 8:18).
- (28) "Love covereth a multitude of sins" (4:8, ASV; Prov. 10:12).
- (29) Judgment to begin at the house of God (4:17; Jer. 25:29; Ezek. 9:6; Amos 3:2).
- (30) "Righteous scarcely be saved" (4:18; Prov. 11:31).
- (31) Lording it over the flock (5:3; Ezek. 34:3-4).
- (32) "God resisteth the proud" (5:5; Prov. 3:34).

Most difficult passage (Chapter 3:18-20):

In what spirit did Christ preach to disobedient spirits before the flood? What is meant by "prison?" Who are the "spirits," angels or men? What is meant by "preached?" Was it only Noah's generation that was preached to?

Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and raised from the dead by the same Spirit (I Tim. 3:16). He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). His resurrection is ascribed to the Father (Eph. 1:20) and to

Christ Himself (John 2:19; 10:18), but through the agency of the Spirit.

By the Spirit, Christ preached to the spirits in prison. This is the same Spirit who made him alive, because His Spirit inspired Noah to preach, as we see in Genesis 6:3 – “My Spirit shall not always strive with men.” Thus, Noah is called a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5). Also, the Spirit that was in the ancient prophets was the Spirit of Christ (I Peter 1:11). Christ abolished the law, “and came and preached peace to you which were afar off (Gentiles), and to them that are nigh (Jews)” (Eph. 2:15-17). He did not preach personally to the Gentiles, but He did preach to them by His apostles.

The “spirits in prison” were those to whom Christ preached through Noah, those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. “They were men on earth in the flesh when Christ preached to them by His Spirit speaking in Noah; but they are now “spirits in prison,” detained, like the fallen angels (Jude v. 6), “unto the day of the judgment of the great day” (James Macknight, **Apostolic Epistles with Commentary**, p. 620).

Memory verses – The living hope (1:3-4); “be ye holy” (1:15-16); redeemed by the blood of Christ (1:18-19); “ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth” (1:22); born again by the word (1:23); “the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1:24-25); “desire the sincere milk of the word” (2:2); “living stones...an holy priesthood” (2:5); an elect race, a peculiar people (2:9); proper behavior (2:11-12); Christ our example (2:21-22); wives in subjection (3:1-2); husbands honor wives (3:7); turn away from evil (3:10-12); be ready always to give an answer for your hope (3:15); “baptism doth also now save us” (3:21); “if any man suffer as a Christian” (4:16); God resisteth the proud (5:5-6); cast all your care upon him (5:7); your adversary the devil (5:8); the true grace of God (5:12).

Chapter 70

The Second Epistle To Peter

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE

Key words – Peter frequently refers to “the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Knowledge,” especially in its meaning of the full knowledge, or gospel of Christ, which supplies us with all things that pertain unto life and godliness (1:2-4, 5-6, 8; 2:20; 3:18).

Key verses – Chapter 1:2-4; 1:20-21; 3:9-11, 18 –

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons

ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Key phrase – “The day of the Lord.”

Key chapter – Chapter 1 –

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ...

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...

Message – The all sufficiency of the word of God is the theme of this book. The inspired scriptures are the source of the full knowledge of Christ, the gospel of salvation, of all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and of the precious and exceeding great promises of God. The subject: the Christian’s growth, peril, and hope. Peter wrote this epistle to encourage scattered Christians in spiritual growth, to warn them against false teachers and doctrines, and to re-emphasize their hope by assuring them of the Lord’s return. This three-fold appeal corresponds to the three

chapters of the epistle. Peter shows that the all-sufficient word of God is essential to the Christian's growth, to patience in perils, and to obtaining the hope that is reserved in heaven for the faithful. He thought it right to stir up his readers by putting them in remembrance of these things (Ch. 1:12-13, 15; 3:1-2).

Other significant words – Remembrance is a keynote of this epistle (1:12-13, 15; 3:1-2). Peter also stresses the importance of diligence (1:5, 10; 3:14), and warns against corruption and pollution (1:4; 2:12, 19-20).

II. BACKGROUND OF SECOND PETER

The author – That it was written by Simon Peter, as claimed in Ch. 1:1, must be true, because the author was an apostle (v. 1), who had been one of the three on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:18), and had written an epistle before this to the same people (3:2).

To whom addressed – “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us” (1:1), probably the same ones addressed in the first epistle, the elect scattered throughout Asia Minor.

Date and place of writing – Peter wrote this soon after his first epistle, probably from Babylon, between 64 and 70 A. D.

Theme – Spiritual growth, as seen in each chapter:

Chapter 1 – The ingredients of spiritual growth (v. 5-11).

Chapter 2 – Opponents of spiritual growth – false teachers, false doctrine, false attitudes, false promises, and false living.

Chapter 3 – Motivation for spiritual growth – the coming of Christ (v. 10-14).

Chapter 3:18 – The necessity of growing in grace and knowledge of Christ.

Main points of each chapter:

Chapter One – Like precious faith (v. 1); divine

knowledge supplies all things needful for life and godliness (v. 3), and His precious, exceeding great promises (v. 4); partakers of divine nature (v. 4); add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (v. 5-7); make your calling and election sure (v. 10); barren and unfruitful or an abundant entrance (v. 8-11); put you in remembrance (v. 12-15); eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty (v. 16-18); a more sure word of prophesy (v. 19); true inspiration, holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit (v. 20-21).

Chapter two – False prophets and false teachers (v. 1-2); they make merchandise of you and bring destruction upon themselves (v. 3-4); wicked men reserved for punishment, and the godly delivered out of temptation (v. 4-10); Noah, a preacher of righteousness (v. 5); the presumptuous purposes and rewards of the ungodly (v. 11-16); Baalam (v. 15); the deceitfulness and false promises of the false teachers (v. 17-19); the tragedy of turning away from Christ (v. 20-22).

Chapter three – The second coming of Christ (v. 1-10); mockers and scoffers (v. 1-4); the earth, once destroyed by the flood, now reserved by the word of God for destruction, with the heavens, by fire in the day of judgment (v. 5-7); “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise” (v. 8-9); the day of the Lord and the destruction of the heavens and the earth (v. 10-11); “what manner of persons ought ye to be” (v. 11-13); new heavens and a new earth (v. 13-14); “beloved brother Paul” (v. 15); wresting the scriptures (v. 16); beware lest ye fall (v. 17); grow in grace and knowledge (v. 18).

Comparison to First Peter – Peter wrote his first epistle to encourage Christians under trial and persecution, while in the second he warned them against false teachers and their corrupt and corrupting doctrines. In the first, Christ's suffering, death, resurrection and ascension are frequently mentioned to sustain Christians in their trials. In the second, there is no mention of these things, but in

order to counteract the influence of false teaching, great emphasis is laid upon the word of God and the certainty of the fulfillment of the divine promises. The lamp of truth shines in the darkness of error and corruption (II Peter 1:19). Peter wrote the first letter to console, the second to warn. In the first, he said much about suffering, in the second, much about error. As noted in the study of First Thessalonians, both I and II Thessalonians deal with the second coming of Christ. Similarly, I and II Peter point to the “day of the Lord,” the final judgment.

Second Peter and Jude – There is a remarkable similarity between II Peter, Chapter 2, and the epistle of Jude. How may we account for these parallels? Probably Jude wrote later than Peter did, and in order to show that some of the things that Peter had foretold had now come to pass. Thus, Peter said, “There shall be false teachers,” (2:1), while Jude uses the tense, “there are” (v. 4), showing that the false teachers and other matters which Peter warned were then at work in the church.

All sufficiency of the Word – There are several similarities between II Peter and II Timothy, at the writing of which, both Peter and Paul expected soon to die for Christ’s sake (II Tim. 4:6; II Peter 1:14). The heart of both epistles is the teaching that the scriptures are divinely inspired, perfect, and all sufficient for every spiritual need of man. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Tim. 3:16). Through the knowledge of Christ, God has “given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” and “his precious and exceeding great promises” (II Peter 1:3-4, ASV). The inspired scripture “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17). Every Christian must “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter

3:18). We must “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (II Peter 3:2). Similarly, Paul charged Timothy to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (II Tim. 4:2). “There shall be false teachers among you” (II Peter 2:1). “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers; having itching ears” (II Tim. 4:3).

