



JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF BOOKS

BY
DR. RICK W. BLOOM

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Introduction: A seventeen year old young man went to church for the first time, because a shoe salesman who had led him to Christ told him he needed to learn more about the Savior he had just received. After the song service the minister said, *“Turn to Second Timothy five twelve.”* The young convert turned to the first page of his new Bible and thumbed through Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua and a number of other books but could not find Timothy. Turning to the Table of Contents, he found that Second Timothy was on page 235, but when he found that page number he was in the book of Joshua. Again looking into the Table of Contents he discovered there were two basic sections of the Bible and Second Timothy was in the second. By the time the young Christian had found the text the minister was finished with his sermon.

Have you ever felt like that? Don't be discouraged. Most new Christians start out the same way. From that discouraging beginning that young man developed a desire to know the Bible. Years later he became a famous preacher who, it is said, led one million people to Jesus Christ. In the later years of his life he founded a Bible Institute that today still trains hundreds of young people annually in the Word of God. His name was Dwight L. Moody. Few men have influenced Christianity more. But he would never have been such an influence at all had he not been willing to study the Word of God for himself!

I. Purpose Of Our Study.

- A. To bring salvation. (John 3:16)
- B. To give assurance of salvation. (I John 5:13)
- C. To grow in grace and knowledge. (II Peter 3:18)
- D. To give confidence and power in prayer. (John 15:7)
- E. To cleanse from sin. (John 15:3, 17:17)
- F. To replace dread with joy. (John 15:10-11)
- G. To replace anxiety with peace. (John 16:33)
- H. To give guidance in life. (Psalm 119:105)
- I. To guarantee success. (Joshua 1:8)
- J. To enable believers to articulate their faith. (I Peter 3:15)

II. The Bible As A Whole.

- A. The Bible is God's written revelation of His will to humanity. (II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:21)
- B. The central theme of the Bible is the redemption of mankind. (Galatians 4:4)
 - 1. The moment that man sinned, as recorded in Genesis 3, he died spiritually, and the penalty of spiritual death was upon him.
 - 2. In the same chapter God declares His intention to redeem mankind from this death. (Genesis 3:15)
 - 3. The Old Testament is a history of the Hebrew race through which this Person, who would crush the head of Satan and redeem mankind, would be born.
 - 4. The New Testament finds the fulfillment of God's promise. (Matthew 1:1)
- C. The Bible is a unique book in its composition.
 - 1. Written over a 1,600 year span.
 - 2. Written over 60 generations.
 - 3. Written by over 40 different authors from every walk of life, including kings, peasants, tent-makers, shepherds, farmers, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.
 - 4. Written on three different continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.
 - 5. Written under diverse circumstances.
 - a. Moses in the wilderness.
 - b. Jeremiah in a dungeon.
 - c. Daniel on a hillside and in a palace.
 - d. Paul inside prison walls.
 - e. Luke while traveling.
 - f. John on the Isle of Patmos.
 - g. Joshua in the rigors of military campaigns.

6. Written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
7. Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects.
8. Yet, the Bible has a close-fitting unity, as if one author wrote it, which is indeed the case.
(II Peter 1:21)

III. The Divisions Of The Bible.

A. Old Testament.

Pentateuch (Law)				
Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy

Historical									
Joshua	Judges	Ruth	1 Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings	1 Chron.	2 Chron.	Ezra
									Hehemiah
									Esther

Wisdom Literature				
Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	S. of Solomon

Major Prophets				
Isaiah	Jeremiah	Lament.	Ezekiel	Daniel

Minor Prophets											
Hosea	Joel	Amos	Obadiah	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi

B. New Testament.

Gospels			
Matthew	Mark	Luke	John

Historical
Acts

Pauline Epistles (Church)									
Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	

Pauline Epistles (Personal)				
1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon	Hebrews

General Epistles						
James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude

Prophetic
Revelation

IV. Facts About The Bible.

- A. Christ quoted from 22 Old Testament Books.
 1. Matthew – 19 times.
 2. Mark – 15 times.
 3. Luke – 25 times.
 4. John – 11 times.
- B. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible.
- C. There are 31,373 verses in the Bible.
- D. There are 775,693 words in our King James Version.
- E. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible.
- F. Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible.
- G. Psalms is the longest book in the Old Testament.
- H. Luke is the longest book in the New Testament.

Conclusion: The Bible is divine. The thought and revelation are divine, but the expression of the communication is human. It is the **Word of God**. It is a progressive revelation and one cannot learn it from reading verses or passages at random. It is a step-by-step revelation of one story, HIS-STORY. The story is that of His great purpose moving through the ages. That purpose is to redeem mankind through Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of all who will believe. (John 3:16)

JOURNEY THROUGH GENESIS

Introduction: The Bible opens with a statement of simple grandeur: **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”** As has been often declared, God does not spend time endeavoring to prove His own existence. In the Book which He has given us, He takes it for granted that only **“the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”** (Psalm 14:1, 53:1). The very heaven and earth stand as witnesses to His existence. And God has chosen to reveal Himself to His creation through the medium of a Book.

Genesis gets its name by a common book-naming principle in the Bible. In many instances the name of a book will reveal what the book is about. The word *“genesis”* means *“the origin or coming into being of something.”* Therefore, it is a fitting name for the first book of the Bible.

- I. The “Seed Plot” Of Scripture.
 - A. The beginning of the created world. (1:1-25)
 - B. The beginning of man and woman. (1:26-2:25)
 - C. The beginning of sin. (3:1-7)
 - D. The beginning of the promise of redemption. (3:8-24)
 - E. The beginning of family life. (4:1-15)
 - F. The beginning of civilization. (4:16-9:29)
 - G. The beginning of nations. (10:1-11:32)
 - H. The beginning of a chosen people. (12:1-50:26)
 - I. Genesis tells us of the beginning of everything except God. (Psalm 90:2)
- II. The Structure Of Genesis.
 - A. Mankind in general. (Chapters 1-11)
 1. The creation. (Chapters 1-2)
 - a. No theologian or scientist can improve on the introduction to creation: **“In the beginning God.”**
 - (1) This statement is a declaration of divine truth.
 - (2) Accept this first sentence and there will be little difficulty in accepting all of God’s Word.
 - b. The names of God.
 - (1) The name for God in Genesis 1 is ELOHIM, which means, *“infinite strength and absolute faithfulness.”*
 - (2) In Genesis 2 we are introduced to the word LORD, which comes from the Hebrew word JEHOVAH, which means *“I am the One who is.”*
 - (3) Often in the Bible the Holy Spirit uses the name ELOHIM (**“God”**) to refer to God when He is dealing with the physical universe.
 - (4) However, when He is dealing with His people, the word JEHOVAH (**“LORD”**) is used. (Compare Genesis 6:22 and 7:1, 16)
 - (a) When God was dealing with the animals, the name ELOHIM was used.
 - (b) When it came to Noah being shut up in the ark, JEHOVAH was used.
 - (c) God’s relationship with His people is different than with all other creation.
 - c. The seven days of creation.

“IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED . . .”					
Formed (“without form”)			Filled (“void”)		
Day 1	Light	(1:3-5)	Day 4	Luminaries (sun, moon, stars)	(1:14-19)
Day 2	Water and Sky	(1:6-8)	Day 5	Fish and Birds	(1:20-23)
Day 3	Land and Vegetation	(1:9-13)	Day 6	Beasts and Man	(1:24-31)
“And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” (2:1-3)					

2. The fall of man. (Chapters 3-4)
 - a. The temptation. (3:1-15)
 - (1) Doubt. (3:1-3)
 - (2) Denial. (3:4)
 - (3) Deception. (3:5)
 - (4) Disobedience. (3:6)
 - (5) Deliverance. (3:15)
 - b. The fruit of sin. (4:8)
3. Noah and the flood. (Chapters 5-10)
 - a. The mixing of the Godly line with the ungodly. (6:1-2, cp. II Corinthians 6:14)
 - b. One man, Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (6:8)
 - c. God's judgment falls resulting from sin. (7:1-24)
 - d. The days of Noah serve as a warning of the coming of Christ. (Matthew 24:37-39)
4. The tower of Babel crisis. (Chapter 11)
 - a. God's command to Noah and his descendants was to ". . . **replenish the earth.**" (9:1)
 - b. The reason for the action of God was because the people were disobedient. (11:4-10)
 - c. Babel means "*confusion*." (Cp. I Corinthians 14:33)
- B. The Patriarchs of Israel. (Chapters 12-50)
 1. Abraham – a man of faith. (Chapters 12-23)
 - a. God used this man to begin the fulfillment of His promise in Genesis 3:15 to send a Savior to the world.
 - b. God's call and Covenant with Abraham. (12:1-3)
 - c. Hebrews 11:8-19 reveals Abraham to be a man of faith.
 2. Isaac – the beloved son. (Chapters 24-26)
 - a. Obedient unto death. (22:1-8)
 - b. Father of Esau and Jacob. (25:23-26)
 - c. The Abrahamic Covenant confirmed in him. (26:3-5)
 3. Jacob – persistent with God. (Chapters 27-36)
 - a. Blessed of Isaac by deception. (27:1-46)
 - b. The daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachel. (29:1-30:43)
 - c. Name changed to "**Israel**," meaning "*he persists with God*" in prevailing prayer. (32:29)
 - d. Twelve sons born to him became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

ISRAEL (Jacob)			
LEAH	RACHEL	BILHAH (Rachel's Handmaid)	ZILPAH (Leah's Handmaid)
1. Reuben - 29:32 2. Simeon - 29:33 3. Levi - 29:35 4. JUDAH - 29:35 (Line of Christ) 9. Issachar - 30:18 10. Zebulun - 30:20	11. Joseph - 30:24 12. Benjamin - 35:18	5. Dan - 30:6 6. Naphtali - 30:8	7. Gad - 30:11 8. Asher - 30:13

4. Joseph – from suffering to glory. (Chapters 37-50)
 - a. There is no word of reproof against Joseph.
 - b. He is sold into slavery. (37:1-34)
 - c. He is exalted to the throne. (41:1-44)
 - d. Joseph reveals the supremacy of God and His care for His own. (50:18-20, cp. Roman 8:28)

Conclusion: Genesis concludes with the death of Joseph. It begins in a garden and ends in a graveyard. What a revealing statement on the consequences of sin!!! God promised the remedy for sin immediately after the fall and in the Abrahamic Covenant we begin to see the fulfillment of that promise. Galatians 3:29 proclaims that "**if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

JOURNEY THROUGH EXODUS

Introduction: In the second book of Scripture we see the outgoing of Israel from Egypt, where an entire race of people suddenly and forever fling away the shackles of generations of servitude and migrate to a new country and a new corporate life. It is here that we have the giving of the Law, the erecting of the Tabernacle, and the transition of the Israelites from being merely a plurality of kindred tribes into one nation.

Since this book tells us about Israel's bondage in Egypt and their deliverance by God through Moses, it is named Exodus, which means *"going out"* or *"exit."* The entire book is filled with Messianic types and symbols, and its key word is *"REDEMPTION,"* which means *"to set free."*

In Genesis we saw the ruin of man through the sin of man. In Exodus we see the redemption of man by the blood and the power of God.

I. The Structure Of Exodus.

THE EXODUS (Chapters 1-18)	THE LAW (Chapters 19-24)	THE TABERNACLE (Chapters 25-40)
Power of God Brought to New Life Liberty	Holiness of God Brought under Law Responsibility	Wisdom of God Brought into Fellowship Privilege

II. The Exodus. (Chapters 1-18)

A. Chronology.

1. The enslavement of God's people. (1:1-22)
 - a. A new king came to the throne in Egypt and made the Jews into slaves.
 - b. The new king ordered the midwives to kill all male Hebrew babies.
 - c. Satan has gone to work to destroy the Hebrew race and the promised Redeemer.
2. The deliverer – Moses. (2:1-4:31)
3. Deliverance by blood and power – Ten Plagues. (5:1-12:36)
 - a. Plague #1: Water turned to blood. (7:14-24)
 - b. Plague #2: Frogs. (7:25-8:15)
 - c. Plague #3: Lice. (8:16-19)
 - d. Plague #4: Flies. (8:20-32)
 - e. Plague #5: Diseased beasts. (9:1-7)
 - f. Plague #6: Boils on man and beast. (9:8-12)
 - g. Plague #7: Hail. (9:13-35)
 - h. Plague #8: Locusts. (10:1-20)
 - i. Plague #9: Darkness. (10:21-29)
 - j. Plague #10: Death of firstborn with Passover being instituted. (11:1-12:36)
4. The Hebrew's early freedom. (13:1-18:27)

B. What the Exodus meant for Israel.

1. It secured the beginning of a new LIFE. (12:2)
2. It meant the beginning of a new LIBERTY. (13:3)
3. It anticipated the beginning of a new FELLOWSHIP. (12:14)
4. It marked the beginning of a new ASSURANCE. (6:7-8)
5. The Exodus finds its counterpart in the Gospel of Christ. (I Corinthians 5:7-8)

III. The Law. (Chapters 19-24)

A. The Commandments – governing Moral life. (19:1-20:26)

1. God makes known His purpose in saving the people. (19:3-6)
2. The terms of the Covenant are accepted by the people. (19:8)
3. God gave the Ten Commandments. (20:1-17)

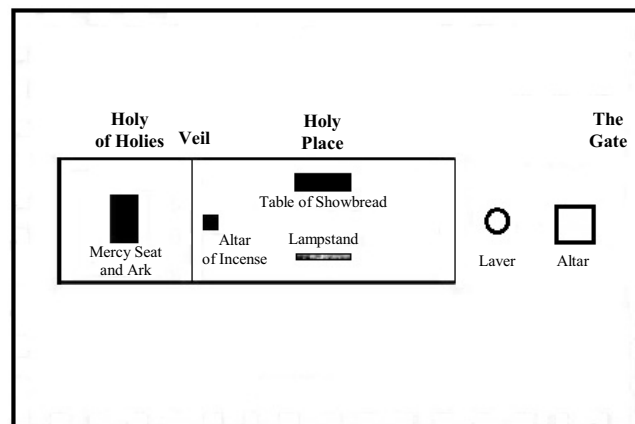
B. The Judgments – governing Social life. (21:1-23:33)

1. Concerning masters and servants. (21:1-11)

2. Concerning physical injuries. (21:12-36)
3. Concerning property rights. (21:1-15)
4. Concerning various evil practices. (22:16-23:9)
5. Concerning Sabbaths and Feasts. (23:10-19)
6. Concerning national relationships. (23:20-33)
- C. The Ordinances – governing Religious life. (24:1-18)
 - ** Further contained in the instructions regarding the Tabernacle.
- D. Why was the Law given?
 1. To provide a standard of righteousness. (Deuteronomy 4:8)
 2. To expose and identify sin. (Romans 5:20)
 3. To reveal the holiness and power of God. (Deuteronomy 4:32-36)
 4. To serve as a “**schoolmaster**” to bring us to Christ. (Galatians 3:19-24)
- E. Christ has become the “**end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth**” (Romans 10:4).

IV. The Tabernacle. (Chapters 25-40)

- A. The Scriptures devote more room to the description of the Tabernacle and its accessories than to any other single subject.
 1. The pattern was given to Moses during his 40 days in the mountain. (25:1-31:18)
 2. Israel’s lapse into idolatry caused a delay of the building of the Tabernacle. (32:1-34:35)
 3. The Tabernacle is completed and erected exactly one year after the Exodus. (35:1-40:38)
- B. The Tabernacle portrays Christ. (Hebrews 9:8-12)



1. The Altar: foreshadows the sacrificial death of Christ.
2. The Laver: typifies Christ’s cleansing ministry through the Word.
3. The Table of Showbread: pointed to Christ, the Bread of Life, as our Sustainer.
4. The Lampstand: represents Christ as the Light of the world.
5. Altar of Incense: models Christ as our great Intercessor.
6. The Ark of the Covenant: speaks of the Person of Christ, not what He has done, but Who He is.
7. The Mercy Seat: prefigures the perfect Work of Christ in salvation.
- C. The Gospel of John leads us through the exact same order found in the Tabernacle.
 1. The Altar: “**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**” (1:29)
 2. The Laver: “**Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit.**” (3:5)
 3. The Table of Showbread: “**I am the bread of life.**” (6:35)
 4. The Lampstand: “**I am the light of the world.**” (8:12)
 5. Altar of Incense: “**I pray . . . for them which thou hast given me.**” (17:9)
 6. The Ark of the Covenant: “**I in them, and thou in me.**” (17:23)
 7. The Mercy Seat: “**Receive ye the Holy Ghost.**” (20:22)

Conclusion: The principal truths we find in Exodus are the power of God, the holiness of God, and the wisdom of God. What a fitting journey following the sovereignty of God found in Genesis.

JOURNEY THROUGH LEVITICUS

Introduction: In clearest detail, the Lord directed the worship of His people. The Book of Leviticus, the name which may mean, "*pertaining to the Levites*," is a book of worship, and speaks of the correct approach of a sinner before a holy God. Although many pages are devoted to descriptions of things pertaining to the priests, we find that God applies them wondrously to the believers of this age of grace in which we live. I Peter 2:9 is written to explain this truth and to show us the application of Leviticus to believers today, **"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."**

- I. Its Abiding Value For Us.
 - A. Leviticus is a revelation of the Divine character and holiness of God.
 - B. It emphasizes the exceeding sinfulness of man and his estrangement from God.
 - C. It symbolically exposes the basic principle which underlies all dealings between God and man, namely, atonement through propitiatory sacrifice.
- II. Its Standpoint.
 - A. Before Leviticus, a distant God spoke **"in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush"** (Exodus 3:2).
 - B. By the end of Exodus, the Tabernacle had been erected and a God who dwelt among His people in fellowship with them now speaks **"out of the Tabernacle"** (Leviticus 1:1).
 - C. Leviticus stands in the same relation to Exodus that the Epistles do to the Gospels.
 1. In the Gospels we are set free by the blood of the Lamb; in the Epistles we are indwelt by God's Spirit.
 2. In the Gospels we have the ground for fellowship with God, namely redemption; in the Epistles we have the walk with God, namely sanctification.
- III. The Way To God – Sacrifice. (Chapters 1-17)
 - A. The Offerings. (1:1-7:38)
 1. Burnt Offering. (1:1-17, 6:8-13)
 - a. An atonement for sin enabling an unholy people to approach a holy God.
 - b. Foreshadows Christ offering Himself without spot to God. (Hebrews 9:14)
 2. Meal (Grain) Offering. (2:1-16, 6:14-23)
 - a. An expression of thanksgiving and dedication to God.
 - b. Exhibits the manhood of Christ and the life that was offered. (Hebrews 2:17-18)
 3. Peace (Fellowship) Offering. (3:1-17, 7:11-38)
 - a. An expression of gratitude and desire for fellowship with God.
 - b. Speaks of restored communion with God through Christ's offering. (Ephesians 2:14)
 4. Sin Offering. (4:1-5, 6:24-30)
 - a. An atonement for unintentional sins of weakness or carelessness.
 - b. Pictures Christ as our Sin-Bearer. (II Corinthians 5:21)
 5. Trespass (Guilt) Offering. (5:14-6:7, 7:1-10)
 - a. An atonement for specific sins or provision for injured persons to be compensated for loss.
 - b. Portrays Christ's atonement for the damage of sin. (II Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 2:1)
 - B. The Priests. (8:1-10:20)
 1. The consecration of the priests. (8:1-36)
 2. The ministry of the priests. (9:1-24)
 3. The violation of two priests. (10:1-20, especially verses 1-2)
 - C. The People. (11:1-15:33)
 1. God's people must be a clean people.
 - a. Clean foods. (11:1-47)
 - b. Clean bodies. (12:1-8)
 - c. Clean clothes. (13:1-59)
 - d. Clean houses. (14:1-57)

- e. Clean contacts. (15:1-33)
- 2. God calls His people to be a clean people. (I Peter 1:13-16)
- D. The Atonement. (16:1-34)
 - 1. The Day of At-one-ment was Israel's most important holy day.
 - a. The High Priest alone went into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the Mercy Seat with the blood of a bullock (a young bull), making atonement for himself and his family.
 - b. Then, entering the Holy of Holies a second time, with the blood of a goat, he sprinkled the Mercy Seat, making atonement for the sins of the people.
 - c. A second scapegoat was then lead into the Wilderness to symbolize the removal of sin.
 - 2. When Christ died on the cross, the veil in the Holy of Holies was torn from the top to the bottom, showing us that we can have direct access to God through Christ, our High Priest.
- E. The Altar. (17:1-16)
 - 1. Five times, in verses 3-9, the one place of sacrifice is divinely ordained.
 - 2. There is only one place where God meets sinful man – at the altar. (Romans 3:23-25)

IV. The Walk With God – Separation. (Chapters 18-27)

- A. A holy people. (18:1-20:27)
- B. Holy priests. (21:1-33)
- C. Holy feasts. (23:1-44)
 - 1. The Feast of Passover. (23:5-14)
 - a. It celebrated Israel's redemption from death and bondage in Egypt. (Exodus 12:13)
 - b. Christ has become our Passover. (I Corinthians 5:7)
 - 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread. (23:6-8)
 - a. This seven day feast immediately followed after Passover, and is often counted as a part of the Passover, which was the first day.
 - b. This feast speaks of communion with Christ in the blessing of redemption. (I Corinthians 5:8)
 - 3. The Feast of Firstfruits. (23:9-14)
 - a. This feast marked the beginning of the harvest.
 - b. Christ has become the **"firstfruits"** of **"them that slept."** (I Corinthians 15:20-23)
 - 4. The Feast of Pentecost. (23:15-22)
 - a. This feast occurred 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits.
 - b. After Christ's resurrection, He was on earth 40 days before He ascended. (Acts 1:3)
 - c. The disciples waited in the Upper Room for an additional 10 days until the Day of Pentecost was fully come. (Acts 2:1)
 - 5. The Feast of Trumpets. (23:23-25)
 - a. This was Israel's New Year's Day.
 - b. Trumpets were used in Israel to summon the people together to announce something of great importance.
 - c. We presently anticipate the sound of the trumpet of God. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)
 - 6. The Day of Atonement. (23:26-32)
 - a. This, the greatest day for Israel, was the annual day when atonement for the sins of the entire nation was made.
 - b. Christ has **"obtained eternal redemption for us,"** having **"offered Himself without spot to God."** (Hebrews 9:11-14)
 - 7. The Feast of Tabernacles. (23:33-44)
 - a. This celebration was held upon the completion of the harvest and commemorated God's deliverance from Egypt and provisions throughout the Wilderness wanderings.
 - b. This anticipates the coming of Christ when the harvest will be completed.
- D. A holy land. (25:1-27:34)
 - 1. The key here is to understand that Israel became stewards of God's land.
 - 2. One-tenth of the increase of the land was to be given to the Lord as His tithe. (27:30)

Conclusion: The Book of Leviticus speaks of the holiness of God and His requirements for fellowship with Himself. It is the supreme Old Testament illustration of the New Testament truth found in I John 1:7. The first section says, **"The blood . . . cleanseth us from all sin."** The second part says, **"If we walk in the light."** The message of the whole book is that through these two things – cleansing and walking – we have fellowship one with another, and truly our fellowship is **"with the Father."**

JOURNEY THROUGH NUMBERS

Introduction: Numbers covers about 38 years of desert wandering by the Israelites. It is called Numbers because it includes two numberings of the men of war, in chapters 1-4 and 26-27. The first numbering was made the second year after the Israelites left Egypt. Then, beginning with Judah, which was to lead the way, each tribe was given a position in the march to Canaan. From this point on, Numbers is a wilderness book. It describes the failure of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea and their wilderness wanderings until the unbelieving generation died off, after which the second numbering took place. This book has been described as the *"longest funeral march in history."*

I. Its Nature.

- A. Numbers takes up where Exodus left off.
 1. Just one month stands between the erecting of the Tabernacle, at the end of Exodus (Exodus 40:17), and the command to number the people, at the beginning of Numbers (Numbers 1:1).
 2. The Leviticus instructions come between these two events.
- B. Numbers resumes the historical narrative.
 1. The census is taken.
 2. The people are organized.
 3. The march to Canaan begins.
 4. God is leading.
 5. Canaan is within sight.
 6. Israel disbelieves and rebels.
 7. Judgment falls.
 8. Forty years of wandering sets in.
 9. The old generation dies off.
 10. The new generation is numbered.
 11. The journey to Canaan continues.
- C. An interesting fact to note is that Israel did not significantly grow during its wilderness wanderings.
 1. They wasted 38 years, suffered unnecessary afflictions, and declined in population by almost 2,000.
 2. This is a description of what unbelief does to the Christian.
 - a. Wasted time.
 - b. Wasted effort.
 - c. Spiritual stalemate.

II. Its Importance.

- A. The things recorded in Numbers are made immortal by becoming divinely resolved examples for our learning. (I Corinthians 10:1-2, see also Romans 15:4, Hebrews 3:7-19)
- B. The faithless failure of Israel to enter Canaan may well foreshadow the failure of the organized Church today to possess the heavenly things in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

III. Its Structure.

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS <i>"The Goodness and Severity of God."</i> (Romans 11:22)		
THE OLD GENERATION (Sinai to Kadesh) Chapters 1-14	THE TRANSITIONAL ERA (In the Wilderness) Chapters 15-20	THE NEW GENERATION (Kadesh to Moab) Chapters 21-36

IV. The Old Generation. (Chapters 1-14)

A. The numbering. (Chapters 1-4)

1. The numbering (census) was for military purposes.
2. The Levites were exempt from the general census for they were priests, set apart to serve God and care for the Tabernacle.

B. Instructions on living. (Chapters 5-9)

1. The only place in the Pentateuch where Nazarites are mentioned is in Numbers 6.
 - a. *"Nazarite"* means *"one consecrated to God."*
 - b. A Nazarite vow included abstinence from wine or strong drink, refraining from cutting one's hair, and the forbidding of contact with the dead. (Samson violated each of these conditions.)
2. In Chapter 10, the Lord commands Moses to make two trumpets for calling the assembly.
 - a. The pillar of cloud gave guidance of the eye while the trumpets gave guidance for the ear.
 - b. The Christian today anticipates the sound of the trumpet and the gathering in the clouds. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

C. The journey. (Chapters 10-14)

1. After being at Sinai for more than a year, and after taking the census, the Israelites broke camp and headed for Kadesh-Barnea.
2. At Kadesh-Barnea they displayed their sinfulness and unbelief. (13:25-33)
3. The people murmured and rebelled against the Lord. (14:1-4)
4. The desire of the people so angered God that He would have destroyed them had it not been for the intercession of Moses. (14:11-19)
5. Though pardoned, the present generation, except Joshua and Caleb, would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land.

V. The Transitional Era. (Chapters 15-20)

- A. God continued to communicate with them through Moses during this time. (15:1, 17, 35)
- B. In chapters 16-18 comes an attack on the Aaronic Priesthood and over 15,000 die in an earthquake, fire, and plague.
- C. In chapter 20, we see Moses smite a rock twice when He was commanded of God to but speak to it.
- D. After all the years of wandering, they returned to the spot where they had been – Kadesh-Barnea.

VI. The New Generation. (Chapters 21-36)

A. The new journey. (Chapters 21-25)

1. The new journey to the plains of Moab was made longer because Edom refused to let them go through their land.
2. The brazen serpent – a type of Christ. (Chapter 21, see I Corinthians 10:9-10, John 3:14-15)
 - a. Their sin. (21:5)
 - b. Their suffering. (21:6)
 - c. Their supplication. (21:7)
 - d. Their salvation. (21:8)
3. The confrontation with Balaam. (Chapters 22-25)
 - a. He was faithful to the Lord's command in refusing to curse the nation of Israel. (23:17-24)
 - b. He was unfaithful in counseling Israel to commit idolatry. (25:2, see 31:16, I Corinthians 10:8)
 - c. II Peter 2:15 warns of the covetous one who would do religious works for personal gain.
 - d. Balaam perished in the judgment of the Moabites. (Numbers 31:8)

B. The new numbering. (Chapters 26-27)

1. Following the new numbering Moses is told of his impending death. (27:12-14)
2. Following Moses' acknowledgment of God's plan, he is instructed to publicly induct Joshua into office as the new leader. (27:18-23)

C. The new instructions. (Chapters 28-36)

Conclusion: In the Book of Numbers we see the severity of God in the old generation which fell in the wilderness and never entered Canaan. Furthermore, we see the goodness of God in the new generation which was protected, preserved, and provided for until Canaan was possessed. Closely associated with its central message, we are also warned against the sin of presumption (I Corinthians 10:1-12) and the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12).

JOURNEY THROUGH DEUTERONOMY

Introduction: The Book of Deuteronomy gets its name from a Greek word which means “*second law*.”

Just before entering into Canaan, Moses gave his farewell addresses, which brought together the laws recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. In Deuteronomy we have a second giving of the Law, or, rather, a new expounding of it to the new generation of Israel who had grown up in the wilderness and were needing to have the Law repeated and expounded to them before entering into Canaan. Deuteronomy is not the giving of the Law, but an explanation of that which had already been given.

I. The Natural Completion Of The Pentateuch.

THE PENTATEUCH				
GENESIS	EXODUS	LEVITICUS	NUMBERS	DEUTERONOMY
Ruin of Man	Redemption by Blood	Communion by Atonement	Direction by God	Destination by Faithfulness
Divine Sovereignty <i>(in creation and election)</i>	Divine Power <i>(in redemption and emancipation)</i>	Divine Holiness <i>(in separation and sanctification)</i>	Divine Goodness and Severity <i>(in judging the old generation and preserving the new)</i>	Divine Faithfulness <i>(in discipline and destination)</i>

II. The Book Of Deuteronomy.

A. Looking backward. (Chapters 1-11)

1. Review of the way since Sinai. (1:1-3:29)
2. Review of the Law from Sinai. (4:1-11:32)

B. Looking forward. (Chapters 12-34)

1. Final rules and warnings to Israel before entering the earthly inheritance. (12:1-30:20)
2. Final words and actions of Moses before entering his heavenly inheritance. (31:1-34:12)

III. The Basic Things Of Deuteronomy.

A. The basic fact: “**The LORD our God is one LORD.**” (6:4-5)

1. This was the first article of Israel’s relationship with God.
2. This is the basic fact on which Christianity is built.
3. The Lord taught this as the foundational pronouncement and “**first commandment**” of the Law. (Mark 12:28-30)

B. The basic truth. (6:23)

1. A three-fold statement of truth.
 - a. “**He brought us out.**”
 - (1) A fact.
 - (2) We see the power of God.
 - b. “**That He might bring us in.**”
 - (1) Here’s the purpose behind the fact.
 - (2) We see the grace of God.
 - c. “**To give us the land which He swore unto our Fathers.**”
 - (1) Reason behind the fact and the purpose.
 - (2) We see the faithfulness of God in being true to His covenant.
2. This basic truth takes on a new meaning when applied to Christian believers today.
 - a. He brought us out from the condemnation of sin. (Romans 8:1-2)
 - b. He has brought us into a Spiritual Canaan, which is ours in Christ. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - c. He is faithful to keep His promise to us. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

- C. The basic requirement. (10:12-13)
 - 1. This is distinguishably the **“and now”** book.
 - a. The people have reviewed the faithfulness of God.
 - (1) They have seen how He watched over Israel during the predicted bondage in Egypt.
 - (2) . . . how He brought them out with **“great signs and wonders.”**
 - (3) . . . how He constituted them an elect nation at Sinai.
 - (4) . . . how He guarded and guided them to the borders of Canaan.
 - (5) . . . how He suffered their many murmurings and their rebellion at Kadesh.
 - (6) . . . how He protected, provided and preserved them through the 38 years of delay.
 - (7) . . . how He brought them, at length, to the gateway of the promised inheritance.
 - b. **“And now”** . . . what about it?
 - 2. Loving obedience, flowing from the grateful consciousness of a covenant relationship and fellowship with God, is the basic obligation which comprehends all others. (John 14:21, 23-24)
- D. The basic pledge. (4:25-31)
 - 1. Israel entered Canaan under the conditions set forth in the Sinai covenant (Law).
 - a. The privileges and responsibilities of the Sinai covenant were such that the penalties attached to it were contingent upon Israel's obedience. (Deuteronomy 28:63-68)
 - b. The extreme penalty threatened was the dispersion of Israel and the desolation of Canaan.
 - c. We know that Israel did foul the covenant, that the threatened penalties were effected, and that both the dispersion of the people and the desolation of the land did ensue.
 - 2. The thing to grasp is that the Sinai covenant was not the last word between God and Israel.
 - a. Going beyond the Sinai covenant is the unending Abrahamic Covenant. (Genesis 12:1-3)
 - b. Nothing can destroy this covenant between God and Israel, which was not only sealed with blood, but confirmed with a Divine oath.
 - c. Israel has never yet possessed Canaan under the terms of the unconditional Abrahamic covenant.
 - 3. The Christian walk can be compared to Israel's covenant with God.
 - a. The Christian who walks in disobedience to the Father can be certain to face the discipline of the Lord. (Hebrews 12:5-11, I John 1:9)
 - b. Nevertheless, overriding our fellowship with the Father is always our sonship with Him. (John 1:12)
 - 4. The stage is presently set for the fulfillment of God's basic pledge to Israel.
- E. The basic differences. (12:10-14, John 4:20-26)
 - 1. The Old and New Testaments differ basically.
 - a. A special place is emphasized in the Old. (Deuteronomy 12:10-14)
 - b. A special Person is emphasized in the New. (John 4:20-26)
 - 2. The Ethiopian eunuch had been to the right place, for the right purpose, and was reading the right Book. (Acts 8:27-31)
 - a. He left Jerusalem unsatisfied. (Acts 8:32-34)
 - b. Religion always leaves men unsatisfied.
 - c. When Philip preached to him the right Person, he learned the secret of salvation and satisfaction, and went away rejoicing. (Acts 8:32-35)

IV. Moses.

- A. His life falls into three clearly marked periods of forty years each.
 - 1. The prince of Egypt. (Exodus 2:2)
 - 2. The shepherd of Midian. (Exodus 7:7)
 - 3. The leader of Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:2)
- B. Deuteronomy records the final words and acts of this great man.
 - 1. The charge of Moses to Joshua and the Levites. (Chapter 31)
 - 2. The song of Moses about God and Israel. (Chapter 32)
 - 3. The blessing of Moses upon the tribes. (Chapter 33)
 - 4. The death of Moses on Mount Nebo. (Chapter 34)

Conclusion: The new generation, having reviewed the Law, was now ready to enter into and claim the land that God had promised to them.