Words peculiar to Second Peter – “Like precious” (1:1); “cannot see afar off” (1:9); “day-star” (1:19); “interpretation” (1:20); “feigned” (2:3); “Tartarus” (footnote) and “chains” (2:4); “sporting” (2:13); “madness” (2:16); “vomit” (2:22); “wallowing” (2:22); “great (rushing) noise” (3:10); “fervent heat” (3:10, 12); “hard to be understood” (3:16); “unstable” (2:14; 3:16); “steadfastness” (3:17).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM SECOND PETER

Grace – Peter wrote his first epistle to testify of the “true grace of God” and to appeal to his readers to “stand ye fast therein” (I Peter 5:12, ASV). His salutation in both epistles is “grace, and peace, be multiplied unto you.” In the second, he gives the means of this grace, “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (1:2). He closes with the command to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18). We should make it our primary aim to grow daily in God’s favor (Luke 2:52) and to please God in all things (Col. 1:10).

Diligence – Peter enjoins Christians to be diligent. This means to be earnest and zealous. Give diligence to add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (1:5-7); “to make your calling and election sure” (1:10), and to be “found of him in peace, without spot and blameless” (3:14). “Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him

hath written unto you" (3:15), to "study (give diligence, ASV) to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (handling aright) the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

Parallel between II Timothy and II Peter:

(1) Both writers refer to the fact that his end is near (II Tim. 4:6; II Peter 1:14).

(2) The prevalence of false teaching (II Tim. 3:13; 4:3; II Peter 2:1).

(3) Corruption of the world invading the church (II Tim. 3:1-7; II Peter 2:10-22).

(4) The coming apostasies (II Tim. 4:3-4; II Peter 2:2, 20-22).

(5) The perfection and finality of God's word (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3-4).

Spiritual growth – It is sad that many have no works perfected before God (Rev. 3:2). We must work the works of God (Phil. 2:12-13) in order for Him to perfect us into the image of Christ (Phil. 1:6; Col. 3:10). Unfruitful Christians are cast aside as a barren branch (John 15:6). Our chief purpose is to perfect "holiness in the fear of the Lord" (II Cor. 7:1). Peter shows that we must go on unto perfection (Heb. 6:1) by growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). The ingredients of spiritual growth are faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. These seven divine qualities are the fruits of the precious faith (1:1, 8) like the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and are the steps from earth to heaven, starting in obedient faith and culminating in everlasting love in the eternal home of God.

If we fail to add these graces, we will be spiritually barren. "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). This means to continue to obey the teachings of Christ, because faith comes from His word (Rom. 10:17). Virtue denotes intrinsic eminence, or moral goodness. It is from a Greek word that is translated "praises" (excellencies, ASV) in I Peter 2:9,

and “virtue” elsewhere (II Peter 1:3, 5; Phil. 4:8). Knowledge refers to the inspired scriptures, the source of all spiritual teaching (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3). Temperance means self control. Patience results from trusting God while enduring trials of our faith (James 1:2-4; 5:11). Godliness means to do God’s will, to please God in all things, to be holy as He is holy (Matt. 7:21; II Cor. 5:9; I Peter 1:16). Brotherly kindness is a beautiful attribute that binds Christians closer to each other and helps us strengthen one another (Psalm 133:1; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:1-4). Love is the crowning trait, the mark of excellence, the perfection of godliness, the greatest of all divine qualities (I Cor. 13:13; Col. 3:14; I John 4:7-8). Without love, we are nothing (I Cor. 13:1-3). Let us all give diligence to add all these spiritual traits in order to make our calling and election sure and to be granted entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Do not neglect God’s Word – In his first epistle, Peter spoke of the word of God as the source of spiritual birth (1:23) and the means of growth (2:2). Knowledge of the word is our safeguard against falling and our source of spiritual growth and steadfastness. In his second epistle, Peter emphasizes the knowledge of Christ as the foundation of our precious faith (1:1), the medium of grace and peace (1:2), of all things that pertain to life and godliness (1:3), one of the means by which we make our calling and election sure (1:5, 10), keep ourselves pure and overcome the defilements of the world (2:19-20). “Grow in knowledge” is the closing exhortation of the epistle (3:18). Since all authentic knowledge about Christ is contained in the inspired scriptures, Peter’s farewell warning is, “Don’t neglect God’s word.”

Gospel testimony sure – Critics of the truth were calling the story of Jesus and His mighty works, “cunningly devised fables” (1:16). Not only was the message divinely inspired (1:21), but Peter for three years had seen with his

own eyes, and he knew that what he told about Jesus was true. He was with Jesus at His transfiguration, and had seen Jesus heal the sick, blind, and lame, walk on water, still the storm, and three times raise the dead. He saw Jesus alive after the crucifixion. With the other apostles, he could testify that “which we heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (I John 1:1). With them he had received the baptismal power of the Holy Spirit and after Pentecost, in Jesus’ name, Peter did many miracles (Acts 5:15), and even raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40). All this confirmed in detail the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah, “a more sure word of prophecy,” the word of holy men of God who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:19-21).

Warnings of apostasy – Warnings of the coming of false teachers occur again and again in the New Testament. Jesus warned of ravening wolves who would come in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15), and lead many astray (Matt. 24:11). Paul warned of grievous wolves who would arise in the church, speaking perverse things (Acts 20:29-30). Paul predicted also that there would be in the church a falling away of momentous magnitude and Satanic nature (II Thess. 2:1-12). He foretold the rise to church leadership of ungodly men, traitors and hypocrites, who, while holding a form of godliness would fill the church with doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:1-9). Jude wrote mainly to warn of a deadly trend toward apostasy which he saw arising in the church (Jude 4-9).

Peter, in his first epistle, wrote to encourage the church to bear up under persecution from without. In the second epistle, he cautions the church to guard against corruption from within. He warns of coming apostasy, as being in the future (2:1), yet he implies that false teachers were already at work within the church. He speaks of their destructive heresies (2:1), their pernicious ways (2:2), their covetousness

(2:3), their walking in lust (2:10), brute beasts (2:12), eyes full of adultery (2:14), servants (slaves) of corruption (2:19). These expressions are used here as referring, not to the world, but to leaders within the church. One of the worst of sins is to corrupt the church by foisting lies, in the name of Christ, upon the unlearned in substitution for inspired truth. Even now, as in the apostolic generation, the devil succeeds in corrupting the moral and doctrinal purity of the church, through his counterfeit “ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:15). Let all false teachers take warning from God’s punishment of fallen angels (II Peter 2:4), the world of Noah’s day (v. 5), and Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6).

Remember the Lord’s coming – The false teachers imperiled the church by denying the Master (2:2) and by denying His second coming (3:3-4). Remembering His coming is a constant encouragement to faithfulness and spiritual growth. Peter wrote to put his readers in remembrance of the truth (1:12-15) and of the words of the holy prophets and of the apostles concerning Christ’s coming (3:2). In regularly observing the Lord’s supper, we remember the blessings he procured for us in His death, as we look forward to His coming again (I Cor. 11:24-25; Heb. 9:26). As we add the divine attributes, we remember our cleansing from sin, make our calling and election sure, and anticipate our entrance into the eternal kingdom (II Peter 1:5-11).

In answer to those who scoffed at the promise of the Lord’s coming (3:3-4), Peter assured his readers that the Lord will come (v. 10), although he may delay His return in the proportion of a thousand years to one day (v. 8). God does not count time as man does, but will keep his promises according to his own plan. The day of the Lord will be a day of destruction of the ungodly, as in the days of Noah (v. 7). The earth will be destroyed, not by water, but by fire, when the heavens and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (3:10). The striking phrases,

“kept in store, reserved unto fire” (v. 7) and “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise” (v. 10), are found only in this passage. God’s people will be delivered from the final holocaust, and for them there will be new heavens and a new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (v. 12-13).

Remembering these things should prompt us to holy living and godliness (11, 14). The living hope sustains us in our many trials and encourages us to be sober, obedient, and holy in life (I Peter 1:3, 13-15). Considering our victory over death, through Christ, constrains us to “be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:57-58). To those who so respond to the remembrance of the Lord’s coming there shall be ministered abundant entrance “into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:11).

Graphic words – Peter uses several vivid expressions. Examples in I Peter are “to look,” to stoop down to get a good view (1:12), as used literally in Luke 24:12 and John 20:5, 11, and metaphorically here and in James 1:25, of looking into the perfect law of liberty; “to silence,” properly “to muzzle” (2:15); “buffeted,” slapped with the hand (2:20); “be clothed,” robed as a slave for hard work (5:5).

In II Peter: “Blind,” to be near-sighted, from which we get our word myopia, found only here (1:9); the body as the “tabernacle” of the soul (1:13-14); “feigned,” fabricated words, from which we get our word, plastic (2:3); “vexed,” tormented (2:8); “great noise,” hurtling or whistling of an arrow, rushing sound, as of roaring flames (3:10); “wrest,” to twist or turn as on a rack (3:16).

Memory verses – The knowledge of Christ (1:3-4); divine qualities (1:5-7); calling and election sure (1:8-11); inspired word (1:19-21); false teachers (2:1); fallen angels (2:4); tragedy of falling away (2:20-22); heavens and earth stored up for fire (3:7); the day of the Lord (3:8-10); manner of life (3:11); new heavens and new earth (3:12-13); grow in grace and knowledge (3:18).

Chapter 71

The First Epistle of John

I. KEYS TO FIRST JOHN

1. **Key words** – Fellowship, know, and love.
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 1:7; 4:7-9, 14; 5:3-4:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1:7).

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him...And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (4:7-9, 14).

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (5:3-4).

3. **Key phrase** – “Not love in word...but in deed and in truth” (3:18).
4. **Key chapter** – Chapter 1–

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with

the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness... (1:1-10).

5. **Subject** – The theme of this epistle is fellowship with God and Christ (1:3). God is life (1:1-2), light (1:5), and righteous love (4:8). His character calls for holy living (1:6-7), and brotherly love (3:17-18; 4:20), on the part of believers. Christ is our pattern of light, as the sinless one (2:6), and our pattern of love, as the selfless one (4:10). The proof and fruits of the life of fellowship are joy (1:4), victory over sin (2:1; 3:9; 5:4), perfected love (4:12), confidence in prayer (5:14-15), and assurance of eternal life (5:11).

6. **Appeal** – Christians must walk both in light and love. The life of fellowship with God is a life of walking in the light of truth. It is the life of righteousness, love of God and not love of the world, of brotherly love, of faith, certainty, safety, victory, joy and eternal life.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (2:3-6).

Writer – The apostle John.

II. BACKGROUND OF FIRST JOHN

Place and date. Both uncertain, probably from Ephesus, about 90 A. D.

To whom addressed. Apparently to the churches of Asia and to the church at large, as it has no greetings or other personal allusions. Since it has no quotations from the Old Testament, but a warning against idolatry (5:21), the readers were probably converts from heathenism. John addressed them affectionately, as “little children” (2:1, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), and as “beloved” (3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11).

Purposes. John mentions several reasons for writing this epistle to them: (1) To add to their joy (1:4); (2) to guard them against sin (2:1); (3) to confirm the truth that the faithful have overcome the evil one (2:12-14); (4) to warn them against false teachers (2:21, 26), and (5) to strengthen their faith in Christ and assure them of eternal life (5:13).

The author. John was a fisherman in Bethsaida with his brother, James, and their father, Zebedee, and they were partners with Simon (Luke 5:10; John 1:40). He was a follower of John the Baptist and one of the first two disciples called by Jesus (John 1:35-40). He was one of the first four apostles called and one of the three privileged apostles (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 5:37; Matt. 17:1; 26:37). John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He and his brother were called *Boanerges*, “the sons of thunder,” but by the power of the gospel of grace, he was transformed into the gentle apostle of love. He was one of the three pillars in the church (Gal. 2:9), the last of the apostles to leave the stage of the apostolic story, after a meaningful life that spanned the first century. John lived for many years in Ephesus before his exile to Patmos (Rev. 1:10), where, according to tradition, he died, the only apostle to escape martyrdom. He wrote five books of the New Testament, more than any other writer with the exception of Paul, who wrote 13.

John's books. The five books of John have a central teaching: Eternal life is in Christ, as shown by the key message of each book.

(1) The Gospel of John – God gives eternal life to those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (3:16; 20:30-31), and who are faithful in the life of fellowship with Christ (10:27-28, 15:5-6; 14:23-24; 17:21-22).

(2) I John – The life of fellowship in Christ is a life of light (1:7) and a life of love (4:7-8). Life is in the Son (5:11-12).

(3) II John – The life of fellowship with God is a life that abides in the teaching of Christ (vv. 9-10).

(4) III John – The life of fellowship is a life that walks in the truth (v. 4) and follows that which is good (v. 11).

(5) Revelation – The life of fellowship is a life of victory in Christ (2:10; 3:5, 21; 14:13; 19:9; 21:6-7; 22:14, 17).

John's style. Simplicity of language and majesty of thought are uniquely united in John's writings. John uses common words, such as "word," "life," "light," "love," "truth," and "know," to express sublime truths too profound for philosophers to fathom. He takes a word and plays upon it, then passes to another, and to yet another, as for example: "fellowship" (1:3, 6-7); "if we" (1:6-10); "keep" and "commandment" (2:3-4, 5, 7-8); "darkness" (2:8-9, 11); "I write" and "have written" (2:12-14); "world" (2:15-17); "abide" or "remain" and "continue" (2:24-28); "sin" and "sins" (3:5-9); "love" (3:10-18; 4:7-12, 16-21; 5:1-3); "we know" (5:15, 18-20). John's colors are black and white; there is no grey. He thinks in terms of ultimate contrasts, such as life and death, truth and falsehood, love and hate, light and darkness, righteousness and sin, the Father and the world, children of God and children of the devil.

John's writings are a valuable complement to those of the other inspired writers. Paul, the major penman, compared to John is human and practical, while John is idealistic and conclusive. Paul dwells on faith, hope, and

love. John treats of life, love, and light. Paul begins with men as they are and builds them up into what they should be, full grown in Christ. John begins with God, who in Christ became man, that man might know God and find eternal life in him.

Analysis. In this epistle, as in the gospel of John, God is revealed in Christ as light, love and life, and the believer is related to the God thus revealed, as in the following outline:

(1) God is light (1:5-2:29), and the Christian must walk in that light (1:5-2:11), while avoiding the hindrances to walking in the light, of sin and false teaching (2:12-29).

(2) God is love (3:1-4:21), and the Christian must reject sin, hate, and error, which negate love (3:1-4:6), while perfecting love, which destroys evil (4:7-21).

(3) God is life (5:1-20), and the Christian's proof of his possession of eternal life is his victorious, obedient faith (5:1-5) and the certainty of divinely inspired spiritual knowledge (5:6-20).

(4) Conclusion (5:21).

This analysis "corresponds to the prologue of the gospel (1:1-18), where the life is revealed (vv. 1-5), the light is displayed (vv. 6-13), and the love is expressed (vv. 14-18). Then, in John chapters 1:9-12:50, God as life is revealed to the world, in chapters 13-17, God as light is revealed to the disciples; and in chapters 18-20, God as love is revealed to all. These are the ultimate realities, and it was given to 'the beloved disciple,'...to make this final contribution to Holy Scripture, and so to crown divine revelation" (W. G. Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 347-348).

Main thoughts. The theme of I John, "fellowship with God," is given in the introduction (1:1-4), and continues throughout the book.

(1) God is light, and our fellowship with him depends upon our walking in the light of his word and purity (1:5-2:28).

(2) God is righteous, and our fellowship with him depends upon our doing righteousness (2:29-4:6).

(3) God is love, and our fellowship with him depends upon our having and manifesting a spirit of love (4:7-5:3).

(4) God is faithful, and our fellowship with him depends upon our exercising faith in him (5:4-12).