JOURNEY THROUGH JOSHUA

Introduction: Joshua is complementary to the five books of Moses, and introductory to the new historical group of twelve (Joshua to Esther). The five books of Moses lead Israel up to Canaan. Joshua complements these by leading Israel into Canaan. The next twelve books cover Israel's history inside of Canaan, with Joshua introducing these by describing the Israelite settlement in Canaan. Joshua, thus, is the link book between the two historical groups in the Old Testament. It covers a period of about twenty-five years.

I. Key Thought.

- A. The Book of Joshua stands in sharp contrast to the Book of Numbers where we see the failure of unbelief.
 1. Failure to enter. (Numbers 14:2-4)
 2. Failure to overcome. (Numbers 14:44-45)
 3. Failure to occupy. (Numbers 14:28-34)
- B. Spiritually interpreted, the exploits of Israel under Joshua proclaim the great New Testament truth, “. . . **and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith**” (1 John 5:4b).
- C. Each of the victories in the program of conquest was ordered so as to exhibit that victory as resulting from faith in God, and not in the arms of men.

II. The Structure Of Joshua.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH (1:5, 9)		
ENTERING THE LAND (Chapters 1-5)		
1	Joshua charged	<i>The warrant of faith</i>
2	Jericho spied	<i>The prudence of faith</i>
3	Jordan crossed	<i>The crisis of faith</i>
4	Memorials raised	<i>The witness of faith</i>
5	Gilgal occupied	<i>The pruning of faith</i>
OVERCOMING THE LAND (Chapters 6-12)		
6	Fall of Jericho	<i>Faith triumphant</i>
7	Sin of Achan	<i>Faith disabled</i>
8	Sack of Ai	<i>Faith re-empowered</i>
9	Guile of Gibeon	<i>Faith endangered</i>
10-12	Rout of all Foes	<i>Faith all-victorious</i>
OCCUPYING THE LAND (Chapters 13-24)		
13-19	Division of Canaan	<i>Faith rewarded</i>
20	Cities of Refuge	<i>Faith protected</i>
21	Portion for Levites	<i>Faith preserved</i>
22	Altar of Witness	<i>Faith unified</i>
23-24	Farewell of Joshua	<i>Faith continued</i>

III. Typical Significance.

- A. In some of our hymns, the Jordan River is taken to represent death, and the land of Canaan heaven.
 1. If Jordan is death and Canaan heaven, then it follows that the whole of the Christian life, right up to the point of death, corresponds to the Wilderness through which the Hebrews tromped.
 2. Canaan cannot be a type of heaven, for it was a place of conquest and conflict.

3. If Israel could be ejected from Canaan by powerful foes, and eventually would be, how can this typify the calm restfulness of the ultimate inheritance in heaven?
- B. The geographical locations seen so far in Israel's history illustrate three spiritual experiences.
 1. Egypt was a place of death and bondage from which Israel was delivered.
 - a. They were delivered from death by the blood of the lamb on the door posts, and by the power of God who opened the Red Sea and took them across safely.
 - b. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers are delivered from the bondage and judgment of sin. (John 1:29)
 2. The Wilderness experience depicts those believers who continue to live in disbelief and disobedience. (Cp. I Corinthians 3:1-3)
 - a. Like Israel, they come to a crisis place (Kadesh-barnea), but refuse to obey the Lord and claim His will for their lives.
 - b. Instead of marching through life as conquerors, they meander through life as wanderers and never enjoy the fullness of what God has planned for them.
 3. Canaan represents the Christian life as it ought to be lived.
 - a. There is conflict and victory, faith and obedience, and spiritual riches and rest.
 - b. It's a life of faith, trusting Jesus Christ to lead from victory to victory. (I John 5:4-5)

IV. Joshua And Ephesians.

- A. There is a remarkable parallel between the Book of Joshua and the Epistle to the Ephesians.
 1. In Joshua, we see Israel entering and possessing the earthly inheritance given to Abraham.
 2. In Ephesians, we see the believer entering and possessing the heavenly inheritance in Christ.
- B. A five-fold parallel is marked by the five occasions of the expression, "**the heavenlies**," in Ephesians.
 1. Each was the predestined inheritance of a chosen people.
 - a. Israel was blessed with all material blessings in earthly places in Abraham. (Genesis 13:14-15)
 - b. The believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3-4)
 2. Each was opened up by a Divine ordained leader.
 - a. In the case of Israel, all was put into the hands of Joshua. (Joshua 1:6)
 - b. The believer's inheritance is opened up by the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:18-22)
 3. Each was a gift of grace to be received by faith.
 - a. Canaan was given to Israel in Abraham, not Moses, the man of the Law. (Exodus 13:5)
 - (1) By the Law Israel could never have become entitled to Canaan.
 - (2) Moses was not privileged even to enter or lead the people into Canaan.
 - (3) The Law can never lead us into God's promised rest for our souls in Christ.
 - (4) Hence, Moses must die, and Joshua must open up the inheritance. (Joshua 4:24)
 - b. The believer's rest is found in Christ. (Ephesians 2:5-8)
 4. Each is a sphere of striking Divine revelation.
 - a. Israel's entering and possessing of Canaan was intended to be a revelation of the true God to the nations of that day. (Joshua 4:24)
 - b. The believer is a revelation of God to the powers of the spirit-realm. (Ephesians 3:8-10)
 5. Each is described as a scene of conflict.
 - a. In the earthly Canaan, there were evil nations that had to be destroyed. (Deut. 9:1-4)
 - (1) Israel was to wield the sword against them, though not with any doubt as to the final outcome, for God was with Israel.
 - (2) Conflict was inevitable, but Israel's defeat was impossible.
 - b. The believer, too, must war against principalities and powers. (Ephesians 6:12)

V. Joshua's Farewell Address. (23:1-24:28)

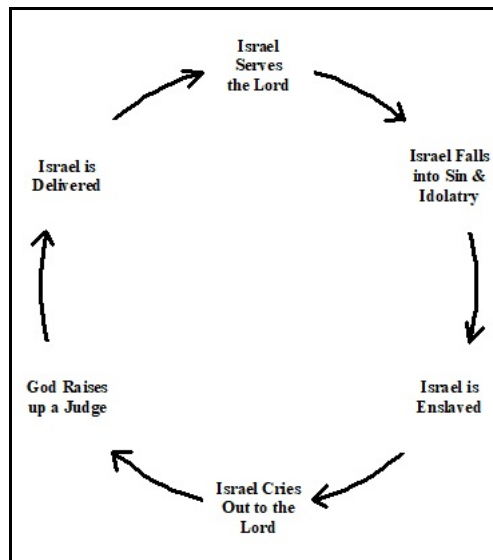
- A. The parting counsel of the aged Joshua unveils the concern of his heart for the privileged nation.
- B. He prescribed three safeguards.
 1. There must be brave adherence to God's Word. (23:6)
 2. There must be vigilant separation from the Canaanite nations. (23:7)
 3. There must be fervent cleaving to the Lord. (23:8-11)

Conclusion: We see in the Book of Joshua that the principles that governed Israel's occupation of the land are the same principles that operate the believer's appropriation of the inheritance in Christ.

JOURNEY THROUGH JUDGES

Introduction: The Book of Judges takes its name from its contents, which are devoted to the period of Israel's so-called "*Judges*." Following Joshua, it covers roughly the first three hundred and fifty years of Israel's history in Canaan.

- I. Nature And Authorship.
 - A. The records preserved in this book are historically true, yet they do not intend to constitute a careful chronology.
 - B. The emphasis is on the spiritually significant events, not on mere chronological continuity.
 - C. The authorship is not known, although Jewish tradition attributes it to Samuel.
- II. Its General Significance.
 - A. The Judges whom God raised up were living object lessons by which God sought to preserve in Israel the understanding that faith in Jehovah, the only true God, was the one way of victory and well-being.
 - 1. The people responded only so far as served their selfish ends of the moment – the saving of their necks from bondage.
 - 2. They did not love Jehovah for His patience; nor did they serve Him out of a sense of duty.
 - 3. When things were tolerably comfortable, betrayal of Jehovah was the order of the day.
 - 4. From time to time, out of sheer pity for His humiliated people, God raised up Judges, whose exploits were so manifestly miraculous, that Israel was forced to recognize Jehovah again as the one true God.
 - B. Cycle of Judges:



- III. Its Central Message – "*Failure Through Compromise*." (Judges 21:25, cp. Deuteronomy 7:1-6a)
 - A. Every page of the book contributes to the driving home of this central theme.
 - 1. The exploits of the Judges teach us that a return to the true faith brings renewed victory.
 - 2. The stark reality, though, is that failure is due to compromise.
 - B. How did it all begin?
 - 1. In the opening chapter we are told that the nine and a half tribes which settled in Canaan did not destroy, or even drive out, the Canaanite nations, as God had commanded.
 - a. The other two and a half tribes had already sadly compromised by choosing to settle on the east side of the Jordan River.
 - b. The first chapter also gives eight incomplete conquests. (1:17ff.)
 - c. The incomplete mastery of an evil at the outset always means constant trouble from it afterwards and often defeat by it in the end.

2. In chapters two and three we find the successive steps of further compromise.
 - a. Having partially mastered the Canaanites, Israel now makes leagues with them. (2:2)
 - b. Having made leagues with them, Israel intermarries with them. (3:6)
 - c. Having mixed blood in marriage, Israel descends to their ways, bows to their idols, forsakes Jehovah, and serves Baal. (2:13, 3:6)
 - d. In judgment for their sin, God brings their enemies upon them. (2:14)
- C. We can never enjoy God's promised rest as long as we tolerate sin in our lives. (II Corinthians 6:17-18)

IV. It's Structure.

FAILURE THROUGH COMPROMISE			
Prologue (Chapters 1-2)			
<i>Reference</i>	<i>Oppressor</i>	<i>Judge</i>	<i>Period</i>
3:7-11	Mesopotamia	Othniel	40 years
3:12-30	Moab	Ehud	80 years
3:31	Philistia	Shamgar	Unknown
4:1-5:31	Canaan	Deborah (Barak)	40 years
6:1-8:28	Midian	Gideon	40 years
10:1-2	Unknown	Tola	23 years
10:3-5	Unknown	Jair	22 years
10:6-12:7	Ammon	Jephthah	6 years
12:8-10	Unknown	Ibzan	7 years
12:11-12	Unknown	Elon	10 years
12:13-15	Unknown	Abdon	8 years
13:1-16:31	Philistia	Samson	20 years
Epilogue (Chapters 17-21)			

V. Gideon Still Speaks.

- A. Gideon still cuts a pathetic figure of unbelief. (6:11-23)
 1. Note Gideon's reaction to the Lord's message: **"Oh, my Lord . . . if Jehovah . . . why then . . . where be all the miracles?"** (6:13)
 2. In these replies we have a fair sample of the vocabulary of unbelief.
- B. Look at Gideon's transforming experience.
 1. He became converted. (6:24)
 - a. He had become convinced regarding the true God of Israel.
 - b. When Gideon built the altar to Jehovah, he turned his back on the false gods. (Cp. I Thessalonians 1:9)
 - c. For the first time in his life this young Hebrew came into a sense of peace – **"Shalom."**
 2. He became consecrated. (6:25-27)
 - a. He yielded his own will to the will of God.
 - b. To wreck Baal's altar was to run counter to the popular will of the people around him, and invite death.
 3. He became controlled by the Spirit of God. (6:34)

Conclusion: Throughout the Book of Judges we see the sinfulness of man and the failure of man, but we are also exposed to the constant mercy of God. Furthermore, we are warned not to presume upon the grace of God.

JOURNEY THROUGH RUTH

Introduction: Priceless gems have often been found in unlikely places. Many a choice flower has been found blooming in a rocky crevice. Rainbow artistries have suddenly lit up the drabest of skies. Beauty spots have charmed the traveler at surprise turns on the least-promising roads. It is even so with this superbly beautiful little story, the Book of Ruth.

I. Introduction.

- A. The book opens with the words, **“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled . . .”**
 - 1. This indicates that the story takes place in the period covered by the Book of Judges – a tragic period in Israel’s history.
 - 2. Yet, so beautiful is this episode, centering on Naomi and Ruth and Boaz, that it comes as a kind of redeeming contrast after our painful reading in the Book of Judges.
 - 3. The Book of Judges leaves us with the all-too-well-founded conviction that the general condition was one of moral deterioration, but the Book of Ruth turns a new sidelight on the scene, and shows that amid the general degeneracy there were instances of noble love and godly chivalry.
 - 4. If this one instance of godly chivalry was picked out by the anonymous author, and committed to written form, it could be supposed that it represents many other such instances amid the surrounding decline.
 - 5. May God’s people never lose sight of a holy walk before God amidst a crooked and perverse nation.
- B. This little biographical episode is given in the form of a story.
 - 1. It is a series of pen-and-ink sketches with a rural background, showing the devotion of a young Moabitish widow for her widowed Hebrew mother-in-law, and the providential reward by which her self-sacrificing devotion was afterward crowned.
 - 2. It tells of actual happenings and of real persons whose names figure in real genealogical records.

II. Ruth’s Unique Features.

- A. This is one of only two books in Scripture which bear the names of women.
 - 1. The two books stand in marked contrast.
 - a. Ruth is a young Gentle woman who is brought to live among the Hebrews and marries a Hebrew husband in the line of royal David.
 - b. Esther is a young Hebrew woman who is brought to live among Gentiles and marries a Gentile husband on the throne of a great empire.
 - 2. Both Ruth and Esther were great and noble women.
 - 3. The Book of Ruth stands alone in that it is the only instance in the Bible in which the whole book is devoted to a woman.
- B. The Book of Ruth is a love story.
 - 1. It is not the story of a romantic love between a young man and young woman.
 - 2. It is the story of a woman’s love for a woman; of a young wife’s devoted love for her mother-in-law.
 - 3. It extols virtuous love and how to overcome all alienations and prejudices.
- C. Ruth is one of the five women who are mentioned in the Messianic Line. (Matthew 1:1-17)
 - 1. Tamar and Rahab were prostitutes. (Genesis 38:24, Joshua 2:1)
 - 2. Bathsheba committed adultery. (II Samuel 11:2-5)
 - 3. Mary, was the Virgin mother of Nazareth. (Matthew 1:16)
 - 4. Ruth was the foreigner of noble character.
- D. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David.
 - 1. This is where the priceless little Book of Ruth finds its purpose.
 - a. It was Boaz who took Gentile Ruth into the Davidic ancestry and the Messianic line.
 - b. As Ruth passes into that line she representatively takes all the Gentiles with her.
 - 2. As far as asserting the exclusive privilege of the chosen people, Ruth invites other races to come and put their trust under the wings of Jehovah.

III. The Structure Of Ruth.

THE BOOK OF RUTH
LOVE'S RESOLVE (Ruth's noble choice – Chapter 1) Ruth, the faithful daughter – cleaves to Naomi in her sorrow.
LOVE'S RESPONSE (Ruth's lowly service – Chapter 2) Ruth, the Moabite gleaner – responds to Naomi's pressing need.
LOVE'S REQUEST (Ruth's tender appeal – Chapter 3) Ruth, the virtuous suppliant – appeals to the chivalrous kinsman.
LOVE'S REWARD (Ruth's marital joy – Chapter 4) Ruth, the beloved wife and mother – joys in the blissful consummation.

IV. The Story.

- A. Love's Resolve. (1:1-22)
 - 1. Ruth's relationships. (1:1-6a)
 - 2. Naomi's plea. (1:8-9)
 - a. The word "**rest**," as used in verse nine, speaks of a safe shelter under a husband's care.
 - b. In the ancient Orient, the position of an unmarried woman or young widow was perilous.
 - c. Naomi urged Orpah and Ruth to seek safety, respect, and honor in their parents' homes.
 - 3. Ruth's resolve – "**Intreat me not to leave thee . . .**" (1:16-17)
 - a. Here is the glorious love of Ruth.
 - b. Knowing the cost well, she gladly gives her all, and is willing to suffer her all, for Naomi.
 - 4. Ruth's reception. (1:19-22)
- B. Love's Response. (2:1-23)
 - 1. Ruth guided to Boaz's field. (2:1-3)
 - a. Under the Law, there were three requirements of a kinsman.
 - (1) He must be willing to redeem.
(Leviticus 25:25, Galatians 4:4-5)
 - (2) He must have the right, as a kinsman, to redeem.
(Leviticus 25:48-49, Hebrews 2:11)
 - (3) He must have the power, or means, to redeem.
(Ruth 4:4-6, John 10:11-18)
 - b. The obvious purpose behind all this was the saving of the Israelites from extinction.
 - 2. Ruth becomes a gleaner in Boaz's field. (2:4-7)
 - 3. Ruth comes under the grace and protection of Boaz. (2:8-14)
 - 4. Ruth reports of her lowly service. (2:15-23)
- C. Love's Request. (3:1-18)
 - 1. Suggested by Naomi. (3:1-4)
 - 2. Executed by Ruth. (3:5-9)
 - 3. Agreed to by Boaz. (3:10-18)
- D. Love's Reward. (4:1-22)
 - 1. A husband. (4:1-12)
 - 2. A son. (4:13-17)
 - 3. A lineage. (4:18-22)

Conclusion: From the point of Naomi's return, Ruth takes the prominent place. First, Ruth is seen in the harvest field, alien, poor, destitute, and having no part in Israel, yet seeking refuge under the wing of Jehovah. Second, Ruth is seen as having no hope in anyone other than Boaz, going to the threshing floor, risking everything, and believing in his kindness and grace to redeem her. Finally, Ruth is seen as having been graciously received by Redeemer-Boaz, becoming united with him as his wife, and sharing in his life, his home and his wealth. It does not require very acute insight to perceive in all this the beautiful type-teaching concerning Christ and His Church.

JOURNEY THROUGH I SAMUEL

Introduction: We have said farewell to gentle Ruth, and have turned over another page of our Bible.

The *"First Book of Samuel"* lies before us, introducing to us one of the most famous figures in Israel's history, and opening up a stirring new chapter in the fascinating story of God's earthly people. This *"First Book of Samuel"* heads what have been called the three *"double books"* of the Old Testament – I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles. These three double books together form a complete section. They record the rise and fall of the Israelite monarchy.

I. The Manuscripts.

- A. In the Hebrew manuscripts, I and II Samuel form but one book, as do I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles.
 - 1. Their division into two books each, as we now have them, originates with the Septuagint translation of the Scriptures into Greek, said to have been made in the third century B.C.
 - 2. In the Septuagint, I and II Samuel and I and II Kings are called, respectively, the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Books of the Kingdoms (*"Kingdoms"* plural meaning the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel).
- B. The present division of I and II Samuel has much merit.
 - 1. I Samuel runs from the birth of Samuel, the last judge, to the death of Saul, the first king.
 - 2. II Samuel is distinctively the book of David's forty years' reign.

II. The Structure.

- A. I Samuel is eventful history interwoven with the biographies of three colorful personalities.
 - 1. Samuel, the last of the Judges. (Chapters 1-8)
 - 2. Saul, the first of the Kings. (Chapters 9-15)
 - 3. David, the anointed Successor. (Chapters 16-31)
- B. Obviously, the three accounts overlap.

III. Central Feature And Message.

- A. I Samuel is the book of transition from the Theocracy to the Monarchy.
- B. I Samuel is a book with a central spiritual message.
 - 1. God had called Israel into a unique relationship with Himself; and God Himself was Israel's King invisible.
 - 2. Through disobedience the people had brought chastisement upon themselves from time to time.
 - 3. The people attributed much of their woes to the fact that they had no human and visible king, such as the surrounding nations had.
- C. As Samuel ages, and his sons prove perverse, the people press for a human king. (8:1-5)
 - 1. It was a step dictated merely by seeming expediency.
 - 2. It was the way of human wisdom and not faith in God.
 - 3. The people thought it would solve their many problems and make things wonderfully easier.
- D. Herein lies the central message of I Samuel: Troubles increase when we choose the seemingly easier way of human wisdom, in preference to faith in God's way.

IV. Samuel: The Last Of The Judges. (Chapters 1-8)

- A. The book of I Samuel opens with Hannah, Elkanah's wife, praying for a son. (1:11)
 - 1. To a Hebrew woman, barrenness was a sign of God's displeasure with her.
 - 2. The hope of becoming the mother of the Messiah burned in the heart of every Hebrew woman.
 - 3. It was during dark and troublesome times for Israel that we find this prayer of faith coming from the lips of a simple, trusting woman, Hannah.
 - 4. God answered this prayer, and blessed Hannah with a son, Samuel. (1:20)
- B. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him to the tabernacle at Shiloh. (1:24-25)
 - 1. Amidst a corrupt priesthood, Samuel was protected and grew up to fear the Lord. (2:26)
 - 2. Eli was both judge and priest at this time and had ruled for 40 years.
 - 3. He was an lenient father, and as a result, his sons, who were also priests, were very immoral.

4. Moral corruption abounded in the nation, and God warned Eli of the downfall of his house. (2:27-36)
 5. Following His warning to Eli, God summoned Samuel to service. (3:1-21)
 - C. Because of Israel's sin, God allowed the Philistines to invade Israel and capture the Ark. (4:10-11)
 1. During this invasion, Eli's sons were killed.
 2. When Eli heard all that had happened, he died of shock at the age of 98. (4:14-18)
 3. The Philistines put the Ark in the house of their god, Dagon, as a war trophy. (5:2)
 4. The Ark brought problems for the Philistines and is returned to Israel. (5:3-6, 6:1-3)
 5. Samuel leads the nation to revival and the defeat of the Philistines. (7:3-4, 11)
 - D. The elders of Israel gathered at Ramah and asked Samuel for a king. (8:4-5)
 1. Samuel responded with displeasure. (8:6)
 - a. God assures the prophet that their rejection was not of him, but of God. (8:7)
 - b. Samuel warned them of the cost. (8:10-18)
 2. The people exercised their *"right of self-determination."* (8:19-20)
 - a. How many once bright Christians have been spoiled through wanting to be like the people of the world?
 - b. How insidious is the temptation to lean on that which is seen and human instead of resting in the invisible God.
- V. Saul: The First Of The Kings. (Chapters 9-15)
- A. His early promise.
 1. Striking physical superiority. (9:2)
 2. Highly commendable qualities.
 - a. Considerate. (9:5)
 - b. Modest. (9:21, 10:22)
 - c. Discreet. (10:27)
 - d. Courageous. (11:6, 11)
 - B. His later decline.
 1. Saul became presumptuous and impatient.
 - a. Samuel told Saul to go to Gilgal and to wait seven days and that he (Samuel) would offer sacrifices to the Lord. (10:8)
 - b. Saul, impatiently violated the priestly function by offering a sacrifice to the Lord. (13:8-12)
 - c. Because of Saul's self will and impatience, the Lord rejected him as king. (13:13-14)
 2. Saul became disobedient and rebellious.
 - a. Saul was to completely destroy the Amalekites. (15:1-9)
 - b. He directly disobeyed the direct command of the Lord.
 3. Samuel rebuked Saul and told him that because of his sin the Lord had rejected him from being king. (15:22-23)
 4. After David slew Goliath (chapter 17) and led in other military successes, Saul became insanely jealous of David because of his popularity. (18:6-8)
 5. Saul ultimately turned to witchcraft. (28:7, cp. 15:23)
 6. Saul was wounded in battle and then killed himself by falling on his own sword. (31:4)
- VI. David: The Anointed Successor. (Chapters 16-31)
- A. David became a man after God's own heart and was one of the greatest characters in all of Israel's history.
 1. Saul made several attempts to take David's life. (chapters 19-26)
 2. In the midst of Saul's rampages against David, Samuel died. (25:1)
 3. David twice had the opportunity to kill Saul, but couldn't, for he asked, **"Who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?"** (26:9)
 4. Finally, David could only find refuge from Saul outside the borders of Israel. (27:1, cp. Psalm 56)
 - B. In II Samuel we will see how David came back to Israel and led the nation to the heights of its glory and splendor.

Conclusion: We learn from Saul that a man plays the fool when he neglects God's commands. From a giant of a man he had gone from the position of king to the pits of unbelief. It was selfism that finally conquered Saul.

JOURNEY THROUGH II SAMUEL

Introduction: II Samuel is distinctively the book of David's reign. It opens with David's accession over Judah, immediately after Saul's death, and closes just before David's death, when he is "**old and stricken in years.**" The book, therefore, covers a period of some forty years; for that was the duration of David's reign. II Samuel 5:4-5 says, "**David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.**" It will be helpful, then, to remember that II Samuel is the book of David's forty year reign.

- I. Composite Authorship.
 - A. The authorship of II Samuel is far from certain, although the likeliest indications favor that Samuel, whose name is carried in the title of the book, was responsible for the first twenty-four chapters.
 - B. The remaining chapters are generally ascribed to the prophets Nathan and Gad. (I Chronicles 29:29-30)
- II. The Tragic Divide.
 - A. This second book of Samuel falls into two main parts.
 1. David's great sin (chapter 11) marks the sad divide, right in the middle of the book and right in the middle of David's forty year reign, for it falls about the end of the first twenty years.
 - a. Up to this point, all goes triumphantly for David.
 - b. After this, there are ugly knots and tangles, grievous blows and tragic results.
 2. In the first part, we sing David's triumphs; in the second part, we mourn David's troubles.
 - B. The structure of the book.

II SAMUEL – THE BOOK OF DAVID'S FORTY YEAR REIGN
Sin Turns Triumphs Into Troubles
I. David's Triumphs. (Chapters 1-12) King over Judah only, at Hebron. (Chapters 1-4) King over all Israel, at Jerusalem. (Chapters 5-12)
II. David's Troubles. (Chapters 13-24) David's troubles in his family. (Chapters 13-18) David's troubles in the nation. (Chapters 19-24)

- III. The Central Spiritual Message.
 - A. II Samuel emphasizes that all sin, whether in king or commoner, whether in the godly or the godless, certainly brings bitter fruit. (Galatians 6:7-8)
 1. Sin is the destroyer of prosperity.
 2. However full and fair the tree may look, if rot is eating away within the trunk, the tree will surely break and fall, or else become a leafless skeleton.
 3. There is no sinning without suffering.
 - B. The central spiritual message, therefore, stands out clearly: Sin turns triumphs into troubles.
- IV. David's Triumphs. (Chapters 1-12)
 - A. David at Hebron. (Chapters 1-4)
 1. David reigned over Judah only, at Hebron for 7½ years, because the other tribes would not at first accept him as Saul's successor.
 2. At the instigation of Abner, captain of Saul's army, Ishbosheth, a son of the deceased Saul, was proclaimed king in opposition to David; and to Ishbosheth the tribes, other than Judah, gathered.
 - B. David at Jerusalem. (Chapters 5-7)
 1. As David is proclaimed king of all Israel, he transfers the seat of his government to Jerusalem. (5:1-5)

- a. The acknowledgment of David's right to the kingship rested on a threefold basis:
 - (1) His human kinship – **"We are thy bone and thy flesh."** (5:1)
 - (2) His human merit – **"Thou . . . leddest out and broughtest in Israel."** (5:2)
 - (3) His Divine warrant – **"The Lord said unto thee: Thou shalt be . . . captain over Israel."** (5:2)
 - b. Does this not speak of Christ's right of Kingship over our lives?
 - (1) He is of our Kinship – *"bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh."*
 - (2) He is our Savior of proven merit, who espoused our cause, fought our foe, and brought us deliverance from the guilt and tyranny of sin.
 - (3) He is our King by Divine warrant, the One to whom is committed all administrative authority in heaven and earth – **"and the government shall be upon His shoulders"** (Isaiah 9:6).
 2. The Davidic Covenant. (7:11-16)
 - a. Its significance.
 - (1) The divine confirmation of the throne of Israel.
 - (2) The predicted perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty – **"for ever"** (7:13, 16).
 - (a) A **"house"** speaks of posterity. (7:11, 13)
 - (b) A **"throne"** speaks of royal authority. (7:13)
 - (c) A **"kingdom"** speaks of a sphere of rule. (7:13)
 - b. This covenant marks the fourth major development in the Messianic prophecies.
 - (1) In Adam, the promise is made to the race of humanity in general. (Genesis 3:15)
 - (2) In Abraham, the promise is made to one nation in the race of humanity. (Genesis 22:18)
 - (3) In Jacob, the promise is made to one tribe in the nation. (Genesis 49:10)
 - (4) In David, the promise is made to one family in the tribe. (II Samuel 7:16)
 - C. David's reign at its zenith. (Chapters 8-10)
 1. Wherever he turns, he is a victorious warrior.
 2. At home, he is an upright and constructive administrator.
 - D. David sins with Bathsheba. (Chapters 11-12)
 1. Steps to David's sin. (Cp. James 1:14-15)
 - a. He **"saw"** – **"drawn away of his own lust."** (11:2)
 - b. He **"enquired"** – he was **"enticed"** by entertaining the thought. (11:3)
 - c. He yielded – **"bringeth forth sin."** (11:4)
 2. Results of David's sin.
 - a. Illegitimate child conceived. (11:5)
 - b. Uriah murdered. (11:14-17)
 - c. Nation deceived. (12:12-14)
 3. Nathan's confrontation. (12:1-7)

V. David's Troubles. (Chapters 13-24)

 - A. David's last recorded victory was the conquest of Rabbah, the royal city of Ammon, in chapter 12.
 - B. The rest of the book records all of David's troubles in his family and as a nation.