(5) God is true, and our fellowship depends upon our abiding in truth (5:13-21).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM FIRST JOHN

Fellowship. One of the great privileges of Christians is their fellowship with the Father, with Christ, and with fellow-believers (1:3, 7). This life of fellowship is the joyful life (1:4), the life of victory over sin (2:1-2), the life guarded from sin and error (2:26; 3:8), and the life of divine knowledge (5:13, 18-20). The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonea*, means communion or joint participation. Thus God has called us “unto the fellowship of his Son” (I Cor. 1:9), united by the common faith (Eph. 4:5), into the one church of which Christ is head, for worshipping the only true God, and receiving from him, through Christ, forgiveness of sins, all spiritual blessings, and eternal happiness in the life to come.

Know. The word, “know,” or its equivalent occurs more than thirty times in this epistle. Therefore it may be called, “the epistle of certainties.” Two words are used in I John for “to know.” One (*oida*) implies the knowledge that comes from without, that which is revealed, and this occurs sixteen times. The other (*ginosko*) expresses knowledge existing in the mind from experience, and this word occurs twenty-five times. The relation of the two kinds of knowledge is shown in John’s gospel: “If ye know (*oida*) these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (13:17); and, “if any man will to do his will, he shall know (*ginosko*) of the doctrine” (7:17). Both in the gospel and in his epistles, John’s object is to get our perception of spiritual truth deepened into the practice

of it. His chief purpose was to tell his readers how they might know that they have eternal life (I John 5:13).

Passages in which the word, "know," occurs are: Ch. 2:3, 5, 13, 14, 20, 21, 29; Ch. 3:2, 5, 14, 15, 19, 24; Ch. 4:2, 6, 13, 16; Ch. 5:2, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20.

Some important things that we know:

(1) That a righteous life is evidence of regeneration – 2:29; 5:18.

(2) That we shall be like Christ at his coming – 3:2.

(3) That Christ came to take away our sins – 3:5.

(4) That brotherly love indicates that we have passed from death to life – 3:14.

(5) That he abideth in us by the witness of the Spirit, through the word – 3:24.

(6) That we have eternal life – 5:13.

(7) That our prayers are answered – 5:15.

Love and sin. One of the main subjects of I John is the relationship of the love of God and the sinfulness of man. Only when we see the beauty of divine love against the black background of man's sin can we appreciate the greatness and glory of God's love for the sinner in giving his only begotten Son for our salvation. John treats the topics of love and sin in these passages.

Love. (1) God's love to sinners (4:9-10); (2) that love shown in our being "sons of God" (3:1); (3) why we ought to love one another (4:11; 3:11, 23); (4) what our love proves (3:14); (5) one who loves not is of the devil (3:10); (6) why we love God (4:19); (7) what love of the world proves (2:15-17); (8) how the love of God is perfected in us (2:5); (9) the result of mature love (4:18); (10) God is both light and love (1:5; 4:8, 16).

Sin. (1) Sin is universal (1:8, 10; Rom. 3:23); (2) definitions: sin is transgression of the law (3:4) and unrighteousness (5:17); (3) Christ came to take away sin (2:2; 3:5, 8; 4:10); (4) his blood cleanses us from all sin (1:7); (5) the erring Christian must confess his sins (1:9); (6) sins

forgiven for his name's sake (2:12); (7) we must not sin habitually (2:1, 3:8-9); (8) the secret of overcoming sin is "abiding" (3:6) and "keeping" oneself (5:18).

The new birth. In the Gospel of John, Jesus explained the new birth as one's being "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:3-5). This is the baptism of a penitent believer, in obedience of the gospel, which is the message inspired by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:3-4, I Peter 1:22; 3:21; II Peter 1:21). In his first epistle, John explains the evidences and results of the new birth. (1) "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin..." (3:9; 5:18); (2) "loveth" (4:7); (3) "...believeth that Jesus is the Christ..." (5:1); (4) "...overcometh the world..." (5:4); and (5) "...doeth righteousness..." (2:29).

Gnosticism. Earlier New Testament writers warned of the perils both of Judaism and paganism, which John groups together as "the world" (I John 2:15-17). False teachers now making inroads into the church were the Gnostics (knowing ones), who boasted that they alone had the true knowledge and ridiculed those who held to the apostolic faith. This sect admitted the Deity of Jesus, but denied his humanity, and held other heretical views. This false teaching centered on the idea that while God created the spirit of man, the body was created by the devil, and therefore all flesh was inherently evil. According to this view, the Son of God could not have come in the flesh, for Jesus could not have lived in the flesh without sin, and any bodily form his disciples thought they saw was only an apparition or vision. In answer to these false teachers, John has much to say about true knowledge and affirms the humanity of Christ. He confirms that the Christ was one whom the apostles had seen with their eyes and with their hands had handled (1:1-2). John denounced as deceivers and anti-christs those who denied Christ's humanity (4:2, 3; II John 7). He declared that these false teachers did not have a monopoly of knowledge, but that the inspired penmen had a knowledge not derived, as theirs, from speculation, but from revelation (1:5; 2:20, 27).

Child of God cannot sin. All the books of the New Testament, after Acts, were written to encourage Christians to remain faithful and to overcome sin. In this epistle, John states clearly that no one is sinless (1:7-10) and that a brother may sin even “unto death” (5:16). He encourages us to sin not, but assures us that when we sin, “...we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins...” (2:1-2). The phrase, “he cannot sin,” cannot mean that it is impossible for Christians to commit iniquity. Ideally, Christians ought not to sin. One who is in Christ will not be an habitual sinner. He will cease the practice of sin and will be devoted to doing the will of God (Rom. 6:1-23). When the child of God does sin, he must come back to the Father through Christ’s blood, as he repents, confesses his sin and prays for forgiveness (Acts 8:17-24). The scriptures neither teach that it is impossible for Christians to sin, nor that God simply will not count our transgressions as sins. God does not impute, or reckon, our past sins after they are forgiven (Rom. 4:7-8; Heb. 8:12), but there is no automatic cleansing, or God’s winking at, our sins. The promise of continued cleansing is for those who continue to walk in the light (I John 1:7), who abide in the Father (3:6), who keep his commandments (2:4; 3:22; 5:3, 14), and in whom the seed, the word of God, remains (2:24; 3:9) to keep us from sinning (Psa. 119:11).

If our heart condemn us (3:19-21). The meaning of heart in this passage is conscience, and refers to a properly taught and informed heart, or mind. One should always strive to have a good conscience (I Tim. 1:5) that will prompt one to respond immediately in obedience to the truth (I Peter 3:21). God is a more perfect judge than our conscience and will condemn us if we act contrary to his will, even if our conscience approves (Acts 23:1; 26:9). We should in all of our actions and motives have the approval both of God and our conscience.

The sin unto death (5:16). Christ cleanses all sins of

those who repent and do his will. The meaning here seems to be that we are neither to pray for the forgiveness of the obstinate brother who continues to sin and gives no evidence of repentance, nor for the one who has continued to sin until he dies. There is no forgiveness after death (Heb. 9:27; Luke 16:26).

The divine witness (5:6-9). As it reads in the King James Version, verse 7 is omitted wholly, or in part, in revised versions. This does not change the truth that there are three persons in the Godhead (Matt. 28:19; Acts 17:29; Col. 2:9), and that the three agree as one (John 16:13-15). The witness, or testimony, is that of God (I John 5:9). He bore witness to the Deity of Jesus by the water (Jesus' baptism), the blood (his crucifixion), and the Spirit, who descended upon Jesus from heaven (John 1:32). Now God bears witness on earth by the Spirit (the scriptures inspired by the Spirit, II Peter 1:21), the water (baptism in the name of Christ, Acts 2:38), and the blood (observance of the Lord's supper, I Cor. 11:25-26). By these three, God bears witness that he has "given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (I John 5:11).

Highest Privilege (3:1-3). One of the highest expressions of God's love to Christians is that they should be *called* the children of God, and such they really are. Even more sublime is the thought that we shall be like Christ when we "see him as he is." This blessed hope should move us to purify ourselves, as he is pure. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1).

Answered prayer. We have confidence that God will hear and answer our prayers when we keep his commandments and pray according to his will (I John 3:22; 5:14-15). Other essentials to acceptable prayer are faith (James 1:5), praying fervently (James 5:16), unselfish spirit (James 4:3), righteous life (I Peter 3:10-12), praying in

Christ's name (John 14:13; Col. 3:17), a forgiving spirit (Matt. 6:14), praying without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17), with thanksgiving (v. 18), for all men (I Tim. 2:1-2), to the glory and praise of God (Matt. 6:9; Eph. 3:20-21).

Notable verses. 1:4, 7, 8, 9; 2:1, 3, 6, 12, 15-17; 3:1-3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 22; 4:1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19; 5:3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (I John 2:15-17).

Chapter 72

The Second Epistle of John

I. KEYS TO SECOND JOHN

1. **Key words** – Truth and love.
2. **Key verses** – vv. 3, 9.

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love (v. 3).

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (v. 9).

3. **Key phrase** – The doctrine (teaching) of Christ.
4. **Message** – The theme is truth, which occurs five times, and love, which occurs four times. The word of God is truth (John 17:17), the subject of all teaching and preaching that is pleasing to God. We must know the truth, abide in the truth, love the truth, walk in truth, defend the truth, and teach the truth in love. All persons who would please God and be blessed of him must receive and obey the truth, and only the truth at all costs.

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (vv. 10-11).

II. BACKGROUND OF SECOND JOHN

The writer. Internal evidence confirms the view that the apostle John wrote this epistle, who here refers to himself as “the elder” (v. 1). Of the 13 verses in II John, eight are found in substance in the first epistle.

Date and place of writing. We cannot know certainly, but evidence points to John's writing II John from Ephesus, around 90-91 A. D.

To whom addressed. "Unto the elect lady and her childre," may refer to a certain church, or the church in general, or to an individual. The simplest and most natural interpretation is that this letter was written to a now unknown lady and her children. Apparently, John had visited her sister and there had met children of the elect lady (vv. 4, 13). Delighted to find them living faithful lives, he wrote this note to their mother, taking the opportunity to add some words of warning against heresy and association with false teachers (vv. 7-10). This is the only epistle of the New Testament addressed to a woman.

III. DOCTRINES OF SECOND JOHN

Truth and love. God has joined these words together, and they should never be put asunder. They are a recurring theme in the gospel and epistles of John, as in Paul's writings. We must walk in truth, but also in love. "...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Christians are to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). "...let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18). Our love should "...abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1:9).

Obedience. In addition to "truth," and "love," recurring words are "commandment," and "walking." "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments..." (1 John 5:3).

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (I John 2:3-4).

"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments..." (v. 6).

Antichrist. (I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; II John 7). This was

a condemnation of the deceivers who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh, the Gnostics in particular, who were at work in the church during the last quarter of the first century. They denied the humanity of Christ, thus undermining faith in the Son of man, who "...to be made like unto his brethren..." (Heb. 2:17), suffered in the flesh for our sins, and gave mankind our perfect example (Heb. 4:15; I Peter 2:21). Compare John's warnings of "antichrists" with Jesus warning of the rise of "false Christs" (Matt. 24:5, 24), and Paul's description of "the man of sin" (II Thess. 2:1-12).

Warning against false teachers. John cautioned,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

In II John, he says plainly that "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,..." and warns that we must not receive such a false teacher or bid him God-speed (vv. 9-11). The word, "transgresseth" (v. 9, KJV), should read "goeth onward" (ASV), "taketh the lead" or "runs ahead" (NIV). It applies to everyone who goes beyond the gospel. We must not go "above" or "beyond that which is written" (I Cor. 4:6, ASV). It is a sin either to add to or take from God's word (Rev. 22:18-19). The Gnostics boasted of being advanced thinkers. They said that the gospel was for the unenlightened, but that they knew something higher. This agrees with John's warning. "By advancing they did not abide. There is an advance which involves desertion of first principles; and such an advance is not progress but apostasy" (Dr. Plummer, in Scroggie, p. 354). Elders are charged to "convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Deceivers mouths must be stopped (Titus 1:11). It is a tragic mistake for Christians to allow false teachers to pervert the local congregation or other churches by sending them on their way with our recommendation of confidence and good will.

Chapter 73

The Third Epistle of John

I. KEYS TO THIRD JOHN

1. **Key words** – Truth occurs often (six times), as in John's other writings, and "true," once.

2. **Key verse** – verse 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (v. 4).

3. **Key phrase** – "Walk in truth."

4. **Subject** – Christian hospitality is the key-note of this short epistle. Such hospitality, extended in the name of Christ, in truth and love, was both helpful and necessary for the early travelling evangelists. Since the missionaries would take nothing from the Gentiles (v. 7), it is especially beneficial for them to be freely welcomed into the homes of the brethren.

4. **Appeal** – To practice hospitality is a wonderful expression of brotherly love, scripturally enjoined upon all Christians, "...that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth" (v. 8). Those who walk in the truth, as beloved Gaius did, will show hospitality in truth and love.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIRD JOHN

A personal letter. The apostle John, who refers to himself as "the elder," wrote this epistle "unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth" (v. 1). Probably John wrote from Ephesus, in 91 A. D. Three men by the name of Gaius are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament—a Macedonian (Acts 19:29), a Corinthian (I Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23), and another man who lived in Derbe (Acts 20:4). We have no way of knowing whether the one addressed by John is one of these. From this epistle we learn that he was a

genuine Christian, loved by John, a good example to other believers, noted for his hospitality to itinerant preachers. He was well known, possibly well-to-do, whom the apostle hoped shortly to visit.

A pen portrait of three men. This epistle is largely a portrait of three men—Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. John paints bright pictures of Gaius and Demetrius, and a dark one of Diotrephes. The last one seems to have been an elder in an Asiatic church. He repudiated the authority of the elderly apostle, who was probably the only one of the twelve still alive. Diotrephes refused John's writings, failed to receive travelling evangelists, and cast out of the church those who did so (vs. 9-10). In contrast, Demetrius who may have been the bearer of this letter, was worthy to be followed (vs. 11-12), while arrogant Diotrephes set an example to be abhorred and avoided.

Commendation of Gaius. John wrote to commend Gaius for the stand he had taken in receiving messengers of the truth and treating them kindly, to approve him and his work, and to strengthen him in his position. At the same time, John condemned Diotrephes for lording it over the church and using his authority to resist the truth and protect false teaching. He represents the beginning of the fulfillment of Paul's warning that from the elders men would arise, "...speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

III. THE EPISTLE

Characteristics. This is the least book of the Bible, the briefest of the five one-chapter books. It contains 219 words, while John's second epistle has 245 words. Like all of John's writings, it is amazingly profound. At its center are truth, love, walk, church, beloved, and witness, or testimony. Words peculiar to this letter are: "To receive," or "to welcome" (v. 8); "loveth to have the preeminence" (v. 9), and "prating against" (v. 10). The word "friends," as applied

to Christians is peculiar to John (v. 14; John 11:11; 15:13-15).

Outline of Third John.

- (1) Introduction – vv. 1-4.
- (2) Commendation of Gaius – vv. 5-8.
- (3) Condemnation of Diotrephes – vv. 9-10.
- (4) Recommendation of Demetrius – vv. 11-12.
- (5) Conclusion – vv. 13-14.

IV. Great Lessons From Third John

Commendation of Christian love and hospitality.

We should receive our brethren, especially those who give their lives to proclaiming the gospel of salvation, "...that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth" (v. 8). Many other scriptures remind us of the joyful duty of showing hospitality, as Paul's command, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). One of the qualifications of elders is that they be "given to hospitality" (I Tim. 3:2), "a lover of hospitality" (Titus 1:8). The author of Hebrews adds:

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:1-2).

Peter agrees: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (I Peter 4:9).

Authorship. The apostle John, probably from Ephesus, in 91 A. D.

Outstanding truths in III John.

(1) *A prayer for prosperity* (v. 2) – John emphasized the right priorities. He knew how genuinely Gaius' soul prospered. Therefore, he prayed that Gaius' health and well-being would prosper accordingly. Do we dare pray for our prosperity and physical strength to be proportionate to our spiritual condition? What would happen to the size of our houses and bank accounts and to our condition of health if these were limited to our soul's prosperity?