VI. How do we reconcile the shameful fall of David with the Biblical statement that God Himself declared David to be **"a man after mine own heart?"** (I Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22)

 - A. We must view David's life as a whole.
 1. Were it not for the strict honesty of the Bible, this black episode could easily have been withheld from us and we would not have known anything about it at all.
 2. We must see David's faith and obedience toward God through many years.
 - B. We must take David's repentance into account. (Psalm 51:1-19, 32:1-11)
 - C. We must see David's inner life, as revealed in the Davidic psalms.
 1. In the books of Samuel and the Chronicles, we see David's outward life.
 2. In the Davidic psalms, we see David's inner life.
 - D. The full account of David's life, supported by the noble testimony of his psalms, shows that despite his defeats, and one extremely grievous fall, the final result is such as to justify the pronouncement that he was truly a man after God's own heart.

Conclusion: David illustrates for us that although sin may be forgiven, sin still has consequences.

JOURNEY THROUGH I KINGS

Introduction: What height of glory and depth of tragedy lies in the history which stretches before us in the books of the Kings. The book of I Kings might be remembered as the book of the disruption, for it records the division of the one united kingdom, over which Saul, David and Solomon reigned, into two kingdoms, known henceforth as Israel and Judah. The Kingdom of Israel, comprised of ten tribes of Israel became the Northern Kingdom, while the Kingdom of Judah, comprised of Judah and Benjamin, became the Southern Kingdom. In the Northern Kingdom, Israel, Samaria became its capital. In the Southern Kingdom, Judah, Jerusalem remained as capital. This then is the central feature of I Kings: one kingdom divided into two.

I. The Book.

- A. The author of the book is unknown, although Jewish tradition suggests that Jeremiah may have penned it.
- B. The central message of I Kings is that division results from disobedience.
- C. Structure of the Book:

I KINGS – THE BOOK OF DISRUPTION
Discontinuance Through Disobedience (I Kings 11:11-13)
I. King Solomon's Forty Year Reign. (Chapters 1-11) Solomon's accession and early acts. (Chapters 1-4) Solomon's Temple and palace built. (Chapters 5-8) Solomon's fame and glory. (Chapters 9-10) Solomon's decline and decease. (Chapter 11)
II. The Two Kingdom's First Eighty Years. (Chapters 12-22) Accession of Rehoboam – the Disruption. (Chapter 12) Kings of Judah – Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat. (Chapters 13-22) Kings of Israel – Jeroboam to Ahaziah. (Chapters 13-22) Ministry of Elijah to Israel. (Chapters 17-22)

II. Solomon's Reign. (Chapters 1-11)

- A. Solomon was the last of the kings to reign over a united Hebrew kingdom.
 - 1. As the book opens, we find King David as a bed-ridden old man. (1:1)
 - 2. His oldest living son, Adonijah, decided he should be king and gave a party to celebrate. (1:5, 9)
 - 3. Hearing this, Bathsheba came to David and reminded him that he had promised that her son Solomon, would follow him as king.
 - 4. Nathan, the prophet, confirmed what was happening, and David moved to have Solomon crowned at once. (1:22-24, 28-35, 39)
 - 5. When Adonijah saw that his continued opposition was useless, he acknowledged Solomon as king. (1:49-53)
- B. God appeared to Solomon early in his reign and told him that he could have anything he desired. (3:5-13)
 - 1. Solomon responded by asking for wisdom and understanding to rule God's people. (3:9, cp. James 1:5)
 - 2. Solomon then became the wisest man the world had ever known, until the coming of the One who said, "**A greater than Solomon is here**" (Matthew 12:42).
 - 3. Solomon's wisdom is displayed in the story of two harlots. (3:16-28)
- C. The greatest of Solomon's accomplishments was the building and dedication of the Temple.
 - 1. This had been the dream of his father, David. (II Samuel 7:1-13a)
 - 2. After the completion of the Temple, the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time with very definite promises. (9:3-9)

- D. Solomon's transgressions against God. (11:1-8)
 - 1. Four and a half centuries before, God had written the qualifications for all future kings of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:14-17)
 - 2. Solomon had disobeyed God in all these areas.
 - a. He had much gold and silver. (10:14-17)
 - b. He had thousands of horses. (4:26)
 - c. He had hundreds of wives and concubines. (11:3)
 - 3. The result of Solomon's transgression was the dividing of the nation after his death. (11:9-13)

III. The Two Kingdoms. (Chapters 12-22)

- A. Israel's tragedy.
 - 1. At the close of Solomon's reign Israel had become exalted to the highest dignity in its history.
 - 2. As in the book of Judges, while God may confer many privileges, He never confers the privilege to sin, not even with such an elect personage as Solomon.
- B. The actual disruption of the kingdom explained. (12:1-33)
 - 1. In the later years of Solomon's reign the extravagant expenses of the royal court had become such as to necessitate the raising of taxes which the people were unable to pay. (12:1-3)
 - a. After the death of Solomon, and the accession of Rehoboam, the people sought relief from their tax burden. (12:4)
 - b. After counseling with his advisors for three days, Rehoboam gave his response. (12:5-14)
 - 2. Here is a good lesson in not only seeking counsel, but also the right kind of counsel.
 - a. Rehoboam rejected the council of his elders, who were far greater experienced in life, and listened to the council of his peers.
 - b. Rehoboam's response revealed his inability to measure the situation and stands in sharp contrast to the mental superiority of his distinguished father.
 - 3. Rehoboam's senseless threat to out do his father's severities was the last straw and the ten northern tribes renounced any further allegiance to the house of David; making Jeroboam their king instead. (12:16-20)
- C. Jeroboam was as shrewd and unscrupulous as he was energetic and forceful.
 - 1. He quickly perceived that although he had fortified Shechem as his capital, Jerusalem would still be regarded as the center of the tribes because of the presence of the Temple as the principle of Israel's worship.
 - 2. If the people were to continue going up to the religious festivals there, the result would be fatal to the throne of the new ten-tribed kingdom. (12:25-27)
- D. Jeroboam established two new centers of worship: Dan and Bethel. (12:28)
 - 1. He ordained a feast to correspond to the Feast of Tabernacles, though he put its observance one month later than that of the feast in Judah. (12:32)
 - 2. He elected a new order of priests from the lowest of people. (13:33)
 - 3. Jeroboam's distinguishing epitaph became, "**Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin**" (22:52).
- E. For the next 80-year period two lines of kings existed.
 - 1. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had eight kings, all of which were considered evil.
 - 2. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, had four kings, of which only two were considered good; Asa and Jehoshaphat.

IV. Elijah. (Chapters 17-22)

- A. Elijah's ministry had its focus on the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- B. The New Testament speaks of him more than any other prophet.
 - 1. It was Elijah who appeared with Moses at our Lord's transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-5)
 - 2. It is at this point in the divided kingdom that the work of God's prophets is emphasized.
- C. Elijah demonstrates that God always has a man to match the hour.
- D. Elijah further demonstrates that when wickedness develops into extraordinary proportions God meets it with extraordinary measures.

Conclusion: Solomon continued the policy and shared the blessing of his father, but his lax attitude toward the things of the Lord latter in life brought division and apostasy. I Corinthians 15:58 warns, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**"

JOURNEY THROUGH II KINGS

Introduction: This Second Book of Kings, which opens with the translation of Elijah to heaven, and closes with the transportation of the captive Jews to Babylon, is more tragic than all that has preceded it. The elect people, through whom the gracious purposes of God were to have been developed for the enlightenment and regeneration of the whole race, become more and more steeped in infidelity and moral degradation, until finally judgment falls and pitiless foes drag them from their own land into humiliating captivity.

- I. The Book.
 - A. In chapter 17 we see the ten-tribed Northern Kingdom (Israel) going into the Assyrian captivity, from which they have never returned.
 1. In chapter 25 we see the Southern Kingdom (Judah) going into the Babylonian captivity, from which only a remnant returned.
 2. Although Judah did not go into captivity until over a century after the break up of Israel, the two captivities are spoken of together as the *"Dispersion."*
 - B. We have seen how each of the historical books, so far, is distinguished by some controlling feature.
 1. I Samuel is the book of Transition – from Theocracy to Monarchy.
 2. II Samuel is the book of David's reign.
 3. I Kings is the book of the Disruption – of the one kingdom into two.
 4. II Kings is the book of the Dispersion.
 - C. As the battered and broken tribes of Israel are dragged behind the chariots of their heathen conquerors, the central message of this book is that willful sin brings a woeful end.
 1. That truth is fully realized in King Solomon's words found in Proverbs 13:15, "**... the way of transgressors is hard.**"
 2. In II Kings, Paul's words are demonstrated on a national scale: "**The wages of sin is death**" (Romans 6:23a).
 - D. Various thoughts are displayed in II Kings.
 1. Sinning despite warning brings ruin without remedy.
 2. Inexcusable wrong brings inescapable wrath.
 3. Abused privilege incurs increased penalty.
 4. The deeper the guilt, the heavier the stroke.
 5. Correction may be resisted, but retribution cannot be evaded.
 6. "**How shall we escape if we neglect . . .**" (Hebrews 2:3).
 7. "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**" (Galatians 6:7).
 - E. Structure.

II KINGS – THE BOOK OF THE DISPERSION
Willful Sin Brings A Woeful End
I. Historical Events of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. (Chapters 1-10) The Ministry of Elisha. Concludes with the death of King Jehu, Israel's Tenth King.
II. Historical Events of Both Kingdoms. (Chapters 11-17) This part runs up the Assyrian Captivity of Israel. <i>(Prophets of this time include Jonah, Amos and Hosea.)</i>
III. Historical Events of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. (Chapters 18-25) This part runs up to the Babylonian Captivity of Judah. <i>(Prophets of this time include Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.)</i> <i>(Post-Captivity prophets include Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.)</i>

II. Elisha. (Chapters 1-10)

A. His personal character.

1. He desired spirituality. (2:9, cp. I Timothy 3:1)
2. He was a man of humble service. (3:11)
3. He was willing to rebuke, even when there was an easier alternative. (3:9-14)
4. He was indifferent towards wealth. (5:5, 15-16)
5. He was a man of compassion.
 - a. He provided financial resources that a helpless widow might pay her debts. (4:1-7)
 - b. He healed the commander of a foreign army who had leprosy. (5:1-19)
 - c. He restored the axe-head for a young man who had borrowed an axe. (6:1-7)

B. His ministry.

1. In the first ten chapters there are no less than seventeen miracles performed by Elisha.
2. All of his mighty acts were unmistakable evidences of the reality and sovereign power of God from whom the nation had now outrageously apostatized.
3. The louder the warning and the clearer the sign, the deafer and blinder do unwilling people become.

III. The Northern Kingdom. (Chapters 1-17)

A. In about 250 years, Israel had 19 evil kings. (3:2-3, 10:31, 13:2, 14:24, 15:9, 18, 24, 28, 17:2)

1. The standard by which the kings of Israel were judged is the shameful reign of Jeroboam, the first king who occupied the throne of the Northern Kingdom.
2. Just as our bodies cast their shadows quite involuntarily, so do we continually and quietly cast the shadow of our moral and spiritual influence upon other lives. (Romans 14:7)

B. The dispersion of the Northern Kingdom. (17:1-41)

1. Hoshea, Israel's last king, reigned nine years and finally refused to pay tribute to Assyria, resulting in their conquest. (17:1-6)
2. The sins for which this calamity happened are indelibly written so that all who come after may know the real cause of what happened and to justify the ways of God with men. (17:7-23)
3. After defeating the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., the Assyrians carried away thousands of Israelites and resettled them in other parts of the Assyrian Empire. (17:6)
4. After the Exile, the land was repopulated with people from other nations that had been conquered by the Assyrians. (17:24-41)
5. These people intermarried with those left in Israel and began the new race known as the Samaritans. (Luke 10:33)

IV. The Southern Kingdom. (Chapters 18-25)

A. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, survived for more than a century after the fall of Israel.

B. In the final years, Judah had only two good kings, Hezekiah and Josiah.

1. Hezekiah sought to restore Judah both religiously and politically.
 - a. When Assyria conquered Phoenicia and Egypt they turned to Judah and conquered 46 cities.
 - b. They tried to take Jerusalem, but God intervened. (19:32-36)
2. Josiah was the finest of Judah's kings and carried out thorough reforms. (23:25)
 - a. During the repairing of the Temple a book of the Law was found and the public reading of it brought renewal to Judah. (II Chronicles 34:30-33)
 - b. During this revival, Josiah reinstated the celebration of Passover. (23:21-23)

C. When the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, fell to Babylonia in 612 B.C. Egypt went north to aid what was left of Assyria.

1. King Josiah resisted their march through Israelite territory and was killed at Megiddo. (23:29)
2. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 606 B.C.

D. After Judah made several attempts for independence, Babylon decided to completely destroy her.

1. The important leaders were killed and the rest of the people exiled.
2. The Temple was burned and all its furnishings taken away to Babylon. (Chapters 24-25)

Conclusion: In the book of II Kings, what appears to be listings of kings and accounts of battles actually show some of the most important Old Testament themes: that God desires a pure people, that He has sovereign control over human events, that defeat comes from within, that repentance is needful, and that judgement is sure.

JOURNEY THROUGH I AND II CHRONICLES

Introduction: Having gone through the Books of Samuels and Kings we will not need to give more than an overview of Chronicles. They are a “*Chronicle*,” an account of events arranged in order, which takes us from Adam to Nehemiah, giving us the main genealogies of the nation of Israel – and also the main events of the Davidic Kingdom up to the time of the Babylonian Captivity.

- I. The Unifying Idea.
 - A. The Temple and matters connected with it are prominent in these two books.
 - B. Beginning with chapter 11, the remainder of I Chronicles is occupied with the reign of David.
 1. Absent from these chapters are:
 - a. David’s adventures.
 - b. David’s reign at Hebron.
 - c. David’s grief over Saul and Jonathan.
 - d. David’s sin against Bathsheba and Uriah.
 2. Matters which are not mentioned in Samuels and Kings:
 - a. David’s abundant preparation of material in advance for the Temple. (Chapter 22)
 - b. David’s preparatory numbering and distributing of the Levites and priests. (Chapters 23-24)
 - c. David’s appointment and arrangement of singers and players for the Temple. (Chapters 25-26)
 - C. Six of the first nine chapters of II Chronicles refer to the Temple.
 1. From chapter 10, which marks the disruption of the nation into the two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom is ignored as having apostatized from the nation’s true worship.
 2. Chronicles concern themselves with Judah and Jerusalem because it is that kingdom and city which hold the Temple.
 3. The remaining chapters subordinate all political, military, and personal facts to the interests of the faith which the Temple is the great symbol.
 - D. The Temple was significant.
 1. It was a symbol of the unity of the nation.
 2. It was a reminder of the nation’s high calling.
 3. It was a sign that Jehovah was still with His chosen people.
- II. The Central Purpose.
 - A. The Chronicles were compiled after the Babylonian exile
 1. The “*Remnant*” had returned from Babylon to Judea, under Ezra and Zerubbabel.
 2. The Chronicles were written for these repatriated Jews and their descendants who were to reestablish Jewish national life in the homeland.
 - B. The one thing the replanted people needed to keep constantly before them was that, unlike other nations, Israel has no destiny apart from God.
 1. When Israel recognized its mission, it impressed and led the other nations.
 2. When it neglected it, it sank into insignificance.
 3. A nation’s response to God is the determining factor in its history and destiny.
 - a. Moral principles and spiritual convictions are the first-important things in regards to national progress and decline, not politics and economics.
 - b. The place we give God is what determines our prosperity or adversity.
- III. The Structure Of I Chronicles.
 - A. The people of God. (1:1-9:44)
 1. In this genealogy we see a family tree of the people of Jehovah. (1:1-54)
 - a. The stock of Noah shoots out into three great branches:
 - (1) The sons of Japheth. (1:5-7)
 - (2) The sons of Ham. (1:8-16)
 - (3) The sons of Shem. (1:17-27)
 - b. In the great purposes of God, Japheth, the oldest, is passed over and Shem, the youngest, is chosen. (1:28-54)

- (1) Abram, the youngest son of Terah is chosen for His purposes.
- (2) Isaac, younger than Ishmael, is chosen for His purposes.
- (3) Jacob is chosen over Esau.
2. The redemptive line goes through Jacob to Judah, to Jesse, to David. (2:1-55)
3. The Davidic line continues down to the last of Judah's kings. (3:1-24)
4. The genealogies of the tribes of Israel and their allotments in Canaan are reviewed. (4:1-8:40)
- B. The anointed of the Lord. (10:1-12:40)
 1. Here begins the reign of David, the anointed of the Lord, and how he made Jerusalem the capital when he was made King.
 2. He was the king of Divine choice, whereas Saul was the king of human choice.
- C. The Ark of the Lord. (13:1-16:43)
 1. The first outstanding recorded act of King David was the bringing of the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. (15:3)
 2. David teaches the people of the mercy of God through his psalm of thanksgiving. (16:7-36)
- D. The covenant of the Lord. (17:1-21:30)
 1. It pleased God to choose out of the race one nation, Israel; then out of that nation one tribe, Judah; then out of that tribe one family, the house of David; and then to make with him a wonderful, everlasting Covenant. (17:7-14)
 2. David begins to implement the provisions of the covenant. (18:1-20:8)
 3. When David fell to the strategy of Satan in numbering the people, God overruled and the spot where the future Temple would stand was fixed. (21:28, cp. II Chronicles 3:1)
- E. The Temple of the Lord. (22:1-29:30)
 1. David was not allowed to build the Temple (22:7-11), but he amply prepared for it.
 - a. Materials. (Chapter 22)
 - b. Levites. (Chapter 23)
 - c. Priests. (Chapter 24)
 - d. Singers, porters. etc. (Chapters 25-27)
 2. David charges Solomon and the nation. (Chapters 28-29)

IV. A View Of II Chronicles.

- A. The forty-year reign of Solomon. (1:1-9:31)
 1. In these chapters we see the national and moral significance of Solomon's reign.
 2. Solomon was promised wisdom, riches and honor, and he received them. (I Kings 3:12-13)
 3. God reemphasized to Solomon that a nation's response to Him is the determining factor in its history and destiny. (7:14)
- B. Judah's history to the captivity. (10:1-36:23)
 1. In the preceding chapters of both Chronicles there has risen up a Throne founded in a Divine covenant, and a Temple founded by Divine guidance.
 - a. The Throne and the Temple were to uphold and glorify each other.
 - b. As apostasy develops, the Throne becomes the worst enemy of the Temple.
 2. As conditions continued to worsen it became apparent that one of the two must go, as it cannot be the Temple, it must be the Throne.
 - a. The Babylonian Captivity (exile) is allowed to suspend the Throne of David.
 - b. The Temple is allowed to be burnt, for it had already been profaned far more by Jewish sin than it could be by any Babylonian action.
 - c. A new Temple would be built in the Throne-less new period after the Exile.
- C. Running right through the story of Judah's twenty kings, with her occasional reforms and ever worsening relapses, is the solemn, vital, and urgent truth that a nation's response to God is really the determining factor in its history and destiny.

Conclusion: In the two Books of Chronicles we have the full historical view of the Davidic monarchy. In it we see high callings, great blessings, ill doings, and bad endings. When a king and a people honor God there was peace and prosperity, but when they were willfully unfaithful to God there was adversity. The truth of Galatians 6:7 is vividly portrayed for us in the Chronicles: **"Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."**

JOURNEY THROUGH EZRA

Introduction: The three little books which now lie before us – Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther – complete the seventeen historical books which form the earlier part of the Old Testament. These three books belong together as the record of God's dealings with the Jews after them going into captivity. Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the "*Remnant*" which returned to Jerusalem and Judea, while Esther has to do with those who stayed on in the land of their captivity.

I. The Return Of The Remnant.

- A. This is one of the most important subjects in Jewish history, namely, the return of the elect to their own land after the Babylonian captivity.
 - 1. This event took place around 536 B.C., at the end of seventy years of servitude in Babylon.
 - 2. Both the Exile and the Return were predicted before the Exile began. (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10-11)
 - 3. Isaiah predicted 200 years before King Cyrus, by name, that he would be the instrument to bring the Return to pass. (Isaiah 44:28)
 - 4. The Book of Ezra recognizes these prophecies in its opening verse. (Ezra 1:1)
- B. The second chapter gives the size of the returning remnant under Zerubbabel.
 - 1. The total figure of the return can be rounded off to about 50,000. (2:64-65)
 - 2. Such a number out of the national total was small – thus a "*remnant*."
 - 3. Many of those who had grown up in Babylon did not want to leave the only life they had known.
 - 4. A further return came under the leadership of Ezra about 80 years later, in 456 B.C.

II. The Book Of Ezra.

- A. The Book of Ezra deals solely with the return of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
 - 1. The people of the Northern Kingdom never returned from their Assyrian captivity.
 - a. They had no survivors of a royal dynasty.
 - b. They had no spiritual leadership to preserve their religion.
 - c. They lost their racial purity by intermarriages.
 - d. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom were assimilated into the populations of the ancient Middle East and became a lost race.
 - 2. The fate of the Southern Kingdom was quite different.
 - a. They were able to preserve their worship.
 - b. They kept their ethnic and religious purity.
 - c. They had a descendant of David taken into captivity with them, which meant that there was hope for the restoration of the Davidic throne.
 - d. They had scribes and priests who preserved and taught the law.
- B. The central spiritual truth of the book may be best expressed in the words of Lamentations 3:32.
 - 1. God had brought grief upon His elect people, for judgment had become necessary, and the grief was deserved, but now the span of exile was over, and God had not forgotten to be gracious.
 - 2. Let us never forget that our God is a gracious God, especially in times when men's sins bring vast calamities upon the world.
- C. The structure of the book is simple and interesting.
 - 1. The return of the Remnant under Zerubbabel and what ensued. (Chapters 1-6)
 - a. An intervening gap of sixty years. (Between Chapters 6 and 7)
 - b. During the earlier part of this sixty years' gap the events of the Book of Esther took place.
 - 2. A further return under Ezra. (Chapters 7-10)

III. Main Spiritual Lessons. (Chapters 1-6)

- A. The subject of the book is the repatriation of the Jews under the edict of Cyrus
 - 1. It is the book of Restoration.
 - 2. This historical restoration exemplifies the factors which operate in all true spiritual restorations.
 - 3. God may allow heavy chastisement to reduce us to sore straits, but if we are truly the Lord's by a genuine conversion, He will never utterly cast us off or allow us to "*fall from grace*."

- B. Six steps to spiritual restoration, as seen in the restoration of the Jews.
1. Return to the land. (1:3)
 - a. To the nation of Israel, the land of Canaan was in a very special sense the place of blessing.
 - (1) It was their covenant inheritance, and their full enjoyment of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-2) were associated with their occupation of it.
 - (2) God might preserve them distinct amid dispersion, but there could be no fulfillment of the covenant promises while they were outside the land.
 - (3) The first step in restoration was to return to the place of blessing.
 - b. The same step is needed in the restoration of the soul.
 - (1) If you have lost the joy of your salvation (Psalm 51:12), through backsliding into the world, and have a longing for restoration, then the way of restoration is open and the Lord waits to be gracious.
 - (2) We must turn our backs on the *"Babylon of this world"* which has held us captive, we must forsake that which has occasioned our departure, and we must get back to the old ground of acceptance and blessing, namely, God's promise in the Gospel. (I John 1:9)
 - (3) The first step is to return to the place where God can bless us.
 2. Rebuild the altar. (3:1-2)
 - a. The altar was built just where the former one had been.
 - (1) Symbolically, the altar, with its various offerings, spoke of consecration to God.
 - (2) In presenting an offering, the individual was symbolically offering himself with his presentation.
 - b. If we are to be restored from our backslidings, in our hearts we must rebuild an altar of dedication to Christ. (Romans 12:1-2)
 3. Commence rebuilding. (3:6-11)
 - a. The returning Jews were under a commission, not only from Cyrus, but from God Himself, to build up on the old site a new Temple to Himself. (1:2-3)
 - b. We are to erect a spiritual house of praise and witness to the Lord, in our lives, in each local church. (Hebrews 10:25)
 - c. There must restore service and witness to Christ in our lives.
 4. Withstand adversaries. (4:1)
 - a. Sometimes those of God's people who have been restored from backsliding are so overjoyed at their sense of renewed acceptance and communion with God that they tend to imagine that they have now reached a place where their difficulties are all at an end.
 - b. The Jewish Remnant's adversaries sought to hinder the rebuilding in three ways:
 - (1) They tried to deceive them into an unreal union. (4:2)
 - (2) They tried to openly hinder them. (4:4)
 - (3) They tried to misrepresent them. (4:5)
 - c. We must be prepared for adversaries even when working for God. (I Peter 5:8)
 5. Raise up the "Word." (5:1)
 - a. New voices are now heard, exhorting and encouraging them with God's Word.
 - b. When Zerubbabel and his helpers felt that God was with them again in truth, they resumed building with renewed resolution.
 - c. The Scriptures are the living and vitalizing Word of God to us.
 - d. In all our work for God, and especially in times of opposition, discouragement, or apparent failure, we need to live close to the written Word.
 6. Complete the work. (6:15)
 - a. If a work is truly of God, it cannot know final defeat.
 - b. Faith and work triumph in the name of the Lord.
 - c. The Christian must continue on until the course is complete. (II Timothy 4:7)

- IV. Ezra And His Mission. (Chapters 7-10)
- A. Ezra's preparation for the task. (Chapter 7)
 - B. Ezra's prosecution of the task. (Chapter 8)
 - C. Ezra's consternation at compromise. (Chapter 9)
 - D. Ezra's restoration of separation. (Chapter 10)

Conclusion: Ezra's account is living proof that our gracious God keeps His Word.

JOURNEY THROUGH NEHEMIAH

Introduction: Nehemiah is a gem of a book in the spiritual lessons which it teaches us. It tells how, under the new leadership of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt by the returned Remnant and how the people themselves were re-instructed in the Law of God which had been given to their nation long before. This rebuilding of the city walls is like a graphic object lesson illustrating those truths which lie at the heart of all true service for God. He who will give heed to the lessons here vividly portrayed will be a wise and successful builder in spiritual things.

I. Background.

- A. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C.
 1. The restored "*Remnant*" had been back in Judea for more than ninety years.
 2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had passed away and another generation had filled their shoes.
- B. What had happened during the ninety years?
 1. A much inferior to the original Temple had been built.
 2. Sixty years later, Ezra had returned with his company of between two and three thousand.
 3. Moral and spiritual conditions were still troubling.
 - a. Princes, rulers, priests, Levites, and people alike had largely intermarried with the surrounding idolatrous peoples, and although not themselves worshipping idols, they were allowing its infiltration, jeopardizing the next generation.
 - b. Unchecked, such a fusion of the "*Remnant*" with the outnumbering Gentiles then in the land would have meant complete obliteration of them as a distinct people.
- C. When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, twelve years after Ezra, circumstances continued to degenerate.
 1. The walls and gates of Jerusalem were still in ruins. (1:3)
 2. The people were suffering in "**great affliction and reproach.**" (1:3)
 3. There was great insufficiency. (5:3)
 4. Some of the poorer people were mortgaged to their own better-off fellow-Jews. (5:3-5)
 5. There had been laxity about Sabbath day observances and other obligations. (10:28-39)

II. Subject And Structure.

- A. Nehemiah's special objective was the rebuilding of the city walls.
- B. Scope and shape of its contents:

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
THE BOOK OF RECONSTRUCTION
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WALLS (Chapters 1-6)
Nehemiah, the Cupbearer. (1:1-2:10) Nehemiah, the Wall-Builder. (2:11-6:19)
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE. (Chapters 7-13)
Re-registration of the Remnant. (7:1-73) Re-newing of the Law. (8:1-10:30) Re-populating the city. (11:1-36) Re-dedicating the walls. (12:1-47) Re-forming the abuses. (13:1-31)

III. Spiritual Message. (I Corinthians 16:9)

- A. There is no "*open door*" set before us without many "*adversaries*" to obstruct our entrance.
- B. There is no winning without warring; there is no opportunity without opposition; there is no triumph without trouble; there is no victory without vigilance; there is no crown worth wearing without a cross.

IV. The Man And The Story.

- A. In this book, the man and the story are inseparably wedded to each other.
 - 1. How difficult a story the rebuilding of Jerusalem might have been if that huge burden had fallen to a man of lesser caliber than Nehemiah.
 - 2. If ever a crisis-hour was matched by a man, it was so in that city rebuilding episode.
- B. It is also equally true that the story makes the man.
 - 1. The perils and problems of the undertaking bring out all that is finest in the man.
 - 2. The things which we often think will break us are the very same things designed to make.

V. Nehemiah, The Cupbearer. (1:1-2:10)

- A. Nehemiah was raised in exile and became prominent in the Persian Court. (1:11)
- B. His brother told him of the conditions in Jerusalem and Judea. (1:1-3)
- C. Nehemiah, stricken with grief, gave himself to fasting and prayer. (1:4)
 - 1. During this process a conviction ripened in his heart that he should undertake the huge task of the rebuilding.
 - 2. For four months he carried this burden and his appearance changed to the point that the king asked what was wrong. (2:2)
 - 3. Nehemiah responded and the king granted his request and commissioned him to do what God had led him to undertake. (2:5-8)

VI. Nehemiah, The Wall Builder. (2:11-6:19)

- A. Nehemiah reached Jerusalem and made a secret survey of the ruins. (2:11-15)
 - 1. His plan was to section off the wall to different groups who would all work at the same time.
 - 2. So successful was the work that in spite of opposition, the walls were rebuilt in just over seven weeks (6:15), and the gates were set shortly thereafter (7:1).
 - 3. All was completed within six months of the mandate from the king of Persia.
 - 4. This story is a testimony to practical organization and spiritual-mindedness. (4:6, 9)
- B. Obstruction from without.
 - 1. Scorn. (4:1-6)
 - a. Note Sanballat's sarcastic question: **"What do these feeble Jews?"** (4:2)
 - b. That is exactly the same reaction of the worldly-wise today toward the spiritually-minded minority scattered through the churches.
 - c. In meeting the scorn, Nehemiah just kept praying and building. (2:4-6)
 - 2. Force. (4:7-23)
 - a. Mutual enemies become mutual friends to make common cause against God's people. (4:7)
 - b. When taunts and sneers failed the opposition took a more menacing form. (4:11)
 - c. Nehemiah's response was prayer, watching, and working. (4:16-17)
 - 3. Craft. (6:1-19)
 - a. They tried pretense, suggesting a meeting on neutral ground, but Nehemiah saw their hypocrisy and replied, **"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."** (6:1-4)
 - b. They tried bluffing, stating that a charge was being lodged with the emperor against Nehemiah to the effect that he was planning a rebellion. (6:6-9)
 - c. They employed treachery against some of Nehemiah's kinsmen. (6:10-14, cp. II Corinthians 6:3-8)
- C. Setbacks from within.
 - 1. Debris. (4:10)
 - 2. Fear. (4:11-14)
 - 3. Greed. (5:1-6)

VII. Nehemiah, The Governor. (7:1-13:31)

- A. At the completion of the walls, Ezra returned to Jerusalem to assist Nehemiah in dedicating the walls and sanctifying the people.
- B. The reading of God's Word sparked a revival. (8:1-8, 9:1-3ff)

Conclusion: Nehemiah went to Jerusalem with the authority of the King to build the walls and revive the people. At the close of the book, the Jews are in their own land, but still under Persian rule. No further record of the Jews is found in the Bible until the birth of Christ in the New Testament.