(2) *Walking in the truth* (vv. 3-4) – Every Christian parent who is thinking right will agree with John that no other joy can compare with the realization that our children are walking in the glorious and righteous way of divine truth (II John 4). This is a source of joy, also, for fellow Christians to hear of one another walking in the truth.

(3) *Evidence of godliness* – “...He that doeth good is of God...” (v. 11). One of the chief objects of John’s writings is that we may know God. This assurance is to those who keep God’s commandments (I John 2:3) and who love God and one another (I John 4:20-21; 5:2-3).

Is there a lost epistle? In most versions, III John 9, reads, “I wrote unto the church....” Macknight translates this, “I would have written,” based upon six or seven manuscripts, the Syriac version and the Vulgate. Perhaps John is saying that he would have written to the church, but for Diotrephes’ opposition and his power to suppress the epistle. If John has in mind a former epistle, this could be a reference to I John, rather than to yet another epistle, now lost. As a probable representative of the heresy that John condemns in his first epistle, it would have been natural for Diotrephes to reject the epistle, as well as the messengers who carried it.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Colossians 2:6-7).

Chapter 74

The Epistle Of Jude

I. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

1. **Key words** – “Keep,” or “kept,” are mentioned five times – in verses one and six (ASV), and in verses 21 and 24 (KJV).

2. **Key verses** – vv. 3-4:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 3-4).

3. **Key phrase** – “Contend for the faith.”

4. **Subject** – Keep the faith that God may keep you from stumbling.

5. **Appeal** – Our duty is to keep and defend the faith, and ourselves, against all false teachers, to build ourselves up on the most holy faith, to pray in the Spirit, to keep ourselves in the love of God, to trust in him who is able to keep us from falling, and to look to Christ for eternal life.

Message. Jude’s object in writing was twofold, to instruct his readers in the common salvation, and to warn them of false teachers who had stealthily entered the church and had introduced both doctrinal error and ungodly practices. Jude is one of the strongest statements in the Bible of the peril to faith and salvation from the corrupting influences of false teachers.

II. INTRODUCTION TO JUDE

Author. Jude, the brother of James, who wrote the epistle bearing his name. Both were sons of Joseph and Mary (Matt. 13:55), half-brothers of Jesus, and neither was an apostle.

To whom. Addressed to "...them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (v. 1), it is a general epistle to the church. The many Old Testament references show that Jude had Jewish Christians in view. It seems that the letter was intended primarily for some particular church or locality, where the ungodly teachers were already at work (v. 4).

Date and place. Possibly from Palestine, sometime around 68 A. D. If Jude had written after the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A. D., he would surely have referred to that event as another example of God's punishment of evil doers.

Analysis. Jude may be studied from the viewpoint of the duty and the danger presented in verses 3 and 4, the duty of contending for the faith and the danger of being corrupted by ungodly leaders in the church. Those who are fallen shall be destroyed (vv. 5-7); they are denounced (vv. 8-11), and described (vv. 12-16). Contending for the faith is a Biblical duty (vv. 17-19), a personal duty (vv. 20-21), and a duty of compassion for the lost (vv. 22-23). In order to defend the faith, we must be aware of the enemies of the truth (vv. 17-19); be strong, built up upon the faith (vv. 20-21), and must maintain an evangelistic spirit (vv. 22-23).

Jude's teaching is centered also in the key words, "keep," and "kept." The Lord's people are kept by God for Jesus Christ (vv. 1-2); we must keep and defend the faith (vv. 3-4); those who kept not the way of obedience are kept unto judgment (vv. 5-7); description of the defiled character that results from not keeping the faith (vv. 8-19); the Lord's people must keep themselves in the love of God (vv. 20-23), and God is able to keep them from stumbling (vv. 24-25).

Jude's style of writing. This short epistle is one of the most solemn in the Bible. It gives a history of apostasy from before time to the end of time, dealing with the rebellious angels (provided these were heavenly beings and not earthly messengers, which they could well have been), self-righteous Cain, depraved Sodomites, unfaithful Israel, greedy Balaam, presumptuous Korah, and the apostasy of Jude's day and ours. His style is much like that of James, poetic and vivid. In one of the most graphic passages in the Bible, he speaks of hidden rocks, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, wild waves, and wandering stars (vv. 12-13).

III. MESSAGES FROM JUDE

Jude and II Peter. By comparing Jude 4-16 with II Peter 2:1-18, and Jude 17-18 with II Peter 3:2-3, it is evident that the two epistles are related. Many scholars believe that Jude wrote later than Peter and quoted from his second epistle. The Holy Spirit may have directed Jude to write on the same subject with Peter, even to quote from him, in order to give greater authority to both epistles against the insidious teachers, whose influence was like a cancer threatening the life of the church.

The false teachers. They were "ungodly men," who denied God and Christ (v. 4); "filthy dreamers," who defiled the flesh, despised dominion, and spoke evil of dignitaries (v. 8); brute beasts who corrupted themselves (v. 10), "murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words," who showed respect of persons for the sake of advantage (v. 16). Paul had warned of such teachers, who would enter the church as grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, and even from among the elders men would arise, who would speak "perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). The greatest hindrances to the church come from within and not without.

The teachers that Jude describes were known as

“antinomians;” literally, those who disclaimed submission to spiritual or moral law. Thus, they turned “...grace of our God into lasciviousness...” (v. 4). They took advantage of Paul’s teaching concerning justification by faith (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16) and perverted it into the doctrine of salvation by faith only. If we are not under any law, Christians are at liberty to live in all manner of ungodliness, and God is too good to punish them for indulging their natural appetites which God gave to all men. According to this heresy, such indulgences are necessary to present happiness and are, therefore, not to be counted as sins. Jude gives the folly and peril of such false doctrine and cites many examples of God’s punishment of the wicked. He shows that faith and practice must go together. We must hold to correct beliefs in order to practice right living. We must have both in order to be well pleasing to God.

The faith. “...the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (v. 3) is the one faith (Eph. 4:5), which comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). It is the complete system of faith, which was given by divine revelation, all truth, given once for all men and for all time (John 16:13; Matt. 28:20). It is the new covenant of which Christ is the mediator (Heb. 8:6), the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). It is perfect and cannot be altered or improved upon (Gal. 1:6-8; II Tim. 3:16-17; James 1:25; Rev. 22:18-19). Paul was “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17), and we must defend it against all enemies and at all costs, “...and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15). Constant loyalty, ceaseless caution, and courageous confidence are required in defending the truth (Jude 17-23).

Notes.

(1) In relation to its length, Jude contains more references to the Old Testament than any other book of the New Testament, with the exception of II Peter and possibly

Hebrews.

(2) Jude, alone, refers to the dispute between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses (v. 9), and to the prophecy of Enoch (v. 14).

(3) Recurring words include “ungodly” (vs. 4, 15 [four times in this verse], 17); “beloved” (vs. 3, 17, 20); “once for all” (vs. 3, 5); “railing,” “rail” (vs. 9-10); “remembrance,” “remember” (vs. 5, 17); with 10 references to God, seven to Christ, and references to Michael and angels and to the devil.

(4) There are twelve groups of triplets in Jude, such as “Jude, servant, brother” (v. 1); “sanctified, kept, called” (v. 1); “mercy, peace, love” (v. 2); “defile, despise, speak evil of” (v. 8); “gone, ran, perished” (v. 11); three eternals—chains (v. 6), life (v. 21), God (v. 25).

(5) Jude’s benediction is one of the most beautiful in the Bible (vs. 24-25).

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

Chapter 75

The Book Of Revelation

I. KEYS TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

1. **Key words** – “Overcome,” or “overcometh.”
2. **Key verses** – Chapter 1:1, 19; 2:10; 22:18-19:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: (Chap. 1:1).

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; (Chap. 1:19).

...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Chap. 2:10).

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Chap. 22:18-19).

3. **Key phrase** – “Blessed are they who do his commandments” (22:14).

4. **Key chapters** – Chapter 1 – The Triumphant Christ, and Chapter 21 – The Eternal Home of the Victorious Faithful in Christ.

5. **Theme** – The theme is the glorious triumph of Christ and the ultimate victory of the righteous. The design of Revelation is to comfort and support Christians under trials and persecutions by assuring them that all the enemies of

Christ and his church will at length be conquered and destroyed, when Christ vanquishes forever Satan and death, and when the church gains the final victory over all the forces of evil.

6. **Scope.** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...” (Rev. 2:7). Christ’s revelation to John was of “things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1), and of “the things which shall be hereafter” (1:19). Christ pronounced a blessing upon those who read and keep this “...record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ...” (Rev. 1:2).

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Rev. 1:3).

Not only does the reading of Revelation comfort us in all of our trials and spiritual conflicts, but it also serves to increase our faith, hope, patience and trust. It should serve to increase: (1) *Our faith* in the integrity of the word of God; (2) *our hope* in the unfailing promises of God; (3) *our patience* in extreme suffering and sorrow, and (4) *our trust* in him who is able to save to the uttermost.

II. BACKGROUND OF REVELATION

Author. God himself dictated it, through Christ, by an angel, to John, the apostle, who wrote it down, and sent the completed book to the seven churches of Asia (1:4, 9; 22:8).

Place and date. From the Isle of Patmos, where John was in exile (1:9). According to tradition, his banishment occurred in the persecution of Domitian, about 95 A. D., and he wrote the book about a year later.

Interpretation. There are four kinds of interpretation, commonly referred to as preterist (past things), historical, futurist, and spiritual.

(1) Preterist interpretation regards the book as referring

to its own day—Christianity struggling against Judaism and the Roman Empire.

(2) Historical interpretation is that the book covers the whole period of church history, from John's time to the end of the world, a series of pictures of the great epochs and crises of the church.

(3) Futurist interpretation centers the book around the time of Christ's second coming and the end of the world.

(4) Spiritual interpretation separates the imagery of the book from all historical events and views it as a highly figurative representation of the principle of divine government applicable to all times.

Each school of interpretation has some merit. John was told to write of "things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1), "which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (1:19). There is an amazing parallel between the visions of the book and the course of church history, and much of Revelation evidently refers to the end and to the new heavens and the new earth.

Divisions of the book.

Chapters 1-3: "Things which are" (1:19); things that were in John's day—seven letters to the seven churches, dealing with conditions in that time.

Chapters 4-22: "Things which shall be hereafter" (1:1, 19; 4:1); covering the time from then on to the end.

Revelation is a book of visions. Fifteen visions are given, some easy to be understood, some veiled, some partly veiled. They fall into three groups—the vision of grace (1:9-3:22); the vision of government (4:1-19:10), and the vision of glory (19:11-22:5).

There are seven subdivisions of the book:

Prologue—1:1-8

1. The Seven Churches—1:9-3:22.
2. The Seven Seals—4:1-8:1.
3. The Seven Trumpets—8:2-11:19.
4. The Seven Mystic Figures—12:1-14:20.

5. The Seven Vials—15:1-16:21.
6. The Sevenfold Judgment—17:1-19:10.
7. The Sevenfold Triumph—19:11-22:5.
- Epilogue—22:6-21.

(Warfield in *Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*).

Recurrence. The principle of recurrence is a key to understanding Revelation. After giving an account of the beginning of divine judgments on the earth, and the final victory of Christ (4:1-11:18), John returns again to the subject in a second panorama of God's wrath (11:19-16:20), and again in a third portrayal of the sovereignty of God and the triumph of Christ (17:1-22:21).

Blessed is he that reads (1:3). This is the only book of prophecy that promises a blessing to those who read it and keep it (22:7), with a warning against adding to or taking from the things written in the book (22:18-19).

The alpha and the omega. Revelation, in the Greek, is *apokalupsis*, which we have anglicized for the word, "apocalypse." It literally means uncovering, disclosure, or unveiling. This book is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). It is the unveiling of the person, purpose and power of Christ. He is the bright and morning star, the ruler of kings, the worthy Lamb, the Lion of Judah, the victorious bridegroom, and the grim reaper.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega (1:8; 21:6; 22:12-13), the first and the last, the beginning and the end, "...him which is, and which was, and which is to come..." (1:4). The eternity of God and Christ is a major emphasis of the book.

...I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth,
and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore,
Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (1:17-
18).

"...Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (4:8). "...that liveth for ever and ever..." (4:10).

The divine power over elemental forces is seen in earthquakes, lightnings, and thunder; over forces of the air,

in plagues; and over spiritual forces in that angels, good and evil, life and death, sin and Satan are all under his command.

The divine purpose is the God to dwell with man. He abides in the church and in every Christian who keeps his word (John 14:23). When Christ comes, God's tabernacle will be with men, "...and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (21:3). Jesus, who is the Lamb, will be in the midst of the throne, and in his presence is the place of worship, and in his power is the place of refuge.

Faith and patience. "...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10). Jesus, the gloriously triumphant Lamb of God, is the keynote of Revelation. This book portrays the moral and spiritual conflict of the ages in which God overcomes Satan, sin is overthrown, the Lamb triumphs, and the church prevails over the world. The gates of hell are disclosed and heaven revealed. The righteous are rewarded and the disobedient punished. The account of the exaltation of Christ and the victorious life of the Christian strengthens our faith and patience in the midst of the victorious life of the Christian strengthens our faith and patience in the midst of trials. God still rules in the affairs of men, and our destiny is in his hands. "Perseverance and prayer, patience and purity become the unseen power of our pilgrimage" (Johnny Ramsey). "...Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (13:10).

III. GREAT MESSAGES FROM REVELATION

Practical purpose of the book. It makes a sublime finish to the Divine Library, with its theme of the moral and spiritual conflict of the ages, culminating in the final victory of Christ and his church over all the powers of evil. An epochal event of the book is the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15), which heralded his world-wide victory. Therefore, the reading of Revelation should serve to increase:

(1) our faith in the integrity of the word of God; (2) our hope in the unfailing promises of God; (3) our patience in extreme suffering and sorrow, and (4) our trust in him who is able to save to the uttermost.

He that overcometh:

- (1) Shall partake of the tree of life—2:7.
- (2) “Shall not be hurt of the second death”—2:11.
- (3) Shall partake of the hidden manna—2:17.
- (4) Shall have “power over the nations”—2:26.
- (5) Shall have his name in the book of life; Christ will confess his name before the Father—3:5.
- (6) Christ will make him “a pillar in the temple of my God”—3:12.
- (7) Christ will “grant to sit with me in my throne”—3:21.
- (8) “Shall inherit all things”—21:7.

Beatitudes in Revelation:

- (1) “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy”—1:3.
- (2) “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord”—14:13.
- (3) “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments”—16:15.
- (4) “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb”—19:9.
- (5) “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection”—20:6.
- (6) “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book”—22:7.
- (7) “Blessed are they that do his commandments”—22:14.

The word of God. The Bible closes with a clear affirmation of its divine origin. It is the word of God, faithful and true (1:2; 21:5).

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein... (1:3).

John was in exile for the word of God (1:9). “...Because thou hast kept the word...I also will keep thee from the hour of

temptation..." (3:8, 10). Martyrs were slain for the word of God (6:9; 20:4). They overcame "...by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word..." (12:11). "...until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (17:17). "...These are the true sayings of God" (19:9).

Last things. (Rev. 19-22)–

(1) *The marriage of the Lamb*–19:1-9. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (v. 9).

(2) *The winepress of the wrath of God*–19:10-21. The beast and the false prophet cast alive into the lake of fire (v. 20).

(3) *The thousand year reign*–20:1-6. This is not a reign of Christ on earth, but a figurative or spiritual reign with Christ of the "...souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,..." (v. 4). This signifies triumph of the cause for which they died, sometime before the resurrection of the dead, at which time the souls of the faithful will be clothed with spiritual, glorified bodies (I Cor. 15:15, 42-44; I Thess. 4:14). The "thousand years" refers to the completeness of Christ's triumph. It is not a reference to a period of time. Christ is now reigning over his kingdom, which is his church (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13). Christ began his reign on Pentecost, after he ascended back to heaven (Acts 2:30-36). He will continue his reign to the end of the world, when he will return the kingdom back to the Father (Luke 1:32-33; I Cor. 15:23-26). His coming will mark the end of the world, the resurrection of all the dead, and the end of his reign on earth.