JOURNEY THROUGH ESTHER

Introduction: We have studied the fact that Ezra and Nehemiah dealt with the “*Remnant*” which returned to Jerusalem and Judah. Now we see that the Book of Esther has to do with those who stayed in the land of captivity. The story takes place in “*Shushan*” the palace, which is Susa, the ancient capital of Persia. The number who stayed in the land was far greater than the number who returned to Jerusalem.

I. Background.

- A. Purpose: To demonstrate the providential care of God over His people.
 - 1. In Esther, we see providential preservation as distinct from what we call miraculous.
 - 2. In Esther, we see providential overruling as distinct from supernatural intervening.
 - 3. This is the only Book in the Bible that does not mention God specifically.
- B. Who was Ahasuerus? (1:1)
 - 1. He is known in history as Xerxes, who reigned over the Persian Empire from 485-465 B.C.
 - 2. He was a man of extremes.
 - a. On one occasion he ordered a bridge built, and when it was destroyed by a storm he commanded the sea lashed 300 times and then had the builders beheaded.
 - b. When Pythius, a Lydian, offered a sum of 5½ million sterling toward the expenses of a military expedition, Ahasuerus was so impressed by his loyalty that he returned the money.
 - c. Shortly afterwards, when Pythius requested an exemption for his eldest son from the expedition, Ahasuerus ordered the son cut in half and the army to march between the pieces.
 - d. It is just like Ahasuerus to dethrone Queen Vashti for refusing to expose herself before his drunken guests.
 - e. It is just like Ahasuerus to consign a people to be massacred, and then swing to the opposite extreme and sanction Jewish vengeance on thousands of his own subjects.

II. Esther – Two Main Movements.

- A. The Anti-Semitic Crisis. (Chapters 1-5)
 - 1. Queen Vashti deposed. (Chapter 1)
 - a. Queen Vashti was ordered by Ahasuerus to show her beauty to a host of drunken men at a feast. (1:10-11)
 - (1) This would have been a gross breach of Persian etiquette.
 - (2) This would also have disgraced the life of one the king should have protected.
 - b. Queen Vashti refused. (1:12)
 - (1) Her refusal was both courageous and fully justified.
 - (2) It comes as no surprise that when the king’s high council came to consider the matter, they concluded that Vashti must forfeit her royal position. (1:19)
 - 2. Esther becomes queen. (Chapter 2)
 - a. It was not until Ahasuerus sobered up that he realized what had taken place. (2:1)
 - b. With the position of queen open, a decree was sent out to find all the fair young virgins from whom the king would select a new queen. (2:3-4)
 - c. When Esther was brought to the court, she was instructed by Mordecai, the Jew, not to reveal that she was a Jew. (2:10)
 - d. After a period of about a year, Esther was taken before the king. (2:16)
 - e. Esther became the queen. (2:17)
 - 3. Haman plots a massacre. (Chapter 3)
 - a. In time, Haman was promoted to be above all the other servants of the king. (3:1-2)
 - (1) Haman was an Agagite from Amalek.
 - (2) Amalek was Esau’s grandson.
 - (3) Naturally, Haman would hate the Jews, as did all Amalekites.
 - b. Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. (3:5)
 - (1) His bowing down would have been contrary to the Law of God. (Deuteronomy 5:7-10)
 - (2) Mordecai chose to obey God rather than man. (Cp. Acts 5:29)

- c. Haman became mad because Mordecai would not revere him. (3:6a)
- d. He, therefore, decided to kill all the Jews scattered throughout the empire. (3:6b)
- e. He approached the king with a bribe to secure the approval of his plan. (3:8-9)
- f. A letter was sent to all 127 provinces, giving orders to kill the Jews on a particular day. (3:13-14)
- 4. Mordecai pleads for help. (Chapter 4)
 - a. Having heard the decree, Mordecai sends a copy to Esther. (4:4-7)
 - b. Mordecai further sends word to Esther to approach the king and make a request on behalf of her people. (4:8)
 - c. At this point, the implicit recognition of God is unmistakable. (4:13-14)
 - d. Esther chooses to courageously appeal to the king. (4:16)
 - (1) The risk arose from a Persian law that whoever entered into the king's inner court unbidden paid the death penalty. (4:11)
 - (2) As of that time, Esther had not been called in for a whole month.
 - (3) Esther determined to go against the law of the king by entering into his presence.
- 5. Esther contrives aid. (Chapter 5)
 - a. On the third day, Esther, dressed in royal apparel, entered into the inner court of the king's palace. (5:1)
 - b. The king, on his throne, saw Esther and held out the golden scepter. (5:2)
 - c. Esther made her request that the king and Haman attend her banquet that day and return for a second banquet on the next day. (5:4-8)
 - d. Haman left the banquet feeling like a "*big shoot*." (5:9-13)
 - e. Haman and his wife prepared a gallows, 75 feet high, to hang Mordecai the next day. (5:14)
- B. God's Providential Overruling. (Chapters 6-10)
 - 1. Mordecai is honored. (Chapter 6)
 - a. Due to his insomnia, the king began to read. (6:1)
 - b. In his reading, he discovered that Mordecai had saved his life. (6:2, cp. 2:21-23)
 - c. The king sought to honor the man who saved his life. (6:3)
 - d. As Haman approached the king with his request for the life of Mordecai, the king asks him what should be done for the man the king seeks to honor. (6:6)
 - e. Thinking the king was referring to himself, Haman makes a lavish suggestion. (6:7-9)
 - f. Haman is shocked when he finds out Mordecai is to be honored. (6:10)
 - 2. Esther is bold. (Chapter 7)
 - a. The future of the Jewish people depended on her.
 - b. At her banquet, Esther made a request to the king to save her people. (7:3-4)
 - c. Esther pointed out the wickedness of Haman. (7:5-6)
 - d. Haman was sentenced to die on the very gallows he had made for Mordecai. (7:10)
 - 3. The Jews avenged. (Chapter 8)
 - a. Although the king could not revoke the previous decree Haman had devised, a counter decree was issued to allow the Jews to defend themselves. (8:3-14)
 - b. Mordecai was exalted. (8:15)
 - 4. Purim is instituted. (Chapter 9)
 - a. The Jews, then in Persia, celebrated their deliverance from the planned massacre.
 - b. They called the celebration, "*The Feast of Purim*."
 - (1) The word "*purim*" comes from "*pur*," meaning "*lot*."
 - (2) Haman had cast "*pur*" to ascertain the day to destroy the Jews. (9:21, 24)
 - 5. Mordecai made Premier. (Chapter 10)
 - a. Note the Lord's hand in all this. (Proverbs 21:1)
 - b. The providential care of God for His people is so evident throughout the book of Esther.

Conclusion: Esther is a Book that reveals the wonderful fore-planning of providence. It is here brought to view so that through seeing it clearly demonstrated in this one notable episode we may believe in the fact of its operation through all the varieties of our life, and through all the history of the human race, and especially in those trying times when evil seems to have snatched the reins of government from higher control.

The Old Testament historical narrative closes after the account of Ezra, Nehemiah and the events of Esther. As the history closes, God remains faithful to His covenant promises. The rest of the Old Testament canon is, in the main, prophecy concerning Israel before, during and after the captivity.

JOURNEY THROUGH JOB

Introduction: The seventeen historical books which comprise the first part of the Old Testament now lie behind us. A much smaller and very different group of books lies before us, consisting of the five poetical books – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The seventeen books which lie behind us are historical. These five books are experiential. The seventeen books are concerned with a nation. These five books are concerned with individuals. The seventeen have to do with the Hebrew race. These five have to do with the human heart.

Although the Book of Genesis comes first in our Bible, it may not have been the first to be written. There are grounds to believe that the Book of Job is of an even earlier date. In fact, this Book of Job may be the oldest book in the world.

I. Subject.

- A. The subject of the Book of Job is an ever-present problem: the mystery of suffering, especially as it concerns the godly.
 - 1. The different aspects of this grave and sensitive subject are introduced by the different speakers as the dialogue proceeds.
 - 2. In a general sense, the design of the book is to justify the ways of God to man by correcting certain misconceptions which arise from men's imperfect knowledge.
- B. If Job could have seen into the counsels of heaven just before his trial came, as we are permitted to, and have known the outcome of his ordeal, as God foreknew it, and as we see it in the epilogue, how differently would he have reacted to it all.
 - 1. But that is just the point that gives the whole book meaning to us: Job did not know.
 - a. Between the prologue, which shows how Job's trial originated in the counsels of heaven, and the epilogue, which shows Job's ultimate blessings, we have a group of patriarchal theorists giving counsel based on incomplete data.
 - b. They knew nothing about the counsels of heaven which had preceded Job's trial, nor of the coming epilogue of compensation.
 - c. They were philosophizing in the dark.
 - 2. It is in this that the book has a message for us.
 - a. We are meant to see that there was an explanation, even though Job and his friends did not know it, so that when baffling afflictions come our way we may believe that the same holds true in our case. (Romans 8:28)
 - b. In the counsels of heaven there are purposes to our trials and foreknown outcomes of blessing if we allow them. (James 1:4, Hebrews 12:11)

II. Message.

- A. The fact is, Job was never meant to know the explanations behind his trials.
 - 1. If Job had known, there would have been no place for faith, and the man could never have come forth as *"gold purified in the fire."*
 - 2. We are meant to understand that there are some things which God does not reveal to us at the present, inasmuch as the very revealing of them would thwart His purposes for our good.
 - a. Unknown – *"The Scriptures are as wise in their reservations as they are in their revelations."*
 - b. Enough is revealed to make faith intelligent, and yet enough is reserved to give faith scope for development.
- B. The central message of Job, then, is *"Blessings Through Suffering."*
 - 1. Through bitter calamity comes blessed discovery.
 - 2. Through trials, *"self"* is slain and God becomes known.

III. The Prologue. (Chapters 1-2)

- A. This is a divine revelation of what happens just as we find elsewhere in Scripture.
 - 1. In Zechariah 3:1-2, Satan is standing in the Lord's presence to accuse Joshua, the high priest.
 - 2. In Luke 22:31, we find that Satan ready to sift Peter.
 - 3. In Revelation 12:10, before God, Satan is identified as **"the accuser of the brethren."**

B. Truths discovered about Satan from these interviews:

1. Satan is accountable to God. (1:6)
 - a. These **“sons of God”** came to **“present themselves”** before God, not to participate in the governmental deliberations of the Divine Mind, but to render account concerning their respective activities.
 - b. The point here is not that Satan has the privilege of access to the throne of God, but that he is compelled to come before Divine authority.
2. Satan is behind the present evils that curse the earth. (1:7)
 - a. Satan’s words, **“going to and from”** and **“walking up and down”** indicate his restless and un-intermittent activity.
 - b. We will never get very far in preaching or praying until we realize that behind the world’s evils is the energizing and organizing mind of a personal devil. (II Corinthians 4:3-4)
3. Even the dark mind of Satan is an open book to God. (1:8-10)
 - a. God asked Satan questions, not because He did not know, but to compel confession on the part of Satan.
 - b. Satan’s immediately responded, and that he believed his lack of success against Job was because God had hedged him in so protectedly.
 - c. It is good to reflect that God knows all that is on Satan’s mind, at all times, against any of the saints.
4. The evil one is neither omnipresent nor omniscient. (1:7, 10)
 - a. Satan may move with almost lightning-like rapidity, but none the less he is a created being and, therefore, a local being.
 - b. Satan could not see clearly into Job’s mind as to the motive behind his devotion to God.
 - c. We dare not underrate Satan (Jude 9), but it is also bad strategy to overrate him (I John 4:4).
5. Satan can do nothing without Divine permission. (1:11-12a)
 - a. His schemes are under the perpetual surveillance of the Almighty.
 - b. It is because Satan can do nothing without such permission that God is able, again and again, to overrule his doings to the ultimate good of those whom he would ruin.
6. With every divine permission there is a divine limitation. (1:12b, 2:1-6)
 - a. Satan has absolutely no power against a saint beyond what God allows, any more than Pilate had against Christ. (John 19:11)
 - b. If God set a limit to Satan’s power in the trying of Job, then He will do likewise in the case of others. (I Corinthians 10:13)

IV. The Dialogue. (Chapters 3:1-42:6)

- A. The main body of the book dramatically records three successive rounds, or triads, of dialogue.
- B. The central theme in the discussion is: *“Why does Job suffer?”*
 1. The first three friends try to interpret Job’s case by analysis.
 2. It becomes a deadlock and the youthful voice of Elihu enters but darkness still remains.
- C. Finally, God speaks and brings to a climax what man could not and cannot solve.

V. The Epilogue. (42:7-17)

- A. God spoke wrath upon Job’s *“friends”* because they had done as much damage to Job’s soul as Satan had done.
- B. God transforms, vindicates, and restores Job.
 1. Transformation – **“him will I accept.”** (42:8)
 2. Vindication – **“my servant Job.”** (42:8)
 3. Restoration – **“the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”** (42:10)

Conclusion: The Book of Job does not give a *“pat answer”* to the problem of why the righteous suffer. Certainly Job was a better man after the trials were over, for suffering can have a purifying effect if we will surrender to the Lord. James 5:11 commends Job for his endurance, which literally means *“faithfulness under trial.”* Job maintained his faith in God and believed that, in the end, God would vindicate him. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson of the book: that God is completely sovereign in our lives and does not have to explain His ways to us. God works out His purposes (Romans 8:28), and this is all that matters. When trials come, we should not ask, *“How can I get out of this?”* but, *“Lord, what do you want me to get out of this?”*

JOURNEY THROUGH PSALMS

Introduction: The Book of Psalms was the national hymn book of the Hebrew people. The psalms were not written in heaven for angels. They were written by men for men, and have their original setting in the warp and woof of human experience. The psalms are expressions of man's feelings, ranging from great joy and happiness to deep sorrow and depression. Some psalms express the attitude of repentance and confession of sin, which leads to renewal and worship of God.

I. Authors.

- A. The book of Psalms is commonly ascribed to David because he wrote such a large number of individual psalms.
 - 1. He was also known as **“the sweet psalmist of Israel”** (II Samuel 23:1).
 - 2. On one occasion he was referred to as **“cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD was with him”** (I Samuel 16:18).
- B. The following is a classification of the Psalms by authors as designated by their superscriptions.
 - 1. David – 73.
(3-9, 11-32, 34-41, 51-65, 68-70, 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145)
 - 2. Asach, David's choir leader at Jerusalem – 12. (50, 73-83)
 - 3. Descendants of Korah – 10. (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87)
 - 4. Solomon – 2. (72, 127)
 - 5. Heman – 1. (88)
 - 6. Ethan – 1. (89)
 - 7. Moses – 1. (90)
 - 8. Anonymous – 50

II. The Central Message.

- A. The central spiritual message of Psalms may be *“Praise Through Prayer.”*
- B. Again and again, in individual psalms, we see how sighing is turned into singing through prayer.
- C. If we take the collection of psalms as a whole, we see the idea of *“Praise Through Prayer”* moving forward ever more definitely until the whole book is wound up in the five *“Hallelujah”* psalms with which it closes.

III. Classifications Of The Psalms.

- A. Instructional. (1, 5, 7, 15, 50, 73, 94, 101)
- B. Historical – in reference to Israel. (78, 105, 106, 136)
- C. Praise. (106, 111-113, 115-117, 135, 146-150)
- D. Confession. (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143)
- E. Supplication. (86)
- F. Thanksgiving. (16, 18)
- G. Nature – displaying God's handiwork. (8, 9, 19, 29, 33, 65, 104)
- H. Imprecatory – the call for God to uphold His righteousness by bringing judgment upon the wicked. (35, 52, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140)
- I. Messianic – prophecies dealing with the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Christ as the Royal Messiah. (2, 18, 20-21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132)
 - 2. Christ as the Suffering Messiah. (22, 35, 41, 55, 69, 109)
 - 3. Christ as the Son of Man. (16, 40)
 - 4. Other Messianic Psalms. (8, 23, 24, 31, 40, 50, 68, 96-98, 102, 118)

IV. Styles Of Writing.

- A. Hebrew poetry does not depend on rhyme or meter as such, but is built on thought patterns.
- B. Most of the psalms are built around the structure of Parallelism.
 - 1. Synonymous – the second line repeats the truth of the first line in similar words.
**“The earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein”** (Psalm 24:1).

2. Antithetical – the thought of the first line is contrasted by the thought of the second.
**“For the LORD knowth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish”** (Psalm 1:6).
3. Synthetical – The second line explains or adds something to the first.
**“The Law of the LORD is perfect,
converting the soul”** (Psalm 19:7a).

V. Structure.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS				
PRAISE THROUGH PRAYER – “Praise Ye the Lord.”				
BOOK 1 (Psalms 1-41)	BOOK 2 (Psalms 42-72)	BOOK 3 (Psalms 73-89)	BOOK 4 (Psalms 90-106)	BOOK 5 (Psalm 107-150)
ADORING WORSHIP	WONDERING WORSHIP	CEASELESS WORSHIP	SUBMISSIVE WORSHIP	PERFECTED WORSHIP
GENESIS - Man -	EXODUS - Israel -	LEVITICUS - Sanctuary -	NUMBERS - Moses/Wilderness -	DEUTERONOMY - Law & Land -

VI. Examples From The Five Different Books Of Psalms.

- A. A Psalm of Adoring Worship. (Psalm 1)
 1. Most people are concerned with the pursuit of happiness, which is one of the unalienable rights mentioned in the Declaration of Independence.
 2. Modern advertising conditions us to think that pleasure, or satisfaction, goes hand-in-hand with happiness.
 3. Psalm 1 gives God’ description of a happy man, as opposed to His description of an unhappy man.
- B. A Psalm of Wondering Worship. (Psalm 46)
 1. In Psalm 46 we find a man experiencing trouble.
 - a. This is the psalm that inspired Martin Luther to write his famous hymn, *“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”*
 - b. Through the centuries, many people have gained untold strength from this psalm.
 2. We are able to know God’s presence in times of trouble as we experience inner stillness and trust in the Lord.
- C. A Psalm of Ceaseless Worship. (Psalm 73)
 1. Psalm 73 deals with the problem of evil people who seem to prosper.
 2. Sometimes we lose the proper perspective concerning the wicked. (73:11-16)
 3. Verses 17-19 show how to regain the proper perspective.
- D. A Psalm of Submissive Worship. (Psalm 90)
 1. Psalm 90 was written by Moses, making it the oldest psalm in the Bible.
 - a. Probably the occasion that inspired this psalm was when the Israelites came to the border of the Promised Land but refused to go over and take it.
 - b. Therefore, God commanded that they wander in the Wilderness until all the adults died, and then He would allow their children to take the land.
 2. This psalm reveals that it is not the *“quantity”* of life that matters, but the *“quality.”*
- E. A Psalm of Perfected Worship. (Psalm 119)
 1. All of the teaching in Psalm 119 centers itself around the Word of God.
 - a. This is the longest chapter in the Bible and it reveals the heart of God.
 - b. Practically every verse in this psalm makes reference to the Word of God, using words such as **“law,” “testimonies,” “ways,” “precepts,” “statutes,” “commandments,” “judgments,”** and **“word.”**
 2. Psalm 119:9 and 11 should be memorized by every believer.

Conclusion: The Psalms express the emotions of human experience written through Divine inspiration. They will meet a need in every life if they are read for enrichment and meditation.

JOURNEY THROUGH PROVERBS

Introduction: Our Bible is both a book and a library. It is a book inasmuch as it is a diversity in unity, with all its sixty-six parts combining to make one progressive whole. It is a library in the sense that it is a unity in diversity, with its different groups of books given up to the different principle branches of knowledge. Not only do we have history and politics and poetry and prophecy and devotional literature; we also have that distinctive order of learning and teaching which goes by the name of philosophy. This we find in Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

This library is not measured merely by its number of words, but its depth of truth. The Bible may seem very small against the imposing shelves of many large libraries; yet with this one volume in our hand we may stand within the largest library on earth and truthfully say that all the tens of thousands of books therein collected cannot teach us more about the fundamental realities of the universe and of human life than we learn in these Scriptures. To struggle through hundreds of the profoundest and most learned of other books, and yet remain ignorant of this book, is infinite loss; yet to know no other volume but this one is to make one wise unto salvation, and to be furnished with a knowledge of fundamental realities which comes to us stamped with Divine certainty.

I. Proverbs.

- A. We now turn from the devotional reading of Psalms to the practical wisdom of the Proverbs.
 - 1. This Book is meant to be to our practical life what the psalms are to our devotional life.
 - 2. Here are principles from heaven for life on earth.
- B. The genius of Proverbs.
 - 1. The English word, "*proverb*," means "*a brief saying in the stead of many words.*"
 - 2. The genius of a proverb lies in its shrewd concentration of a truth in a terse and striking way, so that it catches on and becomes easier to remember than to forget.
 - 3. Its purpose is not to explain a matter, but to give a pointed expression to it.
- C. Proverbs are not intended to be exact promises of God, but general statements of life. (Cp. 22:6)
- D. The bulk of the proverbs are from King Solomon. (cp. I Kings 4:29-32)

II. Message Of Proverbs.

- A. The "**preacher**," in Ecclesiastes, after relating so graphically the story of his weary search for happiness and its disappointing result leading to the oft-repeated lament, "**vanity of vanities**," directs those who would escape the devious paths he had himself trodden to the consideration of the collection of proverbs which he had "**sought out, and set in order**" (Ecclesiastes 12:9)
 - 1. The last seven verses of Ecclesiastes form a fitting introduction to Proverbs. (Eccl. 12:8-14)
 - 2. God would save all who heed what is there recorded from the heart-breaking experiences and aimless wanderings of the man who wrote them.
- B. There are two ways of learning the emptiness of this world and the true character of sin.
 - 1. Tread the thorny path for yourself.
 - 2. Accept God's Word regarding it and be able to say, "**Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer**" (Psalm 17:4).

III. Three-Fold Purpose Of Proverbs. (Proverbs 1:1-4)

- A. "**To Know**," or "**Perceive**." (1:2)
 - 1. Wisdom (Skilfulness) – the ability to use knowledge aright.
 - 2. Instruction – to teach by discipline.
 - 3. Discernment – words of understanding.
- B. "**To Receive**." (1:3)
 - 1. Wisdom (Understanding) – learning through the unhappy experiences of others or oneself.
 - 2. Justice – right behavior.
 - 3. Judgment – the ability to try the things that differ and reach a decision.
 - 4. Equity – uprightness or moral integrity.
- C. "**To Give**." (1:4)
 - 1. Subtilty (Caution) – the ability to detect craftiness in others.
 - 2. Knowledge – information of a sound character.
 - 3. Discretion – thoughtfulness of others.

IV. The Structure Of Proverbs.

- A. Wisdom and Folly are contrasted. (Chapters 1-9)
- B. Proverbs of Solomon written and compiled by him. (Chapters 10-24)
- C. Further proverbs of Solomon compiled by the men of King Hezekiah. (Chapters 25-29)
- D. The words of Agur, an unknown Sage. (Chapter 30)
- E. Instructions given to King Lemuel by his mother. (Chapter 31)
 - 1. Many suggest this name was probably bestowed on Solomon as a child by Bathsheba.
 - 2. In that case, the description of the Virtuous Woman given by one who had herself, at one time, been betrayed from the path of virtue, is worthy of the God of all grace.

V. Practical Instructions From Proverbs.

- A. **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools . . ."** (1:7).
- B. Seven things that God hates. (6:16-19)
 - 1. **"Haughty eyes"** – Haughty eyes belong to the one who has scorned the teaching of Him who is **"meek and lowly in heart."**
 - 2. **"A lying tongue"** – Stands in opposition to The Truth, Jesus Christ.
 - 3. **"Hands that shed innocent blood"** – The one who would destroy the good name of another with his tongue or would be quick to take his brother's life if possible.
 - 4. **"A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations"** – The unholy urges of the heart. (Mark 7:21-23)
 - 5. **"Feet that are swift in running to mischief"** – They follow where the heart has already gone.
 - 6. **"A false witness that speaketh lies"** – It is pleasant when brethren dwell together in unity.
 - 7. **"He that soweth discord among brethren"** – The talebearer, who mars happy unity by spreading abroad evil insinuations and accusations, is abhorred of the Lord.
- C. Topical subjects.
 - 1. Trusting the Lord. (3:5-6)
 - 2. Gossip. (11:13)
 - 3. Lying. (12:22)
 - 4. Drinking. (23:29-32)
 - 5. Meddling. (26:17)
 - 6. Boasting. (27:2)
 - 7. Flattery. (28:23)

VI. Mrs. *"Far-Above-Rubies."* (Proverbs 31)

- A. She is a Good Woman.
 - 1. She works diligently. (31:13, 15, 19)
 - 2. She contrives prudently. (31:16)
 - 3. She behaves uprightly. (31:25)
- B. She is a Good Wife.
 - 1. She seeks her husband's good. (31:12)
 - 2. She keeps his confidence. (31:11)
 - 3. She aids his prosperity. (31:23-24)
- C. She is a Good Mother.
 - 1. She clothes her family wisely. (31:21)
 - 2. She feeds her household well. (31:15)
 - 3. She shops sensibly. (31:14, 18)
- D. She is a Good Neighbor.
 - 1. She helps the poor. (31:20)
 - 2. She uplifts the needy. (31:20)
 - 3. She speaks graciously. (31:26)
- E. Her evaluation.
 - 1. Her value: **"Her price is far above rubies."** (31:10)
 - 2. Her praise: **"Her children arise up, and call her blessed."** (31:28)
 - 3. Her secret: **"A woman that feareth the LORD."** (31:30)

Conclusion: Proverbs are not meant to be read as one reads narrative chapters (as in the historical books), or cycles of debate (as in Job's dialogue), or complete poems (as in the Psalms), or in argument (as in Ecclesiastes), but they are to be read lingeringly, ponderingly, and memorizingly.

JOURNEY THROUGH ECCLESIASTES

Introduction: The Book of Ecclesiastes is a dramatic autobiography of King Solomon's life when he was away from God. As the Book of Proverbs reveals Solomon's wisdom, the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals his foolishness. This is not a book without rhyme or reason – not just a bunch of verses stuck together. It begins with the problem stated: **“Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,”** or, *“All is vanity in this world.”* Then experiments are made. Solomon seeks satisfaction through many different avenues, in many different fields. He tries science, the laws of nature, wisdom, philosophy, pleasure, materialism, and simply living for the *“here and now.”* He explores fatalism, egotism, religion, wealth, and morality. Then in the final verses of the book he gives the practical results of all his exploits and experiments.

I. The Sermon.

A. The Book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon.

1. There is the announcement of a theme, a brief introduction, the development of the theme, and then the practical application in conclusion.
 2. The theme is: **“What is the chief good of man under the sun?”** (1:3)
 - a. The standpoint is that of natural reason.
 - b. We are meant to see where the quest for the chief good leads us when conducted simply on the ground of natural experience, observation, and induction.
- B. Ecclesiastes is an inspired confession of failure and pessimism, when God is excluded, when man lives under the sun and forgets the larger part, which is always above the sun.

II. The Problem Declared. (Chapters 1-2)

A. Life is not worth living because it is full of vanity (emptiness). (1:1-3)

B. Solomon's reasoning behind the problem.

1. Man is only a cog in a big wheel. (1:4-11)
 - a. What is man compared to the vastness of the world?
 - b. Everything in nature continues, century after century, but man is here for a brief space of time, then he dies.
 - c. It all seems so meaningless; it is vanity.
 - d. Since life is so short and man so insignificant, why bother to live at all?
2. Man cannot understand it all. (1:12-18)
 - a. Solomon was the wisest of all men, yet when he tried to understand the meaning of life, he was baffled.
 - b. How many wise philosophers have tried to explain life, only to admit their utter ignorance?
 - c. Is it reasonable to live when you cannot understand what life is all about?
3. Man's pleasures do not satisfy. (2:1-11)
 - a. Solomon had plenty of money, pleasure, culture, and fame; yet he admitted that these things did not satisfy, nor did they last.
 - b. See what Jesus said about this in Luke 12:13-21.
4. Man's death ends all. (2:12-23)
 - a. **“One event,”** death, happens both to the fool and to the wise, to the rich and the poor.
 - b. A person labors all his life, then dies and leaves their wealth for another person to *“enjoy.”*
 - c. Is life fair?

C. Solomon's four arguments seem to lead to one grand conclusion: it is not worthwhile for a human being to live.

1. But Solomon does not draw that conclusion.
2. He concludes that we ought to accept the blessings of God now, enjoy them, and benefit from them. (2:24-26, cp. I Timothy 6:17)
3. In the next eight chapters Solomon backtracks and studies his arguments in a deeper way.

III. The Problem Discussed. (Chapters 3-10)

A. God has a purpose in our lives. (3:1-22)

1. God balances life: birth-death, joy-sorrow, meeting-parting.
2. Why does He do this?
 - a. So that we will not think we can easily explain God's work. (3:11)

- b. So that we will learn to accept and enjoy what we have. (3:12-13)
 - 3. God has set *"eternity"* in man's heart.
 - a. The word **"world,"** in verse 11, might better be translated *"eternity."*
 - b. This means that the things of this world will never really satisfy us.
 - c. God has given us an eternal perspective so that we can look beyond the routine of life.
 - d. We must find God's will for our lives and let Him *"mix the ingredients"* according to His purposes.
 - B. God gives riches according to His will. (4:1-6:12)
 - 1. These chapters discuss the meaning of riches.
 - a. Why is one person rich and another poor?
 - b. Why is there injustice and inequality in the world?
 - 2. Because God has a plan for us, we should not trust in riches but in Him.
 - 3. Do not live for riches, but use them according to God's will.
 - C. God's wisdom can guide us through life. (7:1-10:20)
 - 1. The word **"wisdom,"** or **"wise,"** is used 17 times in chapters 7-12.
 - 2. Man's wisdom cannot fathom God's plan (Isaiah 55:8), but God can give us wisdom to know and do His will.
 - 3. Simply because we cannot understand everything does not mean we should give up in despair.
 - 4. Trust God and do what He tells you to do.
- IV. The Problem Decided. (Chapters 11-12)
 - A. Solomon has already concluded that man is not just a *"cog in the wheel."*
 - 1. He has further concluded that there is nothing wrong with enjoying riches and pleasures to God's glory.
 - 2. Our inability to understand all that God is doing ought not to be a hindrance to a happy life.
 - B. In chapters 11-12, Solomon sums up the whole matter with three practical admonitions:
 - 1. Live by faith. (11:1-6)
 - a. Circumstances are never going to be ideal in this life, but we must go ahead and obey God and trust Him for the results.
 - b. If we wait for the right wind or the right day, we may miss our opportunity.
 - c. We may seem to be as fools, like those who cast bread on moving water, but God will see to it that it will come back to us.
 - 2. Remember that life will end. (11:7-12:8)
 - a. One day we'll all die, so make the most of the life that we now live.
 - (1) This is not the worldly attitude, *"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."*
 - (2) This is Paul's attitude, who said, **"To live is Christ, and to die is gain"** (Philippians 1:20-21).
 - b. Note the three key thoughts directed especially toward young people:
 - (1) **"Rejoice"** in God's blessings while you are young. (11:9)
 - (2) **"Remove"** from your life the sins that cause sorrow. (11:10)
 - (3) **"Remember"** to serve God and fear Him in the days of your youth. (12:1)
 - c. Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 is a poetic description of old age and death.
 - 3. Fear God and obey Him. (12:9-14)
 - a. Live as those who will one day face judgment. (Romans 14:11-12)
 - b. Interpret Solomon's conclusions in light of the great resurrection chapter. (I Corinthians 15)
 - (1) If death really ends it all, then life is not worth living, and everything truly is **"vanity."**
 - (2) I Corinthians 15 makes it clear that death is not the end of it all, but that because Christ arose from the dead, we, too, will be raised.
 - c. When life is lived in the power of God for the glory of God, then life becomes meaningful.