(4) *The devil cast into the lake of fire and brimstone*–20:7-10.

(5) *The final judgment*–20:11-15. This "great white throne" judgment scene is the fulfillment of Christ's judgment parables and many other warnings of the final accounting of all men unto God (Matt. 16:27; 25:1-46; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10). The disobedient are

warned of everlasting torment when the Lord comes to judge "...every man according to their works" (20:13). "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (v. 15).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (21:8).

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; (II Thess. 1:7-9).

(6) *The new heaven and the new earth*—21:1-8. The tabernacle of God is with men, "And God shall wipe away all tears..." (v. 4). The faithful look for and long for "...new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:12-13).

(7) *The New Jerusalem*—21:9-27. The holy city, the type of the bride of the Lamb, described: from heaven (vs. 2, 10); radiant (v. 11); separated and protected (vs. 12-13); with sure foundations (v. 14); foursquare (vs. 15-16); beautifully adorned (vs. 18-21); with spiritual temple (v. 22); divinely lighted (vs. 23-25); glorified (v. 26), and undefiled (v. 27).

(8) *Paradise restored*—22:1-5. The river of life (v. 1), tree of life (v. 2), removal of the curse (v. 3), divine presence and mark (v. 4), eternal day and everlasting reign of the saints (v. 5).

(9) *Last teachings*—22:6-19. Faithful and true (v. 6); blessed is he that keeps them (v. 7); worship God only (vv. 8-9); no last minute conversion (vs. 10-11); final judgment certain (vs. 12-13); the last promise (v. 14); last

condemnation of evil doers (v. 15), the Lord's last messenger (v. 16); the last invitation (v. 17); the last warning (vs. 18-19).

(10) *"I come quickly"*—v. 20. Christ will come suddenly, but not necessarily soon (I Thess. 5:2-3; Rev. 1:3; 3:3; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12). "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).

(11) *Benediction and prayer*—v. 21. The Old Testament ends with a curse (Mal. 4:6), and the New Testament with a blessing. "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

IV. CHARACTER OF REVELATION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" to John, "your brother, and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (1:9), is a message of patience, consolation and hope to Christians in times of trial and temptation. The theme of Christ's ultimate victory over Satan and all enemies of righteousness is the divine encouragement to all believers that through Christ they will gain the victory over fear, sin, and death.

Fear not. He who was dead and now is "alive for evermore" charged John, "Fear not" to "write the things" (1:17-19). His message to Christians, through John, is to fear neither Satan, death, nor persecution.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer:...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (2:10).

"...neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid" (Isa. 8:12).

In Revelation we see the goodness and severity of God, both his love and his vengeance. The faithful have no fear of punishment. They enjoy the perfect love that casteth out fear and they "...may have boldness in the day of judgment:..." (I John 4:17-18).

Relation of Revelation to other scripture. (W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 371-373)—

(1) *Revelation is related to the whole Bible.* In Genesis is the foundation of the truth, In Exodus to Jude, the superstructure, and Revelation, the completion. In other words, beginning, way, end; commencement, course, consummation.

(2) *To the Old Testament:* The symbolism of Revelation is drawn from the Old Testament. "Of its 404 verses, 265 contain Old Testament language, and there are about 550 references to Old Testament passages" (Scroggie, 372).

(3) *To the New Testament:* The subject matter of each Testament is in three groups of writing, and in the same order:

Historical—Genesis to Esther, and Matthew to Acts.

Instructional—Job to Song of Solomon, and Romans to Jude.

Prophetic—Isaiah to Malachi, and Revelation.

Matthew to John treats of the past; Acts to Jude of the present, and Revelation of the future. In the first group we have Christ; in the second, the church, and in Revelation, the consummation.

(4) *Revelation is related to the book of Genesis,* both by comparison and by contrast. In Genesis there is the first heaven and earth, and in Revelation the last heaven and earth. In these books we have the first and final rest; Paradise lost, and regained; the tree and the rivers, and the tree of life and river of life; husband and wife, the Lamb and the Bride.

In the two books we have by contrast, the creation of the sun and the moon, and a place where there will be no need of sun and moon; a garden for the home of man, and a city, the home of the nations; Satan victorious, and Satan defeated; entrance of sin in the world, and sin banished; the curse pronounced, and the curse removed; the gates of Paradise shut, and the gates opened; exclusion from the tree of life, admission to the tree of life; death, and no more death; judgment pronounced, and judgment executed; tears

and suffering, and no more tears or pain; night, and no more night; exiles because of sin, heirs by the blood of the Lamb.

The book of wars. The word “war” occurs nine times in Revelation, and only seven times in all the rest of the New Testament. It is a book of wars, but war that always ends in peace and victory for Christ and the church. God never makes peace with sin, but will ultimately destroy sin and restore everlasting peace to his people. Here we see conflict between God and Satan, the Lamb and the dragon, the bride and the harlot, the New Jerusalem and Babylon, and Christ and the beast of the sea. All enemies are punished in the winepress of the wrath of God, and the victorious righteous ones bidden to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

The lamb of God. Christ is the central figure of Revelation. He is the glorified one (Chap. 1), the head of his church (Chaps. 2-3), and the triumphant one and was found worthy to open the book with seven seals. But the dominant designation of Christ in Revelation is “the Lamb of God,” which occurs 28 times. The Greek is *arnoin*, “little lamb,” and is found nowhere else of Christ in the New Testament (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22-23, 27; 22:1, 3).

Other passages refer to him as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; I Peter 1:19), but in these, the word is *amnos*. The contrast between the two words lies in the manner in which Christ is presented. The use of *amnos* points directly to the fact and nature of his sacrifice. He is the lamb of God’s providing (Gen. 22:8), and the paschal (passover) lamb of God’s appointment for sacrifice in Israel (Ex. 12:5, 14, 27; I Cor. 5:7). *Arnoin* presents Christ on the ground of his vicarious sacrifice as the basis both of redemption and of divine vengeance. But this word emphasizes his acquired majesty, dignity, honor, authority

and power. "He is seen in the position of sovereign glory and honor (7:17), which he shares with the Father (22:1, 3), the center of angelic beings and of the redeemed and the object of their veneration (5:6, 8, 12-13; 15:3), the Leader and Shepherd of his saints (7:17; 14:4), the head of his spiritual bride (21:9), the luminary of the heavenly and eternal city (21:23), the one to whom all judgment is committed (6:1, 16; 13:8), the conqueror of the foes of God and his people (17:14); the song that celebrates the triumph of those who 'gain the victory over the Beast,' is the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb (15:3). His sacrifice, the efficacy of which avails for those who accept the salvation thereby provided, forms the ground of the execution of Divine wrath for the rejector, and the defiler of God (14:10)." (W. E. Vine, II, 306-307).

The seven churches. Revelation was addressed to all of the seven churches of Asia, with a brief message to each church (1:4, 11; 2:1-3:22). In each of the special messages, the churches are first blamed for what evil was in them, then commended for their good points, and a promise given to those who repent and continue faithful. There is considerable difference in the character of the churches. Two were very good and are entirely commended—Smyrna and Philadelphia. Two were very bad—Sardis and Laodicea—and the latter, lukewarm church was wholly blamed, with no words of praise bestowed upon it. Three were part good, and part bad—Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira. The two good churches were facing persecution. The two bad churches were nominally Christian, but pagan in life. Ephesus was scriptural in teaching, but losing their first love. Pergamos had some who held the doctrine of Balaam and some, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, whose teaching was hated by Christ, and whose deeds were hated by the Ephesians. But Pergamos was faithful to the name of Christ. Thyatira tolerated the prophetess Jezebel, who seduced the servants of Christ, but the church was growing in zeal and good works.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of our journey through the Bible, we have come full circle. We began with the far reaching consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve. Almost every lesson stressed the necessity of obeying God. To choose obedience is to choose blessing and life. Disobedience is condemnation and death. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Here, in the last chapter of the Bible, Christ promises,

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

Christ invites all who will to come:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

These promised blessings in Christ are our prayer for all who may read this book.

~ Frank and Yvonne Dunn