Conclusion: Ecclesiastes is the divinely inspired philosophy of life. God's Word is complete; the Lord has revealed to us not only what we need to know for eternity, but also how to live now in view of the world in which we live. Ecclesiastes skillfully brings these issues together by instructing us to live with a constant view toward eternity. It constantly reminds us to quit looking at the things of time as a means of finding satisfaction and look to the eternal God, who is also the Giver of all the things of life. Happiness rests in the Lord. To factor God out of life leads to frustration now and disaster for all eternity.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Introduction: The title “**song of songs**” (1:1) like “*holy of holies*,” means “*the finest of all songs*.”

Since Solomon composed more than 1,000 songs (1 Kings 4:32), this must be classified as the best of them all. It is a book full of symbols and images that requires maturity and spiritual discernment to appreciate and enjoy. Fitly is it called “**The Song of Songs**,” for it exalts the grandest theme of all themes – Love. Any student who would abuse the language and message of this priceless book would reveal the carnality of his own life. Its literary excellence is such as to make it well worthy of the gifted king to whom it is attributed to.

I. Interpretation.

- A. It has been said, “*Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, while the saintliest men and women of the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight.*”
 - 1. There is no book of Scripture on which more commentaries have been written and more diversities of opinion expressed than this short poem of eight chapters.
 - 2. Fortunately, in the process of the long, continued discussion certain broad facts have gradually emerged with increasing clearness, all converging toward the same result.
- B. Three theories of interpretation have been advanced:
 - 1. Naturalistic Theory.
 - a. The book is simply a collection of erotic songs, or idylls of love, put together on the ground of literary merit, and without any allegorical or typical meaning, though possibly intended to describe ideal human love.
 - b. When we remember how the Hebrews venerated their sacred Scriptures, and how careful they were that only inspired writings should be included in the canon, we cannot believe that “**the Song of Songs**” would have been given its decided place in the Scriptures simply on the ground of literary merit.
 - 2. Allegorical Theory.
 - a. This theory ignores any historical foundation in a real love-suit between Solomon and the Shulammite, and treats the whole as a purely figurative and mystical fiction.
 - b. To read some of the absurd and fanciful expositions associated with this theory (such as that the hair of the bride represents the mass of nations converted to Christianity), is too much for a God-given sense of humor, and brings the whole theory into disrepute.
 - 3. Typical Interpretation.
 - a. Coming between the naturalistic and allegorical theories is the view that recognizes the distinctive elements in each of the other two without going to the extreme of either.
 - b. The writing has a historical basis, in harmony with the rest of Scripture, but it also has a religious purpose and a spiritual content.
 - c. Fundamentally, the facts are historical, but they can be lifted up into the region of poetry for a spiritual significance.

II. The Scriptural Key. (Psalm 45)

- A. A title ascribed to this psalm may be, “*A Messianic Wedding Song.*”
 - 1. It is in fact a royal marriage hymn and refers to King Solomon.
 - 2. While the primary reference is to Solomon, the ultimate reference is to Christ.
 - 3. Just as Solomon is a type of Christ in his wisdom, riches and fame, so is he pictured in this marriage union.
 - 4. The psalm might be read with, or as a complement to, the Song of Solomon, setting the crown on the happy issue of the love-suit.
- B. After a brief preface (vs. 1), the psalm divides into two equal parts.
 - 1. An address to the royal bridegroom. (vss. 2-9)
 - a. The beauty of his person. (vs. 2)
 - b. The valor of his conquests. (vss. 3-5)
 - c. The stability of his kingdom. (vs. 6)
 - d. The gladness of his marriage. (vss. 7-9)

2. An address to the royal bride. (vss. 10-17)
 - a. An appeal for complete devotion. (vss. 10-11)
 - b. A promise of high honor. (vs. 12)
 - c. A eulogy of the bride's charms. (vss. 13-15)
 - d. A pledge of unceasing Divine favor. (vss. 16-17)
 - C. In light of Psalm 45, the love-suit in **"the Song of Songs"** is between Solomon and the Shulammitte, and is a most sacred type of the spiritual union between Christ and His Church.
 1. In the mystical presence of Christ and the Church, we find a deeper meaning to this book.
 2. The union between Christ and His redeemed people is best realized in its deepest and tenderest meaning when it is expressed to us under the figure of an ideal marriage union.
- III. The Climax. (Song 2:16)
- A. The climax of this ideal espousal is the joy of mutual possession – of possessing and being possessed. (Cp. I Corinthians 7:3-4)
 - B. This is the joy which the Christian finds in His spiritual union with the Son of God. (John 15:11)
- IV. The Dramatic Story.
- A. The setting of the drama is the palace in Jerusalem, with flashbacks to a previous time.
 1. The Shulammitte is sunburned from working in the vineyards and feels disgraced. (1:6)
 - a. In that day a sunburn meant you were a hardworking servant girl.
 - b. The women in the court wanted to keep their skin as fair as they possibly could.
 2. Her brothers also made her watch sheep. (1:8)
 - a. The place where she worked was along a caravan route in the hill country.
 - b. When she would look up from her work, she would see the caravans that passed by going between Jerusalem and Damascus. (3:6)
 3. One day, while the girl was tending her sheep, a handsome shepherd appeared, and he fell in love with her. (4:1)
 - a. Finally, she gave her heart to the shepherd. (2:3)
 - b. Apparently he once took her to dinner as he traveled through the country. (2:4)
 - c. After she gave her heart to him, they became madly in love. (2:16)
 4. Yet, he was a most peculiar shepherd.
 - a. He didn't have any sheep that she could see.
 - b. On one occasion she finally asked him of his flocks. (1:7a)
 - B. Then one day, he announced that he was going away but would return.
 1. This is an obvious parallel to the words of the Lord Jesus. (John 14:1-3)
 2. The days passed and she waited.
 3. Finally, her family and friends began to ridicule her. (6:1, cp. II Peter 3:3-4)
 4. Yet she trusted him. (6:2-3)
 - C. One night, as she lay restlessly upon her couch, she noticed a familiar fragrance in the room. (5:5)
 1. Now she knew her lover was near.
 2. Jesus warned His disciples, **"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"** (Matthew 24:44).
 - D. One day, while working with the vines, she lifts up her head to see a pillar of smoke approaching. (3:6)
 1. The cry is passed along, *"Behold, King Solomon is coming!"* (3:9-11)
 2. Up to this point, she is unaware of her shepherd being King Solomon.
 3. Then someone says to her, *"King Solomon is asking for you!"*
 - E. King Solomon turns out to be none other than her shepherd. (2:8-10)
 1. Hear the promise of the Lord Jesus. (John 10:27-28)
 2. The Lord Jesus has promised that He is coming again for us. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)
 3. One of these days He is going to call us out of this world. (2:11-13)

Conclusion: Salvation is a great love affair. I John 4:19 tells us, **"We love him, because he first loved us."** To love His appearing means to love Him – even as a bride eagerly anticipates and prepares for the coming of the bridegroom, her beloved. Just as assuredly Jesus told His disciples, **"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself"** (John 14:3), so the Shulammitte heard her lover say, **"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away"** (Song 2:10).

JOURNEY THROUGH ISAIAH

Introduction: What Beethoven is in the realm of music, what Shakespeare is in the realm of literature, what Spurgeon was among the Victorian preachers, that is what Isaiah is among the prophets. As a writer, he transcends all the other prophets and is therefore fitting that the matchless contribution from his pen should stand as leader to the seventeen prophetic books.

I. The Nature Of Prophecy.

- A. Prophecy is not merely prediction.
 - 1. The common idea today is that prophecy is wholly a matter of foretelling the future.
 - 2. That idea is founded on a wrong etymology.
 - a. The prefix “*pro-*,” in “*prophecy*,” does not mean “*beforehand*,” as it does in the word “*provide*.”
 - b. The prefix “*pro-*” means “*in the place of*,” as in the word “*pronoun*.”
 - c. The remainder of the word “*prophet*” is from the Greek, which means “*to speak*.”
 - d. So then a prophet is “*one who speaks in the place of another*.”
 - 3. When Moses cowered at the thought of being sent to Israel in Egypt, on account of his supposed inability as a speaker, God said to him: “**See, I have made thee a god unto Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall by thy prophet**” (Exodus 7:1).
 - 4. Aaron was to be his brother’s prophet in that he spoke in the place of Moses.
- B. While all prediction is prophecy, not all prophecy is predictive.
 - 1. Prophecy may concern the past or the present, as well as the future.
 - 2. In the former case it is an inspired forth-telling; in the latter, it is an inspired fore-telling.
 - 3. Prophecy, in the non-predictive sense, is a declaring of truth on any given subject received by direct inspiration of God.
 - 4. Prophecy, in the predictive sense, is a declaring of the future such as is impossible to the unaided wisdom of man and which can only come by direct inspiration from God.

II. The Prophetic Office.

- A. The office of the prophet was extraordinary rather than ordinary.
 - 1. As His ordinary servants and teachers, God appointed the priests and Levites.
 - 2. They taught the Law as it stood, and performed the sacred rites which it demanded.
 - 3. But when, under formal teaching, the nation slumbered and came to rest on the mere letter of the Law, when they misapprehended its real character, or when they turned away from it, then appeared the prophet to rouse, to warn, and to call the nation back to God.
- B. The test of a prophet. (Deuteronomy 18:22)
 - 1. Although the test of a true prophet was in his prediction coming to pass, a prediction coming to pass did not necessarily prove that he was of God.
 - 2. The determination of whether he was a true or false prophet was not made on the outcome of his prediction, but on whether or not he led the people away from God. (Deut. 13:1-5)
 - 3. The success of false prophets was permitted in order to test God’s people. (Deut. 13:3)

III. The Prophet Isaiah.

- A. Born into an influential, upper-class family, Isaiah rubbed shoulders with royalty and gave advice concerning the foreign affairs of the nation.
 - 1. Though usually scoffed at, he warned vigorously against foreign alliances and urged Judah to trust the Lord. (7:3-4, 30:1-17)
 - 2. He also attacked the social ills of his day, not because he was a social reformer, but because he saw those abuses as symptoms of a spiritual declension. (1:3-9, 58:6-10)
 - 3. His name means, “*the salvation of Jehovah*.”
- B. Isaiah’s ministry lasted about 60 years, beginning near the close of the reign of King Uzziah in about 758 B.C. (Isaiah 1:1)
 - 1. He preached until the turn of the century.
 - 2. After living most of his life in Jerusalem, tradition says that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of Manasseh (692-642 B.C.) by being sawed in two inside a hollow log. (Hebrews 11:37)

IV. Theme.

- A. The Book of Isaiah divides itself into two sections.
 - 1. The judgment of God – God's government. (Chapters 1-39)
 - a. This section warns the Jews about the impending Assyrian invasion of Judah.
 - b. The main theme of this section is God's chastening of Judah for her sins.
 - 2. The comfort of God – God's grace. (Chapters 40-66)
 - a. This section encourages the captives returning from the Babylonian captivity.
 - b. The main theme of this section is God's consolation of the captives after their suffering.
- B. Isaiah experienced the events of the first thirty-nine chapters, but he prophesied of the events contained in the last twenty-seven chapters of the book.

V. Historical Setting.

- A. The nation divided after the death of Solomon; ten tribes to the north were organized as Israel, and two tribes in the south as Judah.
 - 1. Isaiah ministered in Jerusalem, but his messages touched both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.
 - 2. He lived to see Israel (the Northern Kingdom) decline and finally go into ruin under Assyria.
- B. The political scene was threatening to Judah at that time.
 - 1. Assyria was the menacing power and the other nations wanted to form a coalition to fight her.
 - a. King Ahaz of Judah would not join the league, so Syria and Israel united to attack Judah to try to force Ahaz to cooperate.
 - b. Instead of trusting the Lord, Ahaz turned to Assyria for assistance.
 - 2. In 721 B.C. Assyria defeated Israel, but Judah became a vassal state to Assyria, the price Ahaz had to pay for his security.
 - a. No sooner was Israel out of the way than Assyria decided to attack Judah and enslave the entire Jewish nation.
 - b. Isaiah told the people to trust the Lord for help, but various groups told the king to turn to Egypt for aid.
 - c. Assyria was later defeated by the Egyptians, but when the Egyptians fell to the Babylonians (606-587 B.C.), the Babylonians took Judah into captivity.

VI. The Call Of Isaiah. (Chapter 6)

- A. The upward look – He saw the Lord. (6:1-4)
- B. The inward look – He saw himself. (6:5-7)
- C. The outward look – He saw the need. (6:8-13)

VII. The Great Messianic Prophecy. (Chapter 53)

- A. His rejection. (53:1-3)
 - 1. They rejected His words – **“Who hath believed our report?”** (53:1a)
 - 2. They rejected His works – **“ . . . and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”** (53:1b)
 - 3. They rejected His Person. (53:2-3)
- B. His redemption. (53:4-6)
 - 1. Why should an innocent man, such as Jesus Christ, die such a terrible death on a cross?
 - 2. He took the place of sinners and bore the judgment of our sin.
- C. His resignation. (53:7-9)
 - 1. He offered no protest, for the work of redemption must be accomplished.
 - 2. Though men are unjust, we must remember that God is always just. (I Peter 2:18-25)
- D. His reward. (53:10-12)
 - 1. Redemption was the plan of God and it was carried out successfully.
 - 2. Besides the joy of having done the Father's will, His death and travail have made possible God's family of saved sinners.

Conclusion: It is on an unworthy note that the prophet closes his book (66:22-24). On two previous occasions he had asserted that the wicked had no peace; and now, at the very end, he again states the same truth. Whereas the reference in the first instance is to those of ancient Israel, they who are Jews according to the flesh, it must be remembered that this sad fate will be shared by all who have transgressed against God. That such is not the believer's fate is due only to the fact that the blessed Servant of the Lord was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. **“To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen”** (II Peter 3:18).

JOURNEY THROUGH JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

Introduction: Jeremiah is one of the bravest, tenderest, and most pathetic figures in history, and his books should be read by everybody. There is good reason why we should read the prophecies of Jeremiah with much thoughtfulness today, for there is much correspondence between the fateful days of this noble prophet and our own.

I. The Man.

- A. The name "*Jeremiah*" means "*whom Jehovah appoints.*"
 - 1. Only as God's servant recognizes his task as an appointment from God can he continue to minister faithfully. (I Corinthians 9:16-17)
 - 2. The Apostle Paul recognized the course laid out for his life. (II Timothy 4:7)
- B. Jeremiah was of the priestly line and lived in the priests' city of Anathoth (1:1), three miles northwest of Jerusalem.
 - 1. He was a man of personal wealth seen by his ability to purchase real estate and even hire a scribe.
 - 2. He was called to the ministry in 627 B.C., when he was but a child. (1:4-6)

II. The Times.

- A. Jeremiah ministered during the last forty years of Judah's history.
- B. He lists the kings during whose reigns he served, the last leaders of the once-prosperous kingdom of Judah. (1:1-3)
 - 1. Josiah was a godly king.
 - a. It was during his reign that the Law was found and the Temple worship restored.
 - b. He died in 608 B.C.
 - 2. Jehoahaz followed, but reigned only three months, so Jeremiah does not mention him.
 - 3. Jehoikim was next. (608-597 B.C.)
 - a. He was a godless man and did his utmost to persecute Jeremiah.
 - b. It was he who burned the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies in chapter 36.
 - 4. Jehoiachin was the next king, but he too reigned for just three months before being taken into captivity.
 - 5. The last king was Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.), who presided over the ruin of the nation and the capture of the city of Jerusalem.
- C. When Jeremiah began his ministry, Assyria was the leading power in the world, but Egypt and Babylon were rapidly gaining strength.
 - 1. In 607 B.C. the Babylonians took Nineveh and destroyed the power of Assyria.
 - 2. Babylon next turned to Judah, and Judah's "*politicians*" advised the king to ask Egypt for help.
 - a. Jeremiah was always against an Egyptian alliance.
 - b. He knew that Judah's only hope was the Lord.
 - 3. Babylon finally did capture Judah and take Jerusalem. (606-586 B.C.)
 - 4. Jeremiah wrote Lamentations to commemorate the death of the Holy City.

III. The Message.

- A. Jeremiah's task was not an easy one because he had to sound the death knell for his nation.
 - 1. The first part of his book records several of his sermons, given in Jerusalem, in which he denounces the people, priests, and princes for their sins, especially the sin of idolatry.
 - 2. In chapter 25 he announces that the nation will go into captivity for seventy years, and then return to reestablish the country.
 - 3. In chapter 31 he prophesies a "*new covenant*" between Jehovah and His people, not one of law and works written on stones, but a covenant of love and faith, written in the heart.
 - 4. In the final chapters, Jeremiah deals with the Gentile nations around Judah and tells of God's plans for them.
- B. The central thought of Jeremiah may be expressed by bringing together the two recurrent expressions, "**I will punish,**" and "**I will restore.**"
- C. The book of Lamentations is a series of "*funeral poems*" marking the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

IV. The Potter. (Jeremiah 18:1-10)

A. God is the Potter.

1. Our lives are not in the hands of some invisible “force” or blind “fate.”
 - a. They are in the hands of a Person – Almighty God.
 - b. God is not just our Creator, He is our Father, and He has a personal concern for our lives. (Isaiah 64:8)
2. Clay cannot mold itself.
 - a. Only God has the power to guide our lives.
 - b. We cannot be blessed if we argue with or try to tell God what to do. (Romans 9:20-23)
3. The potter has a perfect plan for the clay.
 - a. He sees the finished product in his mind.
 - b. God has a perfect plan for our lives. (Philippians 1:6)
4. The potter patiently works the clay, molding its shape.
 - a. God patiently directs in our lives, seeking to fulfill His will.
 - b. Often He uses the hands of others to help shape us – parents, teachers, employers, fellow Christians, even those who persecute us.

B. We are the clay.

1. In Jeremiah’s message, the clay represented the people of Judah, but we are not wrong in applying the principle to our lives personally.
2. Christians are God’s vessels, molded by Him to contain the treasure of the Gospel. (II Corinthians 4:6-7)

C. Life is the wheel.

1. The wheel is spun around swiftly by the potter himself, and he alone controls the speed.
 - a. Our lives are not controlled by chance or luck, but by the hand of our loving God.
 - b. He arranges the circumstances of life that mold us. (Romans 8:28)
2. The most important thing about a wheel is not its size (some lives are shorter than others), but its center.
 - a. If the wheel is “on center” then everything will be balanced.
 - b. Christ is the center of the dedicated Christian’s life. (Matthew 6:33)

D. Disobedience is the marring.

1. The most important quality of clay is that it yields.
2. Jeremiah says the vessel (his nation) is marred.

E. The potter did not throw the clay away and start with a new lump, but he made it again.

1. This is a picture of the rebellion of man and his restoration by God’s grace.
2. The clay was marred because it wanted to have its own way. (Jeremiah 18:11-12)
3. How often do we as Christians mar our own lives by making our own plans outside the will of God?
4. If only we could see the finished product that God has planned for our lives.
5. Sometimes He must use difficult testings to get us to yield.

F. Trials are the furnaces of life.

1. Jeremiah does not mention the potter’s furnaces, but they had to be there.
2. No vessel is worth anything until it has gone through the furnace.
3. The heat gives the clay strength and beauty and increases its usefulness and value.

V. “Thus Saith The Lord.” (Jeremiah 36)

- A. The inspiration of the Word. (36:1-4, II Peter 1:21)
- B. The proclamation of the Word. (36:5-10, II Timothy 3:16)
- C. The preservation of the Word. (36:11-32, Matthew 24:35)

VI. Lessons Of God. (Lamentations 1-5)

- A. The awfulness of God’s judgments. (1:1-6)
- B. The righteousness of God’s wrath. (1:18)
- C. The truthfulness of God’s Word. (2:17)
- D. The faithfulness of God’s mercy. (3:22-25)

Conclusion: As in Jeremiah’s days, people about us are less and less inclined to hear our message, and are more inclined to resist and persecute us. Let us recognize the hour in which we witness for God, and be encouraged by Jeremiah, who, through nearly half a century of discouragement, bravely pressed on.

JOURNEY THROUGH EZEKIEL

Introduction: In our study we should note that twelve of the prophetic books are pre-exilic (before exile) and five are post-exilic. The five post-exilic books are Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. All the others belong to the period preceding the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile of the Jews, except, of course, that Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, actually lived to witness that tragic event, and wrote his *"Lamentations"* as a sad memorial to it.

Among the Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in his invasion of Judah (597 B.C.) was a man named Ezekiel. Daniel had been taken captive in an earlier invasion (606 B.C.). While Jeremiah ministered to the Jews in the land, Ezekiel was to be the prophet to the Jews in exile, and Daniel served as God's ambassador to the court of the king.

I. Author Of Ezekiel.

- A. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was a priest as well as a prophet. (1:3)
 - 1. He was one of ten thousand captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar at the time when Zedekiah, Judah's last king, commenced his miserable reign of eleven years at Jerusalem. (II Kings 24:10-19)
 - 2. He was thirty years of age when he began his prophetic ministry. (1:1)
 - a. He had been captive in Babylon for five years before he began prophesying. (1:2)
 - b. This was six years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
- B. Ezekiel's name means *"God strengthens."*

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The call and commission of Ezekiel. (Chapters 1-3)
- B. God's judgments on Jerusalem. (Chapters 4-24)
 - 1. Prophecies of judgment. (Chapters 4-7)
 - 2. Reasons for judgment. (Chapters 8-11)
 - 3. Messages of judgment. (Chapters 12-24)
- C. God's judgments on Judah's foes. (Chapters 25-32)
- D. Israel's restoration. (Chapters 33-48)
 - 1. Israel's resurrection. (Chapters 33-39)
 - 2. Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. (Chapters 40-48)

III. The Glory Of God Revealed. (Chapters 1-3)

- A. As a priest in captivity (1:1), Ezekiel was unable to exercise his ministry away from the Temple.
 - 1. But God opened the heavens to him and called him to be a prophet.
 - 2. How wonderful to know that God's Word is never far from God's people if they will only listen.
 - a. John heard the Word as an exile on Patmos. (Revelation 1:9)
 - b. Paul received the Word when in prison.
- B. What did Ezekiel see?
 - 1. A fiery whirlwind. (1:4)
 - a. This symbolized God's judgment on Jerusalem, with Babylon coming out of the north.
 - b. The storm cloud with its fiery lightning meant destruction for Jerusalem.
 - 2. The cherub. (1:5-14)
 - a. These creatures symbolize the glory and power of God.
 - b. The four faces speak of their characteristics:
 - (1) The intelligence and discernment of a man.
 - (2) The strength and boldness of a lion.
 - (3) The faithfulness and service of an ox.
 - (4) The majesty and heavenliness of an eagle.
 - c. These creatures could see in all directions and move quickly to accomplish the will of God.
 - 3. The wheels. (1:15-21)
 - a. Each creature was associated with a set of wheels, two wheels in each set.
 - (1) The wheels in each set were not parallel to each other, like the rim and the hub of a bicycle wheel; rather, they were at right angles to each other, like a gyroscope top.

- (2) The wheels were constantly turning and, since they faced in all four directions, they could move in any way without changing motion, just like the cherubim.
 - b. They were **“full of eyes”** (vs. 18), picturing the omniscience of God as He rules His creation.
(Proverbs 15:3, **“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”**)
 - c. All of this speaks of God's constant working in the world, His power and glory, His presence in all places, His purpose for man, and His providence.
- 4. The firmament. (1:22-27)
 - a. There was a beautiful *“platform”* above the wheels, containing the throne of God.
 - b. God is still on the throne, and His will is still being accomplished in this world even if we don't always see it.
 - c. The complex movements of the cherubim and the wheels reveal how intricate God's providence is in the universe.
 - (1) Only God understands it and can control it.
 - (2) But there is perfect harmony and order. (Colossians 1:16-17)
- 5. The rainbow. (1:28)
 - a. Noah saw the rainbow after the flood as a sign of God's mercy. (Genesis 9:11-17)
 - b. Ezekiel saw the rainbow during the storm as a reminder of God's mercy and faithfulness to His people and that He would not fail them.
 - c. The entire vision shows God's glory at work in the world, judging the sins of His people, but still keeping His covenant of mercy.
- C. The result of this vision was total collapse on the part of Ezekiel. (1:28)
 - 1. God set him up on his feet (2:1), fed him with the Word (2:1), filled him with the Spirit (2:2), and called him to be a watchman (3:17).
 - 2. The result is that **“they shall know that I am the Lord”** (6:7) – the central message of Ezekiel.

IV. The Glory Of God Removed. (Chapters 8-11)

- A. A year later, God gave Ezekiel another vision, this time of the sins of the people back in Jerusalem.
 - 1. There he saw a fourfold view of the sins of the people.
 - a. An image set up at the north gate, possibly As-tarte, a Babylonian goddess. (8:5)
 - b. Secret heathen worship in the hidden precincts of the Temple. (8:6-12)
 - c. The Jewish women weeping for the god Tammuz. (8:13-14)
 - d. The high priest worshipping the sun. (8:15-16)
 - 2. Is it any wonder that God planned to destroy the city?
- B. The glory of the Lord could not remain in such a wicked place.
 - 1. The glory had come to the Temple. (8:2)
 - 2. The glory moved to the threshold of the Temple. (9:3)
 - 3. The glory moved with the cherubim to the eastern gate of the Temple. (10:18-19)
 - 4. The glory moved out of the Temple to the top of the Mount of Olives. (11:22-23)
- C. Why was the glory removed?
 - 1. God will not share His glory with another.
 - 2. The idols and the sins of the people had driven Him away.
 - 3. Their sins have been hidden from the people, but God saw them, and judged them.
 - 4. Today, God will remove His glory and His blessing from our lives unless we serve Him faithfully with honest and pure hearts.

V. The Glory Of God Restored. (43:1-6)

- A. In chapters 40-48 the prophet sees the future restoration of Israel and her glory in the Kingdom.
- B. He describes the restored city and Temple, greater than anything Israel has ever known.

Conclusion: God is concerned with His glory. We are to glorify God in our bodies (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and magnify Him in all that we do (Philippians 1:20-21). Our good works are to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). But we can send away the glory of God from our lives. Certainly the Spirit of God will not leave us (Ephesians 1:12-14), but we can grieve the Spirit and lose the glory of God in our daily walk (Ephesians 4:30). Ezekiel warns us that secret sins do not remain secret very long. God sees them all and, before long, others will see them too.

JOURNEY THROUGH DANIEL

Introduction: For sheer interest, the Book of Daniel stands first among the writings of the prophets. It is full of supernatural marvels, both in the events which it records and in the visions which it describes. But its interest is eclipsed by its importance; for it preserves for us not only unique links in the chain of history, but also vital keys to the interpretation of prophecy.

I. Daniel, The Man.

- A. Daniel stands out as one of the greatest men in Jewish history.
 - 1. That he was a real person in history is proved by Ezekiel 14:14 and 28:3. (See also Matthew 24:15 and Hebrews 11:33)
 - 2. He was a teenager in the year 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and began his conquest of Judah.
 - a. There are several “*deportations*” of Jews to Babylon, and because he was of the princely line, Daniel was in the first group.
 - b. It was the practice of Babylon to deport the finest of the citizens and train them for service in their own government.
 - 3. Daniel was still active in 539 B.C. when the kingdom was taken by Cyrus, so he lived and ministered in Babylon for more than sixty years.
 - a. He lived through the reigns of four rulers: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.
 - b. He lived through two different kingdoms: Babylon and Media-Persia.
- B. Daniel held several important positions and was promoted greatly because of his character and wisdom, and because the blessing of God was upon him.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar named him chief of the wise men and a ruler of the land (2:48), a position similar to a modern prime minister.
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, Belshazzar, called Daniel out of retirement and, because he explained the handwriting on the wall, made Daniel third ruler in the land. (5:29)
 - 3. Darius later named him leader over the whole realm. (6:1-3)
 - 4. For at least seventy-five years, Daniel was God’s faithful witness in wicked and idolatrous kingdoms.
- C. His name means “*God is my judge.*”

II. Daniel, The Book.

- A. Daniel is to the Old Testament what the Book of Revelation is to the New Testament.
 - 1. Prophetically, Daniel deals with “**the times of the Gentiles**” (Luke 21:24), that period of time that began in 606 B.C. with the captivity of Jerusalem and will end when Christ returns to earth to judge the Gentile nations and establish His Kingdom.
 - 2. In the various visions and dreams in Daniel, we see the program of Gentile history from the rise of Babylon through the conquests of the Medes and Persians, Greeks, Romans, and culminating in the rule of the Antichrist just before the return of Jesus Christ.
- B. We see that the themes of Daniel are the themes of the New Testament.
 - 1. The manifestation of “*the man of sin*” – the Antichrist.
 - 2. The Great Tribulation.
 - 3. The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 4. The resurrections and the judgments.
- C. The Book of Daniel proves that “**there is a God in heaven.**” (2:28)
 - 1. It further reveals that “**the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will**” (4:25).
 - 2. Daniel makes it very clear that God Almighty is sovereign in the affairs of this world, and that truly “*history is His-Story.*”
 - a. God establishes rulers on their thrones and removes them from their thrones.
 - b. God can defeat the strongest nations and turn them over to their enemies.

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The histories of Daniel. (Chapters 1-6)

1. Maintaining his godly walk. (Chapter 1)
 2. Interpreting the *"Image Dream."* (Chapter 2)
 3. The golden image. (Chapter 3)
 4. Interpreting the *"Tree Dream."* (Chapter 4)
 5. Interpreting the handwriting on the wall. (Chapter 5)
 6. Maintaining his godly devotion: the lion's den. (Chapter 6)
- B. The prophecies of Daniel. (Chapters 7-12)
1. His vision of the four beasts. (Chapter 7)
 2. His vision of the ram and he goat. (Chapter 8)
 3. His prayer of confession, the seventy weeks. (Chapter 9)
 4. His final vision of the future. (Chapters 10-12)

IV. The Kingdoms Of Daniel.

KINGDOM	MAN'S VIEW OF KINGDOMS (Valuable Metals) Daniel 2	GOD'S VIEW OF KINGDOMS (Dangerous Beasts) Daniel 7
Babylon (606 - 539 B.C.)	The head of gold (2:36-38)	The lion with eagle's wings (7:4)
Media-Persia (539 - 330 B.C.)	Arms and chest of silver (2:32, 39)	Bear with three ribs (7:5)
Greece (330 - 150 B.C.)	Thighs of brass (2:39, 39)	Leopard with four heads (7:6)
Rome (150 B.C. - A.D. 500)	Legs of iron (2:33, 40)	The <i>"dreadful"</i> beast (7:7)
Antichrist's Kingdom	Ten toes of iron and clay (2:41-43)	Little horn (7:8)
CHRIST'S KINGDOM	The Smiting Stone (2:34-35, 44-45)	The Ancient of Days (7:9-14)

V. Daniel's Difficult Times.

- A. The testing of the Hebrews. (Chapter 1)
1. A difficult trial. (1:1-7)
 - a. A new home. (1:1-2)
 - b. A new knowledge. (1:3-4)
 - c. A new diet. (1:5)
 - d. A new name. (1:6-7)
 2. A daring test. (1:8-16)
 - a. The Babylonians could change Daniel's home, textbooks, menu, and name, but they could not change his heart.
 - b. Daniel had purposed in his heart that he would not be defiled. (1:8)
 3. A Divine triumph. (1:17-21)
 - a. A test for ten days is one thing, but what about the three-year course at the *"University of Babylon?"*
 - b. God enabled Daniel and his friends to learn their lessons better than the other students, and He added to this knowledge His own spiritual wisdom. (1:20)
- B. The fiery furnace. (Chapter 3)
- C. The lion's den. (Chapter 6)

VI. Daniel's Seventy Weeks. (Chapter 9)

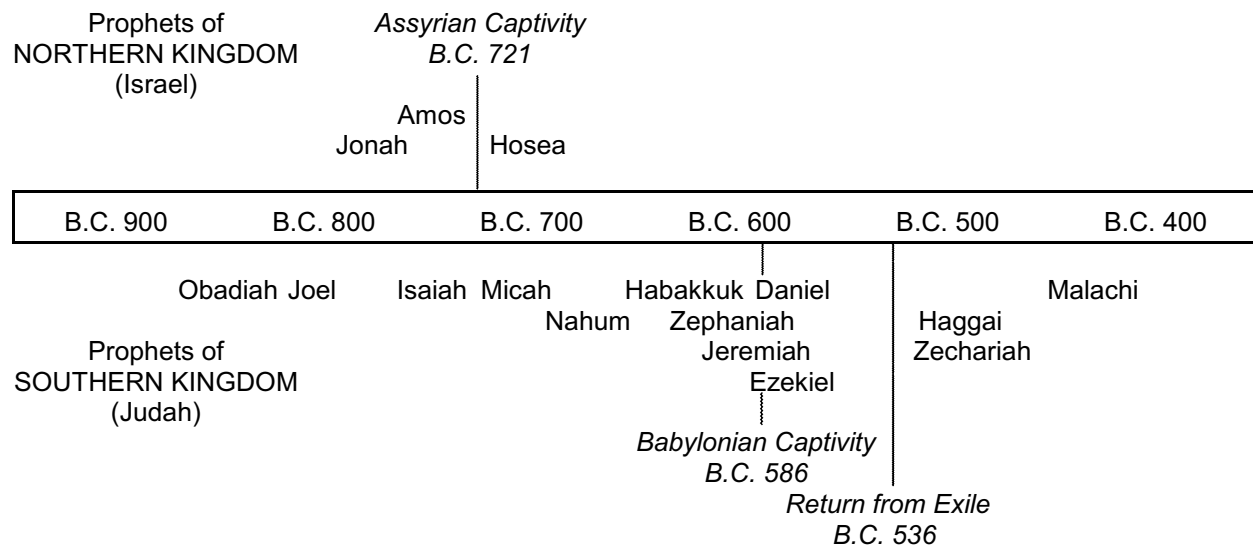
- A. This is one of the great towering chapters of the Bible.
- B. The prophecy divides 70 *"weeks,"* or 70 *"sevens"* into three divisions with a parenthesis, the Church Age, between the 69th and 70th weeks. (9:24-27)

Conclusion: The Book of Daniel represents the low point in Israel's history. They were a captive people in a strange land where riches and power were very seductive. But Daniel looks beyond their oppressive situation, giving hope against all odds. He sees God as always faithful, and His plan, through Christ the King, will ultimately triumph.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOSEA

Introduction: Hosea is the prophet of Israel's zero hour. The nation had sunk to a point of such corruption that a major stroke of Divine judgment could no longer be delayed. What the weeping Jeremiah would be to the Southern Kingdom of Judah nearly a century and a half later, that was the sob-choked Hosea to the Northern Kingdom of Israel presently. Pointedly, though unprevailing, he warned his hardened countrymen during those tragic decades which culminated in the utterly deserved, yet heart-rending catastrophes of an Assyrian invasion.

- I. Introduction To The Minor Prophets.
 - A. The "*Minor Prophets*" are not minor in the sense of being less important than Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel.
 1. Their messages are very important in God's program of prophecy. (II Timothy 3:16)
 2. Bible students call them "*Minor*" mainly because of the brevity of their writings.
 - B. In each of these books, you will usually find a threefold lesson:
 1. Historical – each of the prophets preached and wrote to meet immediate needs.
 2. Prophetical – each prophet announces something about Israel's future, in judgment or restoration.
 3. Practical – the sins of the nations in that day are with us today, and there are many practical lessons for us to learn from these books.
 - C. Chronological grouping of the prophets.



- II. Hosea.
 - A. The name Hosea means "*salvation*."
 1. He preached in the Northern Kingdom during a period of national decline.
 2. When Hosea started his ministry, Jeroboam II was king, and it was a time of great prosperity.
 3. During his lifetime, the nation continued rotting away inwardly and getting involved with foreign alliances instead of trusting God to lead and protect them.
 - B. Hosea's central message is "**return to the LORD**" (Hosea 6:1).
 1. The unique thing about Hosea's message is that he had to live it for himself before he could preach it to the people. (II Corinthians 1:4)
 2. The prophet experienced deep agony in his own marriage because of the sins of his wife before it became an object lesson to him and his people.
- III. Hosea's Message.
 - A. Israel's unfaithfulness pictured in Hosea's marriage. (Chapters 1-3)
 1. Hosea wanted to marry a woman named Gomer, and God permitted him to do so, but warned him that she would break his heart. (1:2)

- a. God's warning was true: Gomer bore Hosea three children, then left him for others.
 - b. Then God commanded the prophet to go find his wayward wife, and he discovered her being sold in a slave market. (3:1-2)
2. All of this pictured Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord.
 - a. The nation was married to the Lord and should have remained faithful to Him. (Exodus 34:14-16, Deuteronomy 32:16, Isaiah 62:5, Jeremiah 3:14)
 - (1) Israel lusted after sin, especially the false gods of the other nations, and committed "*spiritual adultery*" by forsaking the true God and worshiping the idols of her enemies.
 - (2) They promised her many pleasures, but discovered pain and sorrow instead.
 - (3) Like Gomer, Israel would go into slavery (captivity) because of her sins.
 - b. But that is not the end of the story, for as Hosea sought out his wife and bought her back to himself, so the Lord would seek out His own people, set them free, and restore them to His love and blessing.
3. We cannot leave these chapters without pointing out that "*spiritual adultery*" can be a sin of Christians as well as the Old Testament Jews. (I John 2:15-17, Rev. 2:1-7, James 4:1-10)
 - a. Christians who love the world and live for sin are false to their Savior and break His heart.
 - b. Paul warned the Corinthians against this sin. (II Corinthians 11:1-3)
- B. Israel's sins proclaimed. (Chapters 4-7)
 1. No doubt all the neighbors talked about Gomer's sins and pointed an accusing finger at her.
 - a. Now Hosea points a finger at them and reveals their sins. (4:1-2)
 - b. Furthermore, the nation tried to cover her sins with a shallow "*religious revival*." (6:1-6)
 2. Hosea pictures the spiritual condition of the people.
 - a. "**A morning cloud**," here one minute, gone the next. (6:4)
 - b. "**A cake not turned**," or "*a half-baked cake*," for their religion had not gotten deep into their lives, but was only a surface thing. (7:8)
 - c. "**Gray hairs**," losing their strength, but ignorant of the change. (7:9)
 - d. "**A silly dove**," unstable, flitting from one political ally to another. (7:11)
 - e. "**A deceitful bow**," that you cannot depend on. (7:16)
- C. Israel's judgment pronounced. (Chapters 8-10)
 1. The backslider is always punished. (Proverbs 14:14, Jeremiah 3:6)
 - a. Christians who break their testimony for the Lord do not lose their salvation, but they do lose their joy, power and usefulness, and, therefore, suffer the discipline of God.
 - b. Hosea could see the Assyrians coming to punish their nation and deliver it into slavery.
 2. He pictures this coming judgment as:
 - a. A swift "**eagle**." (8:1)
 - b. The wrath of "**the whirlwind**." (8:7)
 - c. The burning of "**a fire**." (8:14)
 3. The nation is going to be scattered (9:17), and reap more than they have sown. (10:12-15)
 4. Sinners always reap more than they have sown, because those few seeds planted multiply into a large harvest. (Galatians 6:7-8)
- D. Israel's restoration promised. (Chapters 11-14)
 1. Hosea does not end on a gloomy note.
 - a. He sees the future glory of the nation.
 - b. Just as his wife was bought back from slavery and restored to his home and heart, so the nation will one day be restored to her land and to her Lord.
 - c. These closing chapters magnify the faithful love of God in contrast to the unfaithfulness of His people.
 2. It was God's grace that redeemed Israel from her slavery in Egypt and provided for her every need. (11:1)
 - a. From the very beginning of this "*marriage*" between Jehovah and Israel, the people were "**bent on backsliding**" (11:7).
 - b. God drew them with cords of love (11:4), but they tried to break those cords and go their own way.
 - c. "*Sin is not only the breaking of God's Law, but also the breaking of God's heart.*"
 3. Chapter 14 is God's loving appeal to His "*wife*" to return to His heart and blessing.

Conclusion: Do not miss the personal message here. Backsliders may return to the Lord, experience His forgiveness (I John 1:9), and be restored to the place of blessing and usefulness. Follow the way of the Lord, which is the right way.

JOURNEY THROUGH JOEL

Introduction: Both in style and in subject the Book of Joel is capturing. For vividness of description and pictorialness of diction Joel is scarcely equaled. His pen-pictures of the plague-stricken land, the invading locust-army, and the final gathering of all nations to the valley of judgment, are miniature masterpieces of graphic strength.

I. Joel, The Man.

- A. Nothing is known of Joel except that he is the son of Pethuel. (1:1)
- B. His name means *“Jehovah is God.”*
- C. His book makes it vividly clear that he exercised his prophetic ministry in or near Jerusalem.
 - 1. It is the inhabitants of Jerusalem (**“Zion”**) to whom he addresses. (2:23)
 - 2. It is Jerusalem which he sees in danger. (2:9)
 - 3. It is in **“Zion”** that the **“alarm”** is sounded. (2:1, 15)
 - 4. It is **“in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem”** that deliverance will follow in the after-days. (2:32)
 - 5. It is the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem which is to then be ended. (3:1)
 - 6. It is Judah and Jerusalem that will **“dwell for ever.”** (3:20)
 - 7. The ten-tribed Northern Kingdom is not once mentioned.

II. Joel, The Book.

- A. Hosea's message grew out of a personal heartbreak in his own family; Joel's message grows out of a national calamity: the invasion of a plague of locusts.
 - 1. Along with the locusts came a terrible drought. (1:4, 20)
 - 2. The combination of the two brought the land to the place of famine.
- B. Joel had a message for the people of Judah, for he saw in their calamities the disciplining hand of God for their sins.
 - 1. He looked beyond the locusts and saw another **“army”** – a literal army of Gentile nations attacking Jerusalem. (3:2)
 - 2. Joel used the immediate judgment of God, the locusts, as an illustration of the ultimate judgment to come in **“the day of the LORD.”**

III. The Central Message – **“The Day Of The LORD.”**

- A. Joel uses the phrase five times. (1:15, 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14)
- B. Other prophets also use the phrase. (Isaiah 2:12, 13:6-9, Jeremiah 46:10, Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3, Amos 5:18-20, Obadiah 1:15, Zephaniah 1:7-8, 14, 18, 2:2-3, 14:1)
- C. The phrase, **“the day of the LORD,”** refers to that future time when God will pour out His wrath on the Gentile nations because of their sins against the Jews. (Joel 3:1-2)
- D. This eschatological **“day”** includes the Great Tribulation (Isaiah 2:12-19, 4:1), the Second Coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the Millennium (Isaiah 4:2, 12, 19:23-25, Jeremiah 30:7-9).

IV. **“The Day Of The LORD”** Typified.

- A. Proclamation. (1:1-20)
 - 1. Joel addresses several different groups of people as he describes the terrible plague and its devastating results.
 - a. The old men are asked if they can remember such a tragedy from the years gone by. (1:1-4)
 - (1) They cannot.
 - (2) In fact, they will tell their children, and even their great-grandchildren, about this awful event.
 - b. Joel turns to the drunkards who weep and howl because the vineyards have been ruined and their supply of drink is gone. (1:5-7)
 - c. He turns to the worshipers who must go to the Temple empty-handed because there are no sacrifices to bring. (1:8-10)
 - d. He addresses the farmers who are howling because their crops are all ruined. (1:11-12)
 - 2. Finally, Joel turns to the priests and tells them to fast and pray. (1:13-14)

3. Here we reach the heart of the matter, for it was because of sin that God was punishing the nation. (1:15-20)
 - a. So long as the people obeyed Him, He would send the rain and the harvest.
 - b. If they turned away from Him, He would make the heavens like brass and destroy their fields. (Deuteronomy 11:10-17, II Chronicles 7:14)
 - B. Tribulation. (2:1-11)
 1. Joel blows the trumpet of alarm to warn the people that the destroying army of locusts is coming.
 2. Verse 10 suggests such great swarms that they will blot out the sun and moon.
 - C. Humiliation. (2:12-17)
 1. Joel blows the trumpet a second time, to call an assembly to fast and pray and confess sin.
 2. This is not to be the mere outward renting of clothes, but rather the breaking of the heart.
 - D. Restoration. (2:18-27)
 1. Having heard the alarm and assembled, now comes the answer from the Lord – **“the LORD will answer.”** (2:19)
 2. God promises to drive away the army of locusts and restore the pastures again. (2:25)
- V. **“The Day Of The LORD”** Prophesied.
- A. Now Joel moves ahead and talks about another **“day of the LORD,”** a time of future judgment that will end in blessing for the Jews.
 - B. The Spirit will be poured out before that day. (2:28-32)
 1. This passage is quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:16-21)
 - a. Peter did not say, *“Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled,”* but rather, **“That which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”**
 - b. In other words, *“This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel spoke about.”*
 2. The full prophecy of Joel, with its dramatic signs in the heavens, will not be fulfilled unto the last days.
 - a. Joel is telling us that during the last days of Israel’s history, during the Tribulation period, the Spirit of God will work in mighty power in the saving of both Jews and Gentiles, and that there will be mighty wonders and signs in the heavens.
 - b. These are recorded in the Book of Revelation.
 - C. Judgment will be poured out during that day. (3:1-17)
 1. Verse 1 makes it clear that the Jews will be back in their land, delivered from their captivities by Gentile nations.
 - a. But all the nations will gather together to fight Jerusalem.
 - b. God will bring them into the Valley of Jehoshaphat (the area of the Plain of Megiddo) where the Battle of Armageddon will be fought.
 2. Verses 2-8 makes it clear that this judgment will be God’s punishment on the Gentiles for the way they have treated the nation of Israel and the land of Israel.
 - a. The Promised Land has been a plundered land.
 - b. Many Gentile nations have robbed the Jews of the wealth that is rightfully theirs.
 - c. God will compensate them in **“the Day of the Lord.”**
 3. Verse 13 compares the battle to a ripe harvest of grapes. (See Revelation 14:14-20)
 4. Christ will defend His land, His people, and His holy City.
 - D. Blessings will be poured out after that day. (3:18-21)
 1. As Joel preached, the people could see the dry fields, the starving cattle, and the empty barns.
 2. They could see and hear the locusts as they ravaged the country.
 3. But Joel is picturing a time when wine, milk and water will again flow in ceaseless measure.
 4. This is, of course, the Kingdom Age when Jesus Christ will sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and when the land will be healed and the blessing of God restored.

Conclusion: We must not miss the personal application of Joel’s message to believers today. Certainly God does send natural calamities when nations refuse to obey Him. Wars, poor crops, epidemics, earthquakes, storms – all of these can be used of God to bring people to their knees. God can even use little insects to do His will if men and women will not obey Him. Our lives personally can become dry and fruitless if we are out of God’s will. How important it is to experience sincere deep repentance (2:12-13) that God might forgive us and send His blessings again.

JOURNEY THROUGH AMOS

Introduction: Amos, the herdsman-prophet, is a singular figure among the Old Testament prophets.

He was not the only prophet of his day, but he denounced the sin of Israel more graphically than any of the others. He preached against self-indulgence, oppression of the poor, lying, and hypocrisy in worship. His writing is distinguished by a peculiar forcefulness and rural freshness.

I. Amos, The Man.

- A. Amos, whose name occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament outside of his prophecy, was born in the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the city of Tekoa.
 - 1. He was a contemporary of Hosea and, although born in Judah, was sent by God to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel at Bethel, its religious center.
 - 2. His prophetic messages are directed against the low moral condition of the people and especially against their apostasy from the Lord in their worship of idols.
- B. Amos was not a prophet in the professional sense.
 - 1. He was not the son of a prophet, but a herdsman, and a cultivator of sycamore trees. (7:14)
 - a. Yet, Amos knew he had the calling of God to proclaim His message. (7:15)
 - b. Consciousness of the call of God is what gives a man or woman the confidence to labor, even in the face of such opposition or discouragement as Amos had met. (II Peter 1:10)
 - 2. **“The LORD said unto me . . . now therefore . . .”** (7:15-16)
 - a. It is that ring of **“now therefore”** that is absent in many preachers today.
 - b. It is the conviction of a Divine call deep in the soul which makes a man or woman a powerful witness for God.

II. Amos, The Time Of His Ministry.

- A. The days of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel were marked by great prosperity, in fact, the most prosperous time for the Northern Kingdom.
- B. Amos foretold of coming chastisement from the Lord but did not name the foreign invader (Assyria) to be the scourge of the Lord.
- C. Amos visited Bethel, where King Jeroboam II had his private chapel and Amaziah his private priest.
 - 1. Services are about to begin, with Amaziah in charge, when a commotion is heard outside.
 - 2. **“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,”** cries the voice of Amos. (6:1)
 - 3. He is God’s man with God’s message, warning God’s people of God’s judgment.

III. The Prophecies Of Amos – A Look Around. (Chapters 1-2)

- A. The phrase, **“For three transgressions and for four . . . ,”** is used to preface each of eight prophecies.
 - 1. The phrase is not to be taken mathematically, to mean a literal three and then four, but idiomatically, as meaning that the measure is full, and more than full.
 - 2. The sins of these peoples had overreached themselves.
 - 3. A modern idiom might be that they had *“gone one too many.”* (See Romans 2:4)
- B. Amos begins his message by looking around at the nations and announcing eight judgments.
 - 1. He accuses Syria (Damascus) of awful cruelty in war. (1:3-5)
 - 2. He condemns Philistia (Gaza) for the sin of slavery. (1:6-8)
 - 3. Tyrus is also judged for cruel slavery. (1:9-10)
 - 4. Israel’s old enemy, Edom, is accused of constant hatred. (1:11-12)
 - 5. Ammon is judged for bitter cruelty and selfish greed. (1:13-15)
 - 6. Moab is condemned for cruelty to Edom. (2:1-3)
 - 7. Judah is judged for rejecting the Law of God. (2:4-5)
 - 8. Finally, Israel is brought to court before God. (2:6-16)
 - a. The prophet names the sins of the people: bribery, greed, adultery, immorality, selfishness, ingratitude, drunkenness, and rejecting God’s revelation.
 - b. He says, **“I am pressed under you,”** or *“I am weighted down beneath your sin.”* (2:13)
 - c. Before we condemn these nations of the past, we had better examine our own nation and our own hearts, for we may be guilty of the same wickednesses. (I Peter 4:17-18)

IV. The Sermons Of Amos – A Look Within. (Chapters 3-6)

- A. Having announced judgment to the nations, Amos now looks within the hearts of the people and explains why this judgment is coming.
 - 1. Remember that Israel was enjoying a time of peace, prosperity and *“religious revival.”*
 - 2. The true servants of God do not look at the outward appearance, but on the heart.
- B. Amos delivers three sermons, each one prefaced by the phrase, **“Hear this word.”** (3:1, 4:1, 5:1)
 - 1. A message of explanation. (3:1-15)
 - a. The people were asking, *“How can our God send judgment upon us, His chosen people?”*
 - b. Where there is privilege, there must also be responsibility. (3:1-2)
 - c. Amos uses an argument from cause and effect. (3:3-15)
 - (1) If two people are walking together, there must be some agreement. (3:3)
 - (2) If a lion roars, he has his prey. (3:4)
 - (3) If a bird is in the trap, somebody set the trap. (3:5)
 - (4) If the trumpet sounds, calamity is near. (3:6)
 - (5) If the prophet is preaching, then God must have sent him. (3:7-8)
 - d. Then Amos announces that the Assyrians are coming to destroy the nation. (3:9-15)
 - 2. A message of accusation. (4:1-13)
 - a. The fearless prophet *“starts meddling”* now, and begins to name sins.
 - b. He calls the women living carelessly **“kine of Bashan,”** or *“fat cows of Bashan.”* (4:1)
 - c. God had sent His warnings to them, but they would not listen. (4:6-11)
 - d. Now He would come Himself: **“prepare to meet thy God . . . The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.”** (4:12-13)
 - 3. A message of lamentation. (5:1-6:14)
 - a. Amos weeps as he contemplates the judgments coming to his nation.
 - (1) Ninety percent of the people will die. (5:3)
 - (2) Amos’ message: *“Seek the LORD, not religious services.”* (5:4, 6, 8)
 - b. In chapter 6 Amos continues to weep over the sins of the people.

V. The Visions Of Amos – A Look Ahead. (Chapters 7-9)

- A. Vision of Locust. (7:1-3)
 - 1. The locusts are about to destroy the crops.
 - 2. Amos intercedes in prayer and the Lord stops them.
 - 3. Judgment is averted.
- B. Vision of Fire. (7:4-6)
 - 1. An awful, fiery drought overtakes the land.
 - 2. The prophet prays and the fire ceases.
 - 3. Judgment is restrained.
- C. Vision of the Plumb Line. (7:7-17)
 - 1. God is measuring Israel, and she does not conform to His Word. (7:7-9)
 - 2. At this point, the *“state priest,”* Amaziah interrupts, *“Amos is not patriotic.”* (7:10-13)
 - 3. Amos proclaims, *“God called me to preach His word, and I must obey. As for you, Amaziah, you and your family will pay for your sins.”* (7:14-17)
 - 4. Judgment is determined.
- D. Vision of the Summer Fruit. (8:1-14)
 - 1. The **“summer fruit”** that is, is dead, and once fruit has reached that point it quickly perishes.
 - 2. Judgment is imminent.
- E. Vision at the Altar. (9:1-10)
 - 1. Now Amos sees the Lord Himself, and not some symbol.
 - 2. God orders the door posts to be broken and the roof caves in. (9:1)
 - 3. Judgment is executed.
 - 4. The prophet compares the coming judgment to the sifting of grain. (9:8-9)
 - 5. The good seed (true believers, the believing remnant) will be saved, but the chaff will be burned up.

Conclusion: Amos closes on a note of victory. Amos 9:11-15 gives promise to the future restoration of Israel. Verses 11-12 are quoted in Acts 15:14-18 at the first church conference. Today God is calling out of the nations a people for His name, the Church; but when the Church is completed, then He will return and restore the tabernacle (house) of David and establish the Jewish kingdom. The land will then again become fruitful and the people will be blessed forever.

JOURNEY THROUGH OBADIAH

Introduction: This remarkable fragment from the pen of Obadiah is the shortest and perhaps the earliest of the writings which have come down to us from the Hebrew prophets. It has one subject only, namely, judgment on Edom (Southwest of Judah), though this is offset in the closing verses by a contrastive reference to the final salvation of Israel.

- I. The Prophecy.
 - A. The prophecy of Obadiah is the smallest book in the Old Testament, containing a total of twenty-one verses.
 - B. Obadiah's name means "*servant of Jehovah*."
 - C. He was God's messenger to the wicked nation of Edom.
- II. The Central Message Of The Book.
 - A. Two key thoughts.
 1. Pride deceives a person or a nation. (1:3)
 2. **"As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee."** (1:15)
 - B. The theme of Obadiah is, therefore, Edom stands judged and her doom is certain, because of her pride in rejoicing over the misfortunes of Jerusalem.
- III. Background.
 - A. The time is 586 B.C.
 1. The place is Jerusalem.
 2. The event is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies.
 - B. We see the angry soldiers as they wreck the walls, slay the people, and burn the city.
 1. We see a group of neighboring citizens, the Edomites, as they stand on the other side and encourage the Babylonians to ruin the city.
 2. They are crying out, **"Rase it, rase it."** (Psalm 137:7-9)
 - C. Who are these Edomites that desire such terrible things to happen to their neighbors?
 1. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's older brother. (Genesis 25:21-26)
 - a. The book of Genesis outlines the enmity that existed between these two brothers.
 - b. Their progeny perpetuated this feud.
 2. Edom had early become a powerful nation. (Genesis 36, Exodus 15:15, Numbers 20:14)
 - a. They lived in Mount Seir, a mountainous region south of the Dead Sea.
 - b. The capital of Edom in Obadiah's day was Petra.
 3. When the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt, the Edomites denied them passage through their land. (Numbers 20:14-21)
 - a. However, God commanded Israel to treat Edom as a brother. (Deuteronomy 23:7-8)
 - b. The Edomites had a bitter, persistent spite for Israel.
 4. History tells us that Edom fell to the Babylonians five years after they had helped Babylon destroy Jerusalem. (See Obadiah 1:13)
 - a. Thereafter, the Nabatheans, an Arabian tribe, occupied Edom's capital, Petra.
 - b. By the third century even the language of Edom had ceased.
 - D. It is presently Obadiah's duty to pronounce God's message of final doom upon this incorrigible foe of His people.
- IV. The Structure Of The Book.
 - A. Jeremiah (49:7-22) had already announced the doom of Edom because of her sins.
 1. God's message to Edom was one of judgment, and the judgment would be severe.
 2. The Lord gave the nation no hope for future restoration.
 3. The Edomites needed to listen carefully to God's pronouncement of judgment.
 - B. The destruction of Edom. (1:1-16)
 1. The sins of Edom:
 - a. Pride – Edom was a small nation, but she boasted of her achievements. (1:3-4)
 - b. Confederacy – Instead of sharing the burden of their brothers in Israel, the Edomites allied with the surrounding nations to oppress Jerusalem. (1:5-9, especially verse 7)

- c. Violence. (1:10-11)
 - (1) The Edomites assisted in the wrecking of Jerusalem.
 - (a) By doing nothing to prevent it.
 - (b) By encouraging those who actually did the damage.
 - (2) They stood **“on the other side”** and refused to stand with the Jews.
- d. Rejoicing – Edom should have been weeping over his brother’s calamity, but instead he was rejoicing and jeering. (1:12, cp. Proverbs 24:17-18)
- e. Looting – They took advantage of the plight of the Jews. (1:13)
- f. Obstructing – They hindered Jews from escaping. (1:14)
- g. Drunken celebration – The Edomites got to the wine supplies and held a great celebration for the defeat of their enemy. (1:16)
- 2. The doom of Edom. (1:15)
 - a. God would treat the Edomites just as they had treated the Jews.
 - b. They were traitors to the Jews.
 - c. Their own confederates would betray them. (1:7)
 - d. As they plundered and looted, so their nation would be robbed. (1:5-6)
 - e. As they were violent, so they would be cut off completely. (1:9-10)
 - f. As they wanted the Jews to be destroyed, so Edom would be destroyed. (1:10, 18)
 - g. Edom would reap what she had sowed. (Galatians 6:7)
- C. The restoration of Israel. (1:17-21)
 - 1. That little word, **“but,”** in verse 17, marks the turning point.
 - a. God promises deliverance and cleansing for Mt. Zion.
 - b. Israel had sinned, and the Temple had been destroyed because of her sins, but God would cleanse and restore **“the house of Jacob,”** but not so for the Edomites, or **“the house of Esau.”** (1:18)
 - 2. The day will come when the Jews will “possess their possessions” – their land, their Temple, their city, and their kingdom.
 - a. Certainly Israel possesses the land because of God’s promise to Abraham, but she does not fully occupy it, for her land has been overrun by Gentile nations for centuries.
 - b. There is coming a day, however, when Jesus Christ will return to give Israel her full possession that she might enjoy it and use it to the glory of God.

V. Typical Teaching Of Obadiah.

- A. **“Esau”** and **“Jacob”** stand for something more than two brothers and two nations.
 - 1. They represent two opposing forces: the flesh and the Spirit.
 - a. Esau was a good-looking man, active, healthy, outgoing and athletic.
 - b. Jacob was a homebody, full of deceit and selfish plans.
 - 2. If you were to choose between these two boys, no doubt you would have selected Esau, but God chose Jacob.
 - a. Throughout the Bible, He is known as **“the God of Jacob.”**
 - b. This is God’s grace.
 - c. Salvation is not by merit, but by grace and grace alone. (John 1:13)
- B. God used Jacob to father the tribes of Israel, and gave His covenants and promises to Jacob, not Esau.
 - 1. So, Jacob represents the child of God, chosen by God’s grace, often sinning and failing, but ultimately gaining his inheritance.
 - 2. Esau pictures the flesh: attractive, powerful, proud, grasping, rebellious, and always seeming to be on the winning side.
 - a. Yet, God has pronounced judgment on the flesh, and one day that judgment will fall.
 - b. Edom was proud and rebellious, but fell to the Babylonians and is no more.
 - 3. This world boasts of the flesh, what the flesh has accomplished, how strong the flesh is, but one day all flesh will fall before the victory of Christ. (Revelation 19:11-21)

Conclusion: The book of Obadiah ends with **“the kingdom shall be the LORD’s.”** What a wonderful way to end a book. Today, the King has been rejected, and David’s throne is empty in Jerusalem, but when Christ returns, the nation will look upon the One they pierced, they will be cleansed and forgiven, and the Kingdom will be established. No matter what may happen in the affairs of Israel as the Gentile nations seek to control her, God still watches over His people and will one day give them their promised Kingdom.

JOURNEY THROUGH JONAH

Introduction: The Book of Jonah, is it historical, allegorical, or romance? Was Jonah a real person?

Was he really housed in the great fish as the book declares? Did he really preach Nineveh to a repentance which averted Divine judgment? Or is the book merely fictional? The answer to these questions is of much deeper consequence than many persons realize, for if the book is really a narrative of actual fact it brings to us one of the most striking revelations of God, and one of the most priceless messages of Divine comfort ever given; whereas, if it is merely fictional, it contains no authentic significance at all. Moreover, this question as to whether it is really historical or not involves both the integrity of the Scriptures as a whole, and the word of the Lord Jesus Himself. The true answer to the question is clear and convincing to any candid mind.

I. Is Jonah Himself Historical?

- A. The opening verse of the book calls him **“Jonah the son of Amittai.”** (1:1)
- B. That it says that **“the word of the LORD came unto”** indicates that he was a prophet.
- C. II Kings 14:25 attests that King Jeroboam of the Northern Kingdom **“restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet . . .”**

II. Is The Narrative Historical?

- A. There is nothing in the book to suggest otherwise, except to our modern critics, to whom any narrative which records the supernatural is incredible.
- B. The Word of Christ Himself conclusively confirms it. (Matthew 12:39-40)

III. The Book Of Jonah

- A. Jonah and the Storm. (Chapter 1)
 - 1. Jonah on the run. (1:1-3)
 - a. Jonah turned from God's Word. (1:1-2)
 - b. Jonah turned from God's presence. (1:3, cp. verse 10)
 - 2. Jonah, the castaway. (1:4-17)
 - a. He allowed himself to be guided by circumstances rather than by God's Word. (1:3b)
 - b. He became powerless in the time of crisis. (1:5)
 - c. He became ashamed of his ministry. (1:7-8)
 - (1) Five questions.
 - (2) Jonah answered each question except regarding his occupation. (1:9)
 - d. He despaired of future service. (1:12)
- B. Jonah and the Fish. (Chapter 2)
 - 1. The Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, where he remained **“three days and three nights.”** (1:17)
 - a. Jonah later came to realize that the great fish which swallowed him in judgment was also sent by God to prepare him for the work of evangelizing Nineveh.
 - b. Jonah needed to feel the grace of God toward himself before he would be a suitable minister of that same grace to the people of Nineveh.
 - 2. Jonah's return ticket began in the very areas where rebellion formerly existed.
 - a. Jonah returned to the presence of God. (2:4, 7)
 - b. Jonah returned to the Word of God.
(Cp. Psalm 18:6, 31:22, 42:7, 50:14, 50:23, 69:1, 88:6, 116:17-18, 120:1)
 - 3. God's merciful wrath. (Psalm 119:67)
 - a. God's grace produced a new sense of compassion. (2:8)
 - b. God's grace produced a new sense of consecration. (2:9)
 - c. God's grace produced a new sense of God. (2:9)
 - (1) Jonah had already known the truth about God.
 - (2) Now he had come to know God. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)
- C. Jonah and the City. (Chapter 3)
 - 1. The sign of Jonah. (3:1-2)

- a. There are many servants of God who would have to confess that it is only because “**the word of the Lord came a second time**” to them that they are now engaged in serving Christ.
- b. God is committed to us, and the thoroughness of His commitment is the measure of the lengths to which He will go to make us fruitful and faithful children.
- c. Jonah is being sent by God to be the human instrument in a mighty revival.
- d. Here is God’s plan: The salvation of one sinner that will reach many sinners.
2. The task of Jonah – spreading the Word. (3:2)
 - a. We stand in need today of such a revival.
 - (1) We must become aware of “*the sense of the absence of God.*” (cp. Psalm 10:4)
 - (2) Revival comes when the church begins to take this situation with seriousness; when, like Jonah, it is awakened to the needs of men and women who do not know God.
 - b. Jonah was commissioned by God as a herald.
 - (1) Revival is necessary, and we must pray for it.
 - (2) But, evangelism is the divine command, and we must be obedient to it.
3. The testimony of Jonah – its features. (3:3-4)
 - a. He spoke with simplicity and clarity.
 - b. He spoke with the power of God.
 - c. They recognized the voice of the living God through Jonah’s voice.
4. The response to Jonah – Nineveh awakened. (3:5-10)
 - a. In its simplest terms, revival is the magnifying and multiplying of what happens whenever God breaks suddenly into our lives.
 - b. Jonah puts under the microscope the fundamental elements of genuine spiritual experience.
 - (1) Illumination. (cp. II Corinthians 4:2-4)
 - (a) They were unconcerned because they were mistaken as to their situation.
 - (b) Through Jonah’s words, they found a flood of light shining into their hearts with alarming power.
 - (c) They no longer stood at the bar of human justice, for they saw divine judgment over their heads and they began to cry out to God for mercy.
 - (2) Conviction. (3:5)
 - (a) They became convinced of Jonah’s message.
 - (b) “*You have sinned and rebelled against God; you have fallen under the curse of God; you are under the wrath of God; therefore, rouse yourselves to your present danger.*”
 - (3) Spiritual Mourning. (3:8)
 - (a) Their consciences were stabbed, and they began to have misgivings about their easygoing disobedience toward God and indifference to His presence and glory.
 - (b) Their experience was similar to that of the Corinthians. (II Corinthians 7:9-10)
 - (4) Faith and Repentance. (3:9)
 - (a) The fruit of Jonah’s witness was that the people turned from their wicked ways.
 - (b) Some assume that repentance is experienced before faith, and leads to faith, but in fact, repentance, which brings forth life, is a fruit of faith rather than its root.
 - i) The penitence of the Ninevites was based on their faith in God. (3:9)
 - ii) They saw that the God of this Jewish preacher was in His very nature a God of love as well as a God of infinite holiness.
 - iii) They threw themselves helplessly on His character. (Luke 18:13b)
- D. Jonah and the Lord. (Chapter 4)
 1. Despite all the picture lessons God had given him, Jonah had not learned the lesson that the immortal souls of men are the most precious things in the universe?
 2. In many ways, Jonah was a disgrace to the name or the God of grace he professed to serve.
 3. The last enemy to be destroyed in the believer is self. (Galatians 2:20)

Conclusion: The closing chapter of Jonah is indeed mysterious. It may well leave the question: What-ever did become of him? We do not really know. The story is left unfinished. But, in fact, that is the point of the whole writing. We have examined it as a piece of biography set at a given place and time in history. But it carries no conclusion, for it summons us to write the final paragraph. We recognize ourselves in the story of this man’s life. We stand together in need of the mercy of God to enable us, from this day on, to be obedient to His commands, and to live to the praise of His glorious grace.

JOURNEY THROUGH MICAH

Introduction: As in any organism, no member or part, however minute, can be fully understood aside from its relation to the whole; so, in scripture, every paragraph and sentence is part of its totality, and must be studied in relation to all the rest. When it comes to the Book of Micah, it is good to know that in the Judean capital, the great prophet Isaiah had such a trusty comrade and fellow-champion of truth as **“Micah the Morasthite.”**

I. The Messenger Of God.

- A. Little is known about the author of this book.
 - 1. Micah's name means *“Who is like Yahweh?”*
 - 2. Micah was from Moresheth-gath (1:1), a Judean town about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem near the Philistine city of Gath.
- B. Micah, like his contemporary Isaiah, prophesied about the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the later defeat of the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians.
 - 1. In Jeremiah's day the elders referred to Micah in defense of Jeremiah's message of judgment on the nation. (3:12, Jeremiah 26:18)
 - 2. Micah prophesied in the eighth century B.C. during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.
- C. Micah is the prophet usually quoted at Christmas time for his prophecy regarding the city of birth for the Messiah. (5:2)
 - 1. It is interesting to observe that even today we associate Micah with the prophecy of Jesus' birth while Isaiah is remembered for the prophecy of Christ's death. (Isaiah 53)
 - 2. Isaiah was a well-educated man while Micah was a man of the fields.

II. The Message Of God.

- A. This little book is composed of three *“sermons”* that Micah preached to the people.
 - 1. Each sermon begins with the exhortation to **“hear”** what the Lord had to say. (1:2, 3:1, 6:1)
 - 2. Though Micah mentioned the destruction coming on the Northern Kingdom of Israel, his main audience was the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
 - 3. Micah's three messages showed that Judah was just as guilty of sin as Israel.
 - 4. They too would be disciplined by God.
- B. God's standard of measurement in the Book of Micah was the Mosaic covenant God made with His people when the nation was redeemed from Egypt.
 - 1. The people were expected to live according to the covenant stipulations. (Deuteronomy 28)
 - 2. Micah pointed out how the people had failed to live up to the covenant specifications.
- C. Though the theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah's three sermons, the prophet also stressed restoration.
 - 1. Micah mentioned the **“remnant”** in each of his three messages. (2:12, 4:7, 5:7-8, 7:18)
 - 2. He was confident that the Lord would restore the people of Israel to a place of prominence in the world under the Messiah.

III. Sermon One: Judgment Is Coming. (Chapters 1-2)

- A. Micah wastes no time getting into his message.
- B. God has warned him that the sins of the people are so great that He must send judgment.
 - 1. He names the capital cities of Samaria (of Israel) and Jerusalem (of Judah). (1:5)
 - 2. In this first message, Micah names twelve cities and points out their sins.
- C. What are some of the sins God would judge?
 - 1. Idolatry, the worship in **“the high places,”** was the main sin. (1:5)
 - a. The people insisted on worshipping **“the works of their own hands.”** (5:13)
 - (1) People do the same today.
 - (2) We may not carve out statues and bow before them, but we certainly live for the things we have manufactured – cars, clothes, houses, money, etc.
 - b. What we serve and sacrifice for is the thing that we worship.
 - c. Micah warned that the day would come when God would destroy the idols of the people and turn them to dust. (1:6-7)

2. Another sin was covetousness. (2:1)
 - a. People would lie awake at night thinking of new ways to get *“things,”* and then get up early to carry out their plans.
 - b. According to Colossians 3:5, covetousness is idolatry. (Cp. Luke 12:15)
 - c. They were not only covetous, but they used illegal means to get what they wanted. (2:2)
- D. How did the people react to Micah’s preaching?
 1. They tried to stop him by saying, *“Stop preaching such terrible things! You know the Lord would never let that happen to us. We are God’s people.”* (2:6)
 2. Micah knew that the people did not want honest preaching; they preferred their drunken false prophets who lived as wickedly as the people did. (2:10-11, cp. II Timothy 4:3-4)

IV. Sermon Two: Deliverance Is Promised. (Chapters 3-5)

- A. Not discouraged by their slanders, Micah moves now into his second message, a message of hope.
 1. He begins by condemning the wicked leaders of the land. (3:1-3, 5-7)
 2. They were devouring the people instead of helping them, and serve only for pay.
 3. This, again, was the sin of covetousness.
 4. The prophets were preaching what the people wanted to hear, but Micah knew that Israel would fall to Assyria, and that the Babylonians would carry Judah away captive.
- B. Chapter 4 takes up a wonderful new theme.
 1. One day there will be peace on earth and righteousness will reign. (4:1-3, cp. Isaiah 2:2-4)
 2. The day will come when Mount Zion will become the capital of the world, and all the armies of the world will be dismissed and their weapons destroyed.
- C. These things will be accomplished through the coming Deliverer. (Chapter 5)
 1. Micah previously mentioned twelve cities, but now he mentions one more – Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. (5:2-3, Matthew 2:6)
 2. It is this prophecy that led the wise men to Jesus.
 3. Of course, the Jews rejected their Prince of Peace, so there has been no peace in the world, but when Christ returns, He will establish His Kingdom of peace and there will be no more war.
 4. Meanwhile, men and women can have peace in their hearts by trusting Christ as Savior. (Romans 5:1)
 5. This also becomes the final theme of Micah’s concluding message, for he calls the people to make their decision to trust the Lord and obey Him.

V. Sermon Three: Trust The Lord Today. (Chapters 6-7)

- A. The scene here is a courtroom, and God has called His people to be judged.
- B. *“State your case against Me,”* the Lord says. (6:1-4)
 1. The people answer. (6:6-8)
 2. *“Yes, we have sinned. How can we make up for all that we have done?”*
 3. God does not want our extravagant gifts, He wants our hearts. (6:8, cp. Psalm 51:16-17)
- C. God speaks again. (6:9-16, esp. vss. 14-15)
 1. *“You try to satisfy yourselves by your own means, but I will bring it all to naught.”*
 2. Imagine seeing everything you do accomplish nothing because you’re out of the will of God.
 3. *“You must repent and obey, because judgment is on the way.”*
- D. Micah laments the fact that the nation is so wicked that he cannot find an honest man. (7:1-10)
 1. If God is going to bring punishment, all Micah can do is wait patiently for Him to work.
 2. If the Lord chastens His own people for their sins, certainly He will punish the enemy for their sins too.
- E. God makes promises to His people that He will restore them in the future. (7:11-17)
 1. The closing verses are a wonderful confession of faith, the purpose of Micah’s message. (7:18-20)
 2. He wants to bring the people to faith in the Lord.
 3. God is the only One who can forgive sins. (Mark 2:7, Psalm 32:5)

Conclusion: God alone will show His mercy and love to sinners. This is why Jesus Christ died – that sinners might be forgiven. Because Jesus Christ bore the penalty for our sin, God can pass over the transgression of any sinner that will come to Him by faith. This is the theme of Micah’s last message: *“Trust the Lord today!”* (cp. 7:18)

JOURNEY THROUGH NAHUM

Introduction: As we make our way through the writings of the Hebrew prophets, one thing must impress us ever more forcibly; these inspired men profoundly realized the sovereignty of God, especially in its governmental control of nations and history. Two of the books among the so-called Minor Prophets are devoted wholly to the Assyrian capital, Nineveh.

Over a century before Nahum, Jonah had lifted up his voice for Jehovah in the streets of Nineveh, and the Ninevites had learned that Jehovah was a “**gracious God, and merciful**” (Jonah 4:2). To this unique ambassador of Jehovah, the Ninevites had responded, but soon afterward they had presumed upon God’s grace, going to greater lengths of wickedness than ever before. They must now learn that “*wrath restrained*” (as in Jonah’s time), is “*wrath reserved*,” when there is willful return to wickedness. Nahum, so to speak, takes up where Jonah left off.

I. Background To Nahum.

A. Little is known of Nahum.

1. Apart from his designation as an “**Elkoshite**,” nothing is known of Nahum’s personal history.
2. Nahum’s name means “*consolation*.”

B. Nahum’s message was against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire.

1. Assyria was a ruthless enemy that practiced brutality on men, women, and children.
 - a. Their armies destroyed and looted.
 - b. They impaled people on sharp poles and left them to burn in the sun.
 - c. Think “*ISIS*.”
2. Assyria had been used of God to chasten the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.
 - a. In 701 B.C., the Assyrians tried to conquer Judah, but God intervened and destroyed their army. (Isaiah 36-37)
 - b. Finally, in 612 B.C., Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes and the Babylonians.
 - c. So complete was their conquest that the ruins of the city remained undiscovered until 1842.
3. It was concerning this future destruction of Nineveh that Nahum wrote.
 - a. He wrote his little book at a time when Assyria was at the very peak of her power.
 - b. Nobody would have dreamed that mighty Nineveh would fall, but God knows the future and He gave His message to Nahum to deliver to the frightened people of Judah.
 - c. This was not a message of warning to Nineveh, but a message of hope for Judah, to encourage them to trust God at an hour of great danger.
4. Each of the three chapters tells us something about God and also about the fall of the city.

II. God Is Jealous: Nineveh Will Fall. (Chapter 1)

A. The word “**jealous**” when applied to God does not suggest envy or selfishness. (1:2)

1. It carries the idea of being protective of His glory and His holiness.
 - a. He burns with hatred against sin even though He loves the sinner.
 - b. Just as a husband is jealous over his wife and therefore protects her, so God is jealous over His people and His law, and hence must act in holiness and justice.
2. God is slow to anger; in fact, He gave Nineveh 150 years of mercy. (Romans 2:4, II Peter 3:9)
3. Nineveh had gone so far in their brutality and violence that God now had to judge them.

B. God has the power to judge. (1:3-7)

1. His power is displayed in nature, through the winds and storms, rains and droughts, and on the land and sea.
2. Who can stand before His power?
3. Nations today seem to forget the power of Almighty God.
 - a. They act as though there is no God.
 - b. But you can be sure that a day of judgment will come, and in that day no nation will be able to escape.

C. Nahum describes the fall of the city. (1:8-13)

1. It is interesting to note that Nineveh fell because of a flood of water. (1:8)
 - a. The Medes and Babylonians besieged the city for many months and made little headway.

- b. Then the rainy season came and the two rivers next to Nineveh began to rise.
 - c. One historian says that the Medes broke one of the dams on the river causing the swelling waters to beat against the thick walls of Nineveh and brake them down.
 - d. The city was literally destroyed by the flood. (Cp. Nahum 2:6)
- 2. God does not need armies; He can use tiny raindrops.
- D. God makes two wonderful promises to His people in this chapter.
 - 1. He assures them of His goodness and tells them they will be safe so long as they trust in Him. (1:7)
 - 2. He assures them that He will not afflict them again with the Assyrian armies the way they had been afflicted before. (1:12)
 - 3. No matter what the difficulties may be, we can trust God to care for us and see us through.

III. God Is Judge: Nineveh's Fall Is Great. (Chapter 2)

- A. Chapter 2 is a vivid picture of the invasion of the city and its ultimate fall.
 - 1. Assyria had emptied Israel in 721 B.C., but now God was going to restore His people by punishing the enemy. (2:1-2)
 - 2. The Medes wore scarlet uniforms and used scarlet shields. (2:3)
 - 3. The armies with their spears and lances looked like a forest of fir trees. (2:3)
- B. Note the repeated reference to lions. (2:11-13)
 - 1. The lion was the symbol of the Assyrian empire, as you can see from pictures in history or archaeology books.
 - 2. They built huge statues of lions with the heads of men.
 - 3. *"Where are your lions now?"* Nahum asks.
 - 4. *"Where are your rulers and champions?"*
- C. **"I am against thee."** (2:13)
 - 1. God brought the Medes and Babylonians against Nineveh and permitted them to spoil the city and take its wealth.
 - 2. For 150 years He had patiently waited for Assyria to turn to Him, but she refused; now God, the Judge of all nations, would act.

IV. God Is Just: Nineveh Deserves To Fall. (Chapter 3)

- A. Here Nahum deals with the justice of His actions.
 - 1. *"Why would God punish Nineveh when He used her as His own tool to punish the Northern Kingdom of Israel?"*
 - a. *"Look at the Kingdom of Judah. She is full of sin too. Why not punish her?"*
 - b. God would punish Judah in a few years when He would allow the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take the people captive.
 - 2. God's purpose for Judah would be different from His purpose for Nineveh.
 - a. God would chasten Judah in love to teach her a lesson.
 - b. God would judge Assyria in anger to destroy her for her sins.
 - c. God chastens believers today in love to bring them back to Him. (Hebrews 12:6)
 - d. God will judge unbelievers for their unbelief and sin. (John 3:36)
- B. The great sins of Assyria are listed: murder, lies, and covetousness. (3:1)
 - 1. The Assyrians had murdered thousands of innocent people; now their own people would be slain and their bodies stacked in the streets like lumber. (3:2-3)
 - a. Nineveh had carried on a profitable commerce with other nations and had grown rich through lies and violence, but now all their wealth would vanish in the hands of looters. (3:4-7)
 - b. Just as Assyria sacked the city of No, the capital of Upper Egypt, so God would allow Assyria to be sacked. (3:8-14)
 - 2. Nahum compares the battle to a plague of locusts. (3:15-17)
 - a. Nahum sees the Assyrians as a slaughtered flock of sheep with their shepherds and rulers sleeping in death. (3:18)
 - b. When the nations got the report of the destruction of Assyria, they clapped their hands and shouted for joy. (3:19)

Conclusion: The Lord judges the sins of nations, as well as the sins of individuals. It is tragic to reject His warnings and persist in sin. Moses had warned, **"Be sure your sin will find you out"** (Numbers 32:23).

JOURNEY THROUGH HABAKKUK

Introduction: Have you ever looked out upon this world with its injustice and violence, and asked the question, *“Why doesn’t God do something?”* It looks like the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering. Godly people pray, but it seems as though their prayers do no good. This is the problem faced and solved in Habakkuk.

I. The Book.

- A. The focus of Habakkuk’s prophecy is Babylon.
 - 1. Obadiah spoke of the fate of Edom.
 - 2. Nahum spoke of the fate of Assyria.
 - 3. Habakkuk speaks of the fate of Babylon.
 - 4. Habakkuk speaks to God alone about a problem that bothered him relating to Jehovah’s government of the nations.
- B. Central message: **“The just shall live by his faith.”** (2:4b)

II. A Burden: Faith Grappling With A Problem. (Chapter 1)

- A. *“Why is God silent and inactive?”* (1:1-4)
 - 1. Habakkuk looked out across the world of his day and saw violence, injustice, spoiling, strife, and contention. (1:2-3, 9, 2:8, 17)
 - a. The Law was not enforced.
 - b. There was no legal protection for innocent people who were sentenced as guilty.
 - c. The courts were manipulated by selfish lawyers and cruel officials.
 - d. The whole nation was suffering because of the evils of the government.
 - e. Along with the internal problems was the threat of the Babylonian Empire as it swept across the political landscape.
 - 2. Yet God seemed to be doing nothing about it.
- B. God answers the prophet. (1:5-11)
 - 1. *“I am working a work that will amaze you,”* God responded.
 - 2. *“I will raise up the Chaldeans who will conquer the nations and be My instrument to chasten the people.”*
 - 3. God is working in our world and sometimes we fail to see it. (Romans 8:28, II Corinthians 4:17)
- C. God’s answer only created a new problem for Habakkuk. (1:12-17)
 - 1. *“How can God use such a sinful nation to punish His own chosen people?”*
 - a. *“It is true that we have sinned,”* says Habakkuk, *“and we deserve chastening, but the Chaldeans are far more wicked than we are. If anyone deserves punishment, they do.”*
 - b. Habakkuk questions, *“Can a holy God sit and watch His own people being caught like fish or trampled like insects?”* (1:14-15)
 - c. The Chaldeans boast, *“Our gods have given us the victory; Jehovah is not the true God and, therefore, can do nothing to help you.”*
 - 2. There is nothing wrong with a believer wrestling with the problems of life.
 - a. Sometimes it seems as though God does not care, and it appears that He has forsaken His own and is helping the heathen.
 - b. Can we honestly worship, trust, and serve a God whose ways are so seemingly contradictory?

III. A Vision: Faith Grasping The Answer. (Chapter 2)

- A. Instead of becoming an atheist or agnostic, Habakkuk went to his watchtower to pray, meditate, and wait on the Lord. (2:1-3)
 - 1. He knew that God heard his complaint and that He would send an answer soon.
 - 2. God did answer.
 - a. *“I have a plan and a schedule,”* God said.
 - b. *“It will all work out in due time, so don’t become impatient.”*
- B. God next gave to Habakkuk three very wonderful assurances to encourage and strengthen him during his difficult times. (2:4-20)

1. **“The just shall live by his faith.” (2:4)**
 - a. This is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible.
 - b. It forms the text for three New Testament Books:
 - (1) Romans (1:17 – emphasis is on **“the just.”**)
 - (2) Galatians (3:11 – emphasis is on **“shall live.”**)
 - (3) Hebrews (10:38 – emphasis is on **“by faith.”**)
 - c. Habakkuk 2:4 describes two kinds of people:
 - (1) Those who are *“puffed up”* because they trust in themselves.
 - (2) Those who are humbly saved because they trust in the Lord.
 - d. The Chaldeans were the ones who were puffed up by their victories, not realizing that it was God who enabled them to conquer.
2. **“The earth shall be filled with the . . . glory of the LORD.” (2:14)**
 - a. The earth in Habakkuk’s day was not filled with much glory, nor is it today.
 - b. The **“woes”** in this chapter reveal sins that God hates:
 - (1) Insatiable greediness. (2:5-6)
 - (2) Violent covetousness. (2:9)
 - (3) Murderess gain. (2:12)
 - (4) Immoral drunkenness. (2:15)
 - (5) Lifeless idolatry. (2:19)
 - c. These are some of the very same sins that are polluting nations today.
 - d. The promise still stands: God’s glory will one day fill this earth, for Jesus Christ will return, put down all sin, and establish His righteous Kingdom.
3. **“The LORD is in His holy temple.” (2:20)**
 - a. God is still on the throne. (Isaiah 6)
 - (1) We have no reason to complain or doubt, for He is ruling and overruling in the affairs of all nations.
 - (2) Habakkuk thought that God was uninterested in the problems of life, but he discovered that God was very concerned, and that He was working out His plan in His time.
 - b. If we look at ourselves, or our circumstances, we can get discouraged and want to quit, but if we look to God by faith, and ahead to the glorious return of Christ, then we can be encouraged and enabled to go on in victory. (II Corinthians 5:7, 4:18)

IV. A Prayer: Faith Glorifying In Assurance. (Chapter 3)

- A. Habakkuk is a changed man.
 1. Instead of complaining, he is praising the Lord.
 2. God turns sighing into singing if we take the time to wait before Him in prayer and listen to His Word.
- B. Notice the worship of this answered prophet.
 1. He prays. (3:2)
 - a. Habakkuk simply asks the Lord to keep working His work.
 - b. He knows that there will be wrath and judgment, but he prays that God will remember mercy, too.
 2. He ponders. (3:3-16)
 - a. He reviews the history of Israel and the wonderful works of the Lord.
 - b. Since God had worked in the past, He could be trusted to work in the present and future.
 3. He praises. (3:17-19)
 - a. These verses represent one of the greatest confessions of faith found in all the Bible. (Cp. Philippians 4:11-13)
 - b. Habakkuk knew that he had no strength of his own, but that God could give him the strength he would need to go through the trials that lay ahead.

Conclusion: Habakkuk looked through the fog and mist and wondered at God’s program, but in Christ we know God’s plan for the age (Ephesians 1:8-10). We have the entire Bible to study. We have the record of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, as well as the promise of His coming again. If anyone ought to walk by faith and rejoice in the Lord today, it is the Christian.

Habakkuk shows us how to deal with life’s problems: 1) admit them honestly; 2) talk to God about them freely; 3) wait before Him quietly, in prayer; and 4) listen obediently. Why? Because **“the just shall live by his faith.”**

JOURNEY THROUGH ZEPHANIAH

Introduction: The prophecy of Zephaniah is loaded with big meanings for us today. Here was a man who had the mind of God on the national and international situation when few others, if any, had taken the measure of it or sensed the gravity of it. It was this that he declared even though it was severely unpopular. This man saw beneath the sudden new burst of religious activity, and judged it for what it really was.

I. The Man.

- A. Zephaniah was no ordinary preacher.
 - 1. He was the great-grandson of King Hezekiah, one of Judah's most famous rulers.
 - 2. He had royal blood in his veins, but more important, he had the message of God on his lips.
- B. Strange to say, Zephaniah preached during the reign of godly King Josiah, and it was a time of religious "*revival*." (See II Kings 22-23)
 - 1. Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight, and at the age of sixteen he committed himself to the Lord.
 - 2. When he was twenty, he began a great reformation in the land, pulling down the idols and judging the false priests and prophets.
 - 3. He then began to rebuild the Temple and led the nation in a celebration of the Passover.
 - 4. To all appearances, it was a time for religious concern and consecration.
- C. Zephaniah saw deeper; he saw the hearts of the people and he knew that their religious zeal was not sincere.
 - 1. The reforms were shallow; the people got rid of the idols in their homes, but not the idols in their hearts.
 - 2. The rulers of the land were still greedy and disobedient, and the city of Jerusalem was the source of all kinds of wickednesses in the land.
 - 3. Today, many believers still lack discernment and think that every "*religious movement*" is a genuine work of the Lord.
 - 4. Sometimes mere outward reformation only prepares the way for a work of the devil. (Matthew 12:43-45)

II. Zephaniah's Threefold Message.

- A. God will judge Judah. (1:1-2:3)
 - 1. **"I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD."** (1:2)
 - a. Judgment is coming and nothing will escape.
 - b. It will include birds, beasts, and fish.
 - c. It will especially affect the idols, "**stumblingblocks**," of the wicked. (1:3)
 - d. It will wipe out the population of the land. (1:3)
 - 2. God names the trouble spots: Judah and Jerusalem. (1:4)
 - a. The people of God are going to go through judgment.
 - b. The city of God, the place where the Temple stands, will go through judgment.
 - c. How can God destroy His holy people and His holy city?
 - d. He does it because of their sins, and particularly the sin of idolatry.
 - 3. The prophet describes three kinds of sinners in these verses. (1:4-6)
 - a. Those who have forsaken Jehovah and who worship only idols. (1:4-5a)
 - b. Those who worship both Jehovah and the idols. (1:5b)
 - c. Those who have forsaken the Lord openly and want nothing to do with Him. (1:6)
 - 4. The coming judgment is described. (1:7-18)
 - a. He calls it "**the Day of the LORD**." (1:7)
 - b. The phrase, "**Day of the LORD**," is used by several other Old Testament writers.
 - (1) Locally, it is used of God's judgments on Israel and Judah in the past.
 - (2) Prophetically, it refers to that future time of judgment when God will pour out His wrath. (Revelation 6-19)
 - c. In this case, "**the Day of the LORD**" would be the Babylonian invasion in 606 B.C. and the destruction of the city and Temple in 586 B.C.
 - (1) Zephaniah sees this invasion as a great "**sacrifice**." (1:8, See Revelation 19:17-18)

- (2) The noise of the invasion will start at the fish gate, the farthest gate in the city, and then travel right up to the top of Mt. Zion. (1:9-10)
 - (3) The invasion will not be that of foreign soldiers, but God searching the city, as with a lamp, exposing sin and punishing wickedness. (1:11-13)
 - d. At least eleven different words are used to describe the coming **"Day of the LORD."** (1:14-18)
- 5. The prophet turns to Jerusalem and Judah and pleads with the people to turn to the Lord and repent of their sins. (2:1-3)
- B. God will judge the nations. (2:4-3:8)
 - 1. The prophet names the various Gentile nations around Judah and announces that God will judge them for their sins as well.
 - a. Philistia's populous coasts, to the south-west, will become pastures for flocks. (2:4-7)
 - b. Moab and Ammon, to the east, will face the complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (2:8-11)
 - (1) These were the descendants of back-slidden Lot. (Genesis 19:33-38)
 - (2) They had mistreated God's people and proudly **"magnified themselves,"** therefore God would humble them.
 - (3) Their lands would be ruined and their idols would prove themselves to be powerless.
 - c. The Ethiopians, to the south, were promised that war would slay their youths. (2:12)
 - d. Assyria, to the north, along with her capital city, Nineveh, would be so completely destroyed that their land would be a wilderness. (2:13-15)
 - 2. Zephaniah closes this message with an appeal to his own people. (3:1-7)
 - a. If God judges the sins of the heathen, how much more will He judge the sins of Judah, the holy nation of God?
 - (1) He calls Jerusalem filthy and polluted, yet Josiah had removed all the idols.
 - (2) God could see their hearts, and in their hearts He saw rebellion.
 - (3) The princes and judges were like prowling animals, seeking someone to devour.
 - (4) The prophets are **"light,"** lacking seriousness of thought and concern.
 - (5) They were also **"treacherous,"** leading people astray.
 - (6) The priests polluted whatever they touched, including the holy sanctuary.
 - b. All these could see God's judgment day after day, but they did not take it to heart. (Cp. I Peter 4:17-18)
 - c. Judgment did come in 606 B.C. when the Babylonians came and destroyed the nation, the city and the Temple.
 - 3. **"Sin is a reproach to any people"** (Proverbs 14:34), especially the people of God.
 - a. Ultimately, the nations will be judged at the Battle of Armageddon. (3:8, Revelation 16:14)
 - b. All the nations of the world will gather against Jerusalem in the last days. (Revelation 19:17-18)
 - c. But Jesus Christ will return and judge the nations, and then establish His Kingdom. (Revelation 19:11-16)
- C. God will restore His people. (3:9-20)
 - 1. Zephaniah closes his message with great promises: God will one day regather His people, punish the Gentile nations, and restore Israel and Judah to their land.
 - 2. Zephaniah describes the blessings of the restored nation during the Millennial Age.
 - a. Pure worship, in contrast to the blasphemy of idolatrous worship. (3:9)
 - b. Israel and Judah regathered and purified. (3:10, 13)
 - c. Rejoicing. (3:14)
 - d. Christ reigning in their midst. (3:16-17)
 - e. Enemies punished. (3:19)
 - f. Israel restored to her land. (3:20)

Conclusion: The key thought in Zephaniah is not expressed so much in any one verse as in the contrast between the very first verses and the very last. After the superscription, the first phrase is, **"I will utterly consume"** (1:2). This is the fierce fire of judgment. But the last statement in the book is, **"I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth"** (3:20). This is the final fullness of blessing.

God has a glorious end and purpose in view. However grievously His people sin, and however grievously He must punish, the present process of judgment will eventually issue in the final blessing.

JOURNEY THROUGH HAGGAI

Introduction: The Book of Haggai is really a momentous little fragment. Although it covers a period merely of about four months, it puts on record one of the crucial turning points of the Divine dealings with Jerusalem and the covenant people. It has to do with the Jewish remnant who returned to Jerusalem and Judah after the Babylonian exile, and should be read alongside of the Book of Ezra.

I. Background To Haggai.

- A. In order to understand the work of the last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, we must review Jewish history.
 - 1. In 536 B.C., Ezra took about 50,000 Jews from Babylon and returned to the Holy Land.
 - a. They rebuilt the altar and started the sacrifices again, and in 535 B.C. the foundation was relaid for the Temple.
 - b. But there was considerable opposition and the work stopped.
 - 2. It was not until 520 B.C. that the people took up the work again.
 - a. In 515 B.C. the Temple was finally completed.
 - b. It was the work of four godly men that finally brought the task to completion.
(Ezra 5:1, 6:14)
 - (1) Zerubbabel, the governor.
 - (2) Joshua, the high priest.
 - (3) Haggai, the prophet.
 - (4) Zechariah, the prophet.
- B. The purpose of Haggai's ministry was to awaken a people who had become lazy, and encourage them to finish rebuilding God's Temple.
 - 1. It was easy to get the work started when they first arrived in the Holy Land because everyone was dedicated and enthusiastic.
 - 2. But, after months of trial and opposition, the work lagged and finally stopped.
- C. In this little book we have four sermons from Haggai, and in each message Haggai points out a particular sin that will keep us from accomplishing God's will and finishing His work.

II. Sermon One: Looking For Self Instead Of For The Lord. (1:1-15)

- A. Sixteen years had passed since the laying of the foundation, and the Temple lay unfinished.
 - 1. Haggai's first sermon was delivered to the two leaders of the nation, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil ruler and the religious leader.
 - 2. Haggai doesn't waste any time, but gets right to the point of his message: *"The people are making excuses and neglecting God's house. But it is time to get to work and finish the house of God."*
- B. He points out their selfishness: they had built their own houses, but found it not the right time yet to build God's house.
 - 1. In other words, they were putting self ahead of the Lord.
 - 2. Some of the Jews even had "**ceiled houses**," which would be luxuries in that day. (1:4)
 - a. This sin is with us today, putting our own desires ahead of the will of the Lord.
 - b. How easy it is to make excuses for not doing God's work!
 - (1) *"The weather is too bad to go visiting or to attend church, therefore, I will just go shopping!"*
 - (2) People will sit through a double header baseball game and never complain, yet they start to fidget if a church service runs five minutes overtime.
- C. Haggai warned that we really lose out when we put ourselves ahead of God.
 - 1. Our earnings vanish away and our possessions fail to last when God is left out. (1:6)
 - 2. God held back the rain (1:10), and for this reason the crops failed (1:11).
 - 3. The Jews, of all people, knew God's promise that He would bless their land if they honored Him. (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15)
 - 4. Matthew 6:33 is a great promise for us to claim. (See also Philippians 4:19.)
- D. The message was received with real conviction and the leaders became stirred to do God's will. (1:12-15)

1. Note that the whole enterprise was a spiritual venture and not merely a work of the flesh.
2. God's people rose up and put the Lord first in their lives.

III. Sermon Two: Looking Back Instead Of Looking Ahead. (2:1-9)

- A. The people had been working about seven weeks when Haggai preached his second sermon.
 1. This would have been the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. (Leviticus 23:34)
 - a. It was supposed to be a great day of joy and praise.
 - b. Instead it was a day of discouragement and complaining.
 2. Why?
 - a. Because the people were looking back instead of looking ahead.
 - b. When they had laid the foundation sixteen years before, the older men had wept because they remembered the glory of Solomon's Temple. (Ezra 3:12)
 - c. Some of the people were now discouraged because this new Temple lacked the splendor and glory of the previous one.
- B. It must be remembered that the plight of the people was due to their own sins, but this was still no reason to look back.
 1. In God's work, we must look ahead in faith.
 2. **"Be strong . . . fear ye not."** (2:4-5)
 3. God said to the discouraged leaders: *"I am going to shake this world and one day establish my Kingdom."* (2:6-9, cp. Hebrews 12:26-29)
 4. God promises that the glory of the latter house (the Temple of the Millennial Kingdom) will far exceed the glory of the former house (Solomon's Temple).
 5. *"The best is yet to come."* (2:9b)

IV. Sermon Three: Looking Around Instead Of Looking Within. (2:10-19)

- A. The people expected material blessings the very day they began to work on the Temple, but things were still difficult.
 1. Haggai explained why God had not yet blessed them: they were still unclean because of their unconfessed sins.
 2. He explained that a person can give another their uncleanness and sickness, but they cannot give another their holiness and health.
 3. God was able to cleanse the people of their sins, if only they would repent.
- B. Once the nation had been cleansed, God promised to bless them. (2:19)
 1. It is not enough to do God's work, we must do it with clean hands and a pure heart.
 2. Unconfessed sin is one of the greatest obstacles to the accomplishment of the Lord's work.

V. Sermon Four: Looking Through Unbelief Rather Than By Faith. (2:20-23)

- A. This final message was directed to the governor personally.
 1. No doubt Zerubbabel needed special encouragement as he directed the work of the Lord.
 2. Satan always attacks spiritual leaders, and it is our duty to pray for them and work with them.
 3. Perhaps Zerubbabel saw the great empires around him and feared for the future of the tiny remnant of Jews.
 4. Circumstances have a way of discouraging us as we seek to do the work of the Lord.
- B. Unbelief always robs us of God's blessings.
 1. But God encouraged Zerubbabel's faith.
 2. **"I will shake the heavens and the earth,"** God said.
 3. *"Don't be afraid of these kingdoms, for I will overthrow and destroy them. As for you, Zerubbabel, you are as a signet, a very precious jewel, to Me. I have chosen you. Don't give up."* (Cp. John 15:16)
 4. How the Word of the Lord must have brought encouragement to the governor and strengthened his faith.

Conclusion: What work is it that God has called you to do before Christ's return? Have you started it, but not finished it? Are you discouraged? Then beware of these sins that hinder the work of the Lord: putting self ahead of God, looking back instead of ahead, failing to confess sin, and unbelief. Claim the promise of Philippians 1:6, **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."** Finally, rise up and do the work of the Lord!

JOURNEY THROUGH ZECHARIAH

Introduction: Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai. While Haggai seems to have been elderly, it appears that Zechariah was a young man, for he was the grandson of Iddo who had returned to Jerusalem 16 years previously. Haggai had been preaching for two months and the Temple work had already started when Zechariah began. Haggai's total recorded ministry lasted a little less than four months, Zechariah's, about two years.

The Book of Zechariah is considerably larger than that of Haggai, yet it teems with Messianic flashes, mentioning literally, many details of the life and work of Christ.

I. The Writer.

- A. Zechariah ministered with Haggai during the difficult days when 50,000 Jews had returned to Palestine to reestablish Jerusalem.
 - 1. The remnant returned in 536 B.C. and laid the foundations for the Temple in 535, but opposition arose and the work stopped.
 - 2. In 520 B.C. the Lord raised up Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the leaders and the people, and in 525 B.C. they finished the work.
- B. Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest. (Nehemiah 12:4, 16)
 - 1. His name means "*Jehovah remembers.*"
 - 2. His father's name, Berechiah, means "*Jehovah blesses.*"
 - 3. His grandfather's name, Iddo, means "*His time.*"
 - 4. Putting these three generations together we find, "*Jehovah remembers to bless in His time.*"

II. The Theme.

- A. This book ranks next to Daniel as an Old Testament unveiling of God's plan for the Jews.
- B. Zechariah 1:14-17 becomes the key phrase of the book: "**[God is] jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.**"
 - 1. He will punish the heathen for what they did to His city.
 - 2. He will one day restore the city in glory and peace.

III. The Interpretation.

- A. As with much Old Testament prophecy, we must distinguish between the near and the distant meanings of what Zechariah says.
- B. In one verse he describes the fall of Jerusalem under the Romans, and in the next verse he pictures the coming reign of Messiah.
- C. Zechariah's favorite name for God is "**Lord of Hosts,**" literally, "*the Lord of the armies.*"
- D. He sees the Lord coming to defeat Israel's enemies and establish Jerusalem in peace and glory.
- E. Certainly there are spiritual applications for all ages, but the basic interpretation must be for the Jewish nation and Jerusalem.

IV. The Book.

- A. Introduction: A call to repentance. (1:1-6)
- B. Eight Visions of Encouragement. (1:7-6:15)
 - 1. A rider – God has not forgotten Jerusalem. (1:7-17)
 - 2. The craftsmen – God will destroy her enemies. (1:18-21)
 - 3. The surveyor – Jerusalem will be restored. (2:1-13)
 - 4. Joshua the high priest – A cleansed nation. (3:1-10)
 - 5. The candlestick – God's power enables them. (4:1-14)
 - 6. The flying roll – Sin will be judged in the land. (5:1-4)
 - 7. The woman – Wickedness carried to Babylon. (5:5-11)
 - 8. The war chariots – God controls the nations. (6:1-8)
 - a. This vision culminates with the crowning of the Priest-King. (6:9-15)
 - b. Israel has never had a Priest-King, only Kings and Priests.
 - c. The climax of God's plan will be the crowning of Jesus Christ as Priest-King.
- C. Interlude: Questions About Fasts. (7:1-8:23)
- D. Two Oracles Of Enlightenment. (9:1-14:21)

- V. Zechariah's Great Events Relating To The City Of Jerusalem.
- A. Protected by the Lord. (9:8)
 - 1. Zechariah 9:1-8 describes the conquest of Alexander the Great, the Greek general.
 - 2. History tells us that Alexander destroyed many cities, but not Jerusalem.
 - a. Before Alexander arrived, the Jewish high priest had a dream which he felt was from God, and in the dream he was told to dress in his robes and meet Alexander outside the city.
 - b. The scene so dazzled the general, for he claimed that he too had the same dream.
 - c. Alexander entered Jerusalem peacefully and never harmed the people or the city in any way.
 - B. Visited by the Messiah. (9:9)
 - 1. Perhaps Zechariah saw in Alexander's visit a small glimpse of the coming of Jesus Christ to the holy city, for in the very next verse he predicts Christ's arrival in Jerusalem.
 - a. This was fulfilled on "*Palm Sunday*" when Jesus rode into the city. (Matthew 21:4-5)
 - b. Alexander came for war, whereas Jesus came for peace.
 - 2. How did the Jews treat Jesus?
 - a. He was sold for the price of a slave. (11:12)
 - b. He was arrested and smitten. (13:7)
 - c. He was wounded in the house of His friends. (13:6)
 - d. He was pierced on the cross. (12:10)
 - 3. What a tragedy that the "*City of Peace*" should reject her "*Prince of Peace*" and crucify Him.
 - C. Destroyed by Rome. (11:1-14)
 - 1. This entire section is a graphic picture of the last days of Jerusalem and her destruction by the Roman armies in A.D. 70
 - a. This announcement came 600 years before it occurred.
 - b. Zechariah sees the land spoiled, and hears the howling of the people.
 - 2. What caused this tragedy?
 - a. The unfaithfulness of the rulers ("**shepherds**").
 - b. The religious leaders rejected the truth and permitted their own Messiah to be crucified.
 - c. Israel had been "**God's people, the sheep of His pasture,**" but now they were "**the flock of the slaughter,**" destined to be massacred by Rome. (11:4, 7)
 - 3. When Israel sold her Messiah (11:12), the day of God's grace for the nation had come to an end.
 - D. Protected by Antichrist. (11:15-17)
 - 1. The flock of Israel rejected their true Shepherd and smote Him (13:7), but they will gladly accept a false "**idol**" shepherd, the Antichrist. (See John 5:43)
 - 2. Daniel 9:27 tells us that after the Church has been Raptured, the leader of a federated Europe (Daniel 7:7-8) will make a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years.
 - 3. Jerusalem will then have three and a half years of peace, a false peace that will be the prelude to three and a half years of "**Great Tribulation**" (Matthew 24:21).
 - E. Attacked by the Gentiles. (12:1-8, 14:1-3)
 - 1. During the Tribulation days (the last three and half years), only one-third of the nation will survive to enter the Kingdom. (13:8-9)
 - 2. During these days, the kings of the earth will begin to assemble for that great final battle, the Battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:12-16, 19:19-21)
 - F. Delivered by Jesus Christ. (12:9-14:11)
 - 1. Just when the battle is at its worst, Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives. (14:4, See Acts 1:11-12)
 - 2. An earthquake will change the topography.
 - a. This change will make possible the new landscape required by Ezekiel's magnificent Temple. (Ezekiel 40-48)
 - b. The newly formed valley will also make a way for the people of Jerusalem to escape, but the final victory will be Christ's. (Revelation 19:11-21)
 - G. Cleansed and Glorified by the Lord. (12:10-13:1, 14:9-21)
 - 1. The nation will look upon the One they pierced and will repent with mourning. (12:10)
 - 2. God will open His gracious fountain and cleanse them of their sins.

Conclusion: The Book of Zechariah speaks directly to Israel. Yet the Old Testament student will recognize personal themes of God's hand: the call to repent, cleansing, the cry for justice and love, and the plan of God to save through His Messiah.

JOURNEY THROUGH MALACHI

Introduction: Malachi is the last call of the Old Testament before the voice of prophecy dies in a silence of four hundred years. One great phase of Divine revelation is about to close. The last spokesman utters his soul, and retires behind the misty curtains of the past. A peculiar solemnity clings about him. What does this last speaker say? What was the final message? What is the parting word?

I. Background To Malachi.

- A. We know very little about this last Old Testament prophet.
 - 1. He ministered to the restored Jewish nation about 400 years before Christ.
 - 2. He directs his first message to the priests, and then he turns to the people collectively.
- B. As the prophet delivers God's Word, the people respond by arguing.
 - 1. Note the repeated **"Wherein?"** (1:2, 1:6-7, 2:17, 3:7-8).
 - 2. It is a dangerous thing when people argue with God and try to defend their sinful ways
- C. Malachi points out the terrible sins of the people and the priests.

II. They Doubted His Love. (1:1-5)

- A. **"I have loved you,"** God says to His people.
 - 1. *"Oh?"* they respond.
 - 2. *"Wherein have You loved us? Prove it?"*
- B. Doubting God's love is the beginning of unbelief and disobedience.
 - 1. Eve doubted God's love and ate of the forbidden fruit.
 - 2. She thought God was holding out on her.
 - 3. Satan wants us to feel neglected by God.
 - a. *"Look at the present circumstances,"* Satan said to the Jewish remnant.
 - b. *"Where are the crops? Why doesn't God take care of you?"*
- C. God proves His love to His people:
 - 1. He graciously chose Jacob, their father, and rejected Esau, who in many ways was a better man.
 - 2. He judged the Edomites (Esau's descendants) and gave to Israel the best of the lands.

III. They Despised His Name. (1:6-14)

- A. Now God turns to the priests, who should have been the spiritual leaders of the land.
 - 1. The priests were not honoring God's name, but were taking the best for themselves.
 - 2. They did not value the spiritual privileges God gave them: serving at the altar, burning the incense, and eating the dedicated showbread.
 - 3. They did not bring the best for the sacrifices, but the poorest of the animals. (Cp. Deuteronomy 15:21)
 - 4. God gave them His very best, and He asked for their best in return.
- B. Verse 10 might read: *"Who is spiritual enough to shut the Temple doors and put an end to this hypocrisy?"*
 - 1. God would rather see the Temple closed than have the people and priests *"play religion."* (Cp. Revelation 3:15-16)
 - a. The priests would not even accept a sacrifice until they had first received their share.
 - b. It was this same sin that brought defeat to Israel back in Eli's day. (I Samuel 2:12-17)
 - 2. Verse 11 states that the *"heathen Gentiles"* were offering better sacrifices to the Lord than were His own people.
 - 3. How sad it is when the unsaved people sacrifice more for their religion than do those who truly know the Lord.
- C. We are priests through Christ, and we too are to bring **"spiritual sacrifices"** (I Peter 2:5) to Him.
 - 1. What are some of these sacrifices?
 - a. Our bodies. (Romans 12:1-2)
 - b. Our offerings. (Philippians 4:14-18)
 - c. Our praise. (Hebrews 13:15)
 - d. Souls we have won to Christ. (Romans 15:16)
 - 2. Are we bringing our best to Him, or only what is convenient for us?

IV. They Defiled His Covenant. (2:1-17)

- A. It was no light thing to be a priest, for this was a gracious gift of God through His covenant with Levi.
 - 1. Verses 5-7 describes the ideal priest:
 - a. He fears the Lord and obeys Him.
 - b. He receives the Word and teaches it.
 - c. He lives what He teaches.
 - d. He seeks to turn others from their sins.
 - 2. The priests in Malachi's day were actually leading people astray and defiled the holy covenant. (2:8)
- B. What would God do to them?
 - 1. **"I will curse your blessings."** (2:2)
 - a. This ties in with 3:9 and the lack of tithes and offerings.
 - b. God cursed the crops → the people went poor → they did not bring the offerings to the priests → therefore, the priests were hungry.
 - 2. In sinning against God's covenant they were only hurting themselves.
- C. Malachi points out another terrible sin of the priests: they divorced their Jewish wives and married heathen women. (2:11-15)
 - 1. They dealt treacherously against the women and their families. (Exodus 34:10-16, Ezra 9:1-4)
 - 2. All their weeping at the altar could not change things; they had to put away their sins. (2:13)
 - 3. Verse 15 might read like this: *"Did not the Lord make husband and wife one? Why? That you might bring forth a godly family."*
 - a. Actually, the nation's looseness about divorce was endangering the promise of the Seed, Christ.
 - b. God hates divorce because it is the breaking of the covenant between husband and wife and between God and His people. (Matthew 19:4-6)

V. They Disobeyed His Word. (3:1-15)

- A. In 2:17 the people scornfully asked, *"Will God punish us for our sins? Does He really care?"*
 - 1. God answers them by promising to send His messenger, John the Baptist, who would announce the Messenger of the covenant, Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Jesus did not just go into the Temple and expose its sins and purify its courts.
 - a. In His ministry He revealed the sins of the religious leaders so much so that they finally crucified Him.
 - b. Of course, there is a future application here when the Day of the Lord refines Israel and separates the true from the false.
 - 3. Why does the Lord not simply do away with His rebellious people?
 - 4. Answer: **"For I am the LORD, I change not"** (3:6), and He remains true to His promises. (Cp. Lamentations 3:22-23)
- B. The people had disobeyed God by robbing Him of His **"tithes and offerings."**
 - 1. Actually, when God's people are not faithful in their giving, they not only rob God, but they also rob themselves.
 - a. God had shut off the rain and spoiled their crops because of their selfishness.
 - b. Tithing is not *"bargaining with God,"* for God does promise to bless and care for those who are faithful in their stewardship. (Philippians 4:10-19)
 - 2. Certainly God is not bankrupt, but He wants our tithes and offerings as expressions of our faith and love.
 - a. When a believer's love for Christ grows cold, it usually shows up in this area of stewardship.
 - b. If every church member would bring the Lord His due (10% of his increase, the **"tithe"**), and then add their **"offerings"** as an expression of gratitude, our local churches would have more than enough for their ministries.

Conclusion: Malachi closes his message with some wonderful promises to the faithful (3:16-4:6). There was that faithful remnant in his day who did not forsake God's house, but who met together for mutual blessing. *"They are My jewels,"* says the Lord. What a beautiful picture of the faithful believer. Jewels are precious, and we are precious in His sight. He purchased us with His blood. He is polishing us with trials and testings, and one day in glory we will shine in beauty and splendor.

JOURNEY BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Introduction: The period between Malachi and Matthew covers about 400 years. We do not say that a knowledge of this period is necessary to understand the Gospels, but it is to our advantage if we are to fully comprehend the sayings of our Lord and some of the groups He faced.

- I. The Four Hundred Years.
 - A. This 400-year interval has been called *“the dark period”* of Israel's history in pre-Christian times, because throughout it there was neither prophet nor inspired writer.
 - B. With Malachi the waning sun of prophecy set, and the wail of Psalm 74:9 seems to find a sad fulfillment in the ensuing four centuries: **“We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.”**
 - C. The condition of the Jews at the beginning of this four hundred-year period should be recalled.
 1. Two hundred years earlier Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people carried off into Babylonian Captivity (587 B.C.).
 2. The Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel 135 years earlier (722 B.C.).
 3. Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persians, as had been predicted by Daniel (chapters 2 and 7), and Cyrus issued the order for the Jews to return and build the Temple.
 4. Under Zerubbabel a **“remnant”** returned and twenty-one years later the reconstruction of the Temple was completed (515 B.C.).
 5. Ezra then took a small group to Jerusalem and restored the worship in the Temple – followed by Nehemiah twelve years later who rebuilt the city walls
 - D. Such is the picture at the beginning of this period between Malachi and Matthew.
 1. By the time Matthew opens, a **“remnant”** was back in Judah, the Temple and Jerusalem rebuilt, and worship had been restored.
 2. It is in the **“remnant”** that we find Jewish history preserved between the Old and New Testament.
- II. The Political Background.
 - A. The Persian Period. (536-333 B.C.)
 1. The Persian rule over Palestine, which commenced with the decree of Cyrus for the return of the Jewish Remnant, continued until Alexander the Great and his Greek empire.
 2. This means that the Jews were under the Persian rule at the end of Malachi and remained under them for the next sixty years of the Inter-Testament Period.
 3. During this same period, the rival worship of the Samaritans became established.
 4. The Assyrian emperor had repopled the cities of Israel with a mixed people known as the Samaritans.
 5. This rivalry persisted throughout the New Testament times.
 - B. The Greek Period. (333-323 B.C.)
 1. Alexander the Great, at twenty years of age, transformed the face of the world in ten years.
 2. In his Syrian campaign he spared Jerusalem and offered sacrifice to Jehovah.
 3. This, in turn, created pro-Greek sympathies among the Jews, and, along with Alexander's spreading of the Greek language and civilization, had its far-reaching repercussions in the Hellenistic (Classical Greek) spirit which developed among the Jews and greatly affected their mental outlook afterward.
 - C. The Egyptian Period. (323-204 B.C.)
 1. This was the longest of the six periods in the Inter-Testament Period.
 2. The death of Alexander the Great resulted in Judea falling into the hands of the first Ptolemaic ruler, Ptolemy Soter.
 - a. The Ptolemies were a line of Greek kings over Egypt.
 - b. The second Ptolemy, Philadelphus, founded the Alexandrian library and the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was made from the Hebrew into the Greek.
 - D. The Syrian Period. (204-165 B.C.)
 1. This was the most tragic part of the Inter-Testament Period for the Jews.
 2. With the coming to power of Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 B.C., a reign of terror fell on all Jews.

3. He wrecked Jerusalem, tore down the walls and killed many people.
4. He desecrated the Temple in every way, culminating in the offering of a pig on the altar of sacrifice and then erected statues of false gods on the altar. (Cp. Daniel 8:13)
- E. The Maccabean Period. (165-63 B.C.)
 1. This was the most heroic period in all history.
 2. The excesses of Antiochus Epiphanes provoked the movement by the aged priest Mattathias, and carried on by his son, Judas Maccabees.
 - a. Judas restored the Temple and orthodox services.
 - b. Judas was later killed in a battle against the Syrians.
 3. Judas' brother, Jonathan, became leader and high priest, uniting the civil and priestly authorities into one person.
 - a. When Jonathan was killed, Simon, his brother, was made leader.
 - b. Simon was eventually killed and his able son, John Hyrcanus, reigned twenty-nine years.
 4. The demise of the Maccabean Period came when the Herod family appeared on the scene, leading to the Roman rule.
- F. The Roman Period. (63 B.C. onwards)
 1. Judea became a province of the Roman Empire.
 2. When the Maccabean line ended, Antipater was appointed over Judea by Caesar in 47 B.C.
 3. Antipater appointed his son, Herod, governor of Galilee.
 - a. Herod murdered most of his own family, including his wife and sons, to protect his throne.
 - b. This was the "*Herod the Great*" who was king when Jesus was born.

III. The Religious Background.

- A. The Pharisees.
 1. The Pharisees were the spiritual descendants of the pious Jews who had fought the Hellenizers in the days of the earlier Maccabees.
 - a. The name "*Pharisee*," meaning "*separatist*," was probably given them by their enemies to indicate that they were nonconformists.
 - b. The term may have been used in scorn because their strictness separated them from their fellow Jews as well as from the heathen.
 2. Loyalty to truth sometimes produces pride and even hypocrisy, and it is this perversion of the earlier Pharisaic ideal that Jesus denounced.
- B. The Scribes.
 1. The Scribes were not, strictly speaking, a sect, but rather members of a profession.
 2. They were, in the first instance, copyists of the Law.
 3. They came to be regarded as the authorities on the Scriptures.
- C. The Sadducees.
 1. The Sadducees denied the authority of tradition and looked with suspicion on all revelation later than the Mosaic Law.
 2. They denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and did not believe in the existence of angels or spirits. (Acts 23:3)
 3. They were largely people of wealth and position, who cooperated gladly with the Hellenism of the day.
 4. In the New Testament times they controlled the priesthood and the Temple worship.
- D. The Essenes.
 1. The Essenes were an abstemious reaction from the externalism of the Pharisees and the worldliness of the Sadducees.
 2. They withdrew from society and lived lives of simplicity, discipline, and celibacy.
 3. They gave attention to the reading and study of Scripture, prayer, and ceremonial cleansings.
 4. They held their possessions in common and were known for their industry and piety.
- E. The Herodians.
 1. Herodians believed that the best interests of Judaism lay in cooperation with the Romans.
 2. Their name was taken from Herod the Great, who sought to Romanize the Palestine of his day.

Conclusion: Political oppression and the religious reactions expressed in the differing reactions within pre-Christian Judaism, provided the historical framework into which Jesus came. Frustrations and conflicts prepared Israel for the coming of God's Messiah, who appeared "**when the fulness of the time was come**" (Galatians 4:4).

JOURNEY THROUGH MATTHEW

Introduction: The first book of the New Testament lies open before us – the Gospel According to Matthew. Those who know it best will praise it the most. To say that it is a masterpiece of combined human genius and Divine supervision is no light flattery, as we will try to show, even though in necessarily constricted compass.

I. The Four Gospels.

- A. As we enter the New Testament, remember that the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – present four unique presentations of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Matthew: The Messiah-King.
 - 2. Mark: Jehovah's Servant.
 - 3. Luke: The Son of Man.
 - 4. John: The Son of God.
- B. The first three Gospels are often called "*Synoptic Gospels*."
 - 1. The Synoptics give more detail to the events of Jesus' life, while John gives more attention to His teachings.
 - 2. The Synoptics present the outer, human and public aspects of our Lord's life.
 - 3. John reveals the inner, Divine and private aspects of His life.

II. About Matthew Himself.

- A. He was a "**publican**." (Matthew 10:3)
 - 1. Publicans were Jews who had become tax-collectors for the hated Romans.
 - 2. The oft repeated phrase, "**publicans and sinners**," indicates their general moral level.
 - 3. We know that Matthew was a publican by his own pen. (Matthew 10:3)
- B. Upon the Master's beckoning, he immediately became a disciple of Jesus. (Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14)
 - 1. Mark and Luke tell us that when he left his place of business that "**he left all,**" that he hospitably opened up "**his own house**" to the Lord; and that he gave a "**great feast**" for many other "**publicans**" to hear Jesus. (Luke 5:28-29)
 - 2. Matthew doesn't tell us of any of these things.
 - 3. His omissions as well as his insertions reveal his humility.
- C. He was later appointed an apostle. (Matthew 10:3)

III. The Central Message: "**That it might be fulfilled**" (Matthew 1:22).

- A. Matthew was written to the Jews to answer their questions regarding Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be their Messiah.
 - 1. Was He, in fact, the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament?
 - 2. If He was, why did He fail to establish the promised kingdom?
 - 3. Will it ever be fulfilled?
- B. In this Gospel, Jesus is often spoken of as the Son of David and the One who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah.
- C. The Kingdom of heaven becomes the subject matter of much of His recorded teaching.

IV. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Introduction. (1:1-4:11)
 - 1. His Birth. (1:1-2:23)
 - a. Matthew began his writing with a genealogy.
 - b. He wrote primarily for the Jews, who, according to their Scripture, the Old Testament, believed their Messiah to come through a certain family.
 - c. Matthew had only to begin with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, then show the descent through David and the covenant promise of the Messiah.
 - 2. His Baptism. (3:1-17)
 - 3. His Temptation. (4:1-11)
 - a. It is vital to realize that our Lord was tempted as a Man. (Hebrews 4:15)
 - b. He was tempted in every way.

- (1) Body – “**command these stones to be made bread.**”
- (2) Soul – “**cast thyself down.**”
- (3) Spirit – “**fall down and worship me.**”
- B. His Ministry in Galilee. (4:12-18:35)
 - 1. His Inauguration. (4:12-25)
 - 2. His Words. (5:1-7:29)
 - a. The “Be”-Attitudes: the subjects of the kingdom. (5:3-16)
 - b. Moral standards: Christ versus “**it was said.**” (5:17-48)
 - c. Religious motives: alms, prayer and fasting. (6:1-18)
 - d. Mammon worship: earthiness versus godliness. (6:19-24)
 - e. Temporal cares: anxiety versus trust in God. (6:25-34)
 - f. Social discernment: censuring and indiscretion. (7:1-6)
 - g. Encouragements: prayer makes it all practicable. (7:7-11)
 - h. Summary in a sentence: such a life fulfills Scriptures. (7:12)
 - i. The alternatives: broad versus narrow. (7:13-14)
 - j. Final warnings: false prophets, false professions, and false foundations. (7:15-27)
 - 3. His Works. (8:1-10:42)
 - a. The works of the Lord are presented in a series of miracles that reveal His authority over every realm.
 - b. Miracles of healing.
 - (1) The leper is cleansed his leprosy. (8:1-4)
 - (2) The centurion’s servant is healed of palsy. (8:5-13)
 - (3) Peter’s mother-in-law is healed of her fever. (8:14-17)
 - c. Miracles of power.
 - (1) The sea is stilled. (8:23-27)
 - (2) Demons are cast into swine. (8:28-34)
 - (3) A paralytic is forgiven. (9:1-8)
 - d. Miracles of restoration.
 - (1) Life is restored. (9:18-26)
 - (2) Sight is restored. (9:27-31)
 - (3) Speech is restored. (9:32-34)
 - 4. The reaction of the people. (11:1-18:35)
 - a. John the Baptist: Undecided. (11:3)
 - b. “**This generation**”: Unresponsive. (11:16-17)
 - c. Galilean towns: Unrepentant. (11:20)
 - d. The Pharisees: Unreasonable. (12:10, 14, 24)
 - e. The Multitudes: Undiscerning. (13:13-15)
 - f. The Nazarethites: Unbelieving. (13:54, 58)
 - g. King Herod: Unintelligent. (14:2)
 - h. Jerusalem Scribes: Unconciliatory. (15:2, 12)
 - i. Sadducees: Unrelenting. (16:1)
 - j. The Apostles: Gladly Receiving. (16:16)
- C. His Ministry in Judea. (19:1-28:20)
 - 1. Presentation as King. (19:1-25:46)
 - 2. The Events of His Crucifixion. (26:1-27:66)
 - 3. His Glorious Resurrection. (28:1-20)

Conclusion: How many, or how few, of those who read Matthew’s last-recorded utterance of the risen Lord really catch the utter splendor of it? “**All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**” The word “**power**” means “*authority*.” What is meant by this word is not our Lord’s inherent power but His administrative authority.

The Scriptures convey that Satan had once sustained a peculiar relationship of authority over all the earth. He was not always Satan, but was once Lucifer, the “**anointed cherub.**” But his power is now broken, and his authority is forever taken away. That is why Jesus later spoke to John, “**Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death**” (Revelation 1:18). The keys are no longer in Satan’s grasp; they hang at Jesus’ side; and the scepter of “**all authority**” is in the hands which bear the nail-scars! He is King. “**Go ye therefore**” and teach all nations (make disciples), baptize them, and teach them all things.

JOURNEY THROUGH MARK

Introduction: It is interesting how nature contrives her varying artistries in different places, all from the same materials – earth, foliage and waters. It is the same with the four Gospels. All deal with the same basic material, and the first three practically coincide in what they relate. Yet, though all four are substantially the same, each one has its distinguishing aspect and presents things in its own purposeful way to the mental eye. Our present study brings us to the second Gospel. How evident is the basic identity of the subject matter and yet how definite is the differentiating individualism.

I. Mark, The Author.

- A. John Mark, nephew to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary who was a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:12).
- B. Some scholars think he was the young man who fled in the garden when Jesus was arrested. (Mark 14:51-52)
- C. He accompanied Barnabas and the Apostle Paul on their first missionary journey. (Acts 13:5)
 1. During their journey, for an undisclosed reason, he left them at Perga and returned home. (Acts 13:13)
 2. This departure later caused a division between Barnabas and Paul and led to Barnabas taking Mark under his wing. (Acts 15:36-41)
 3. A decade later, before he died, Paul acknowledged Mark's ministry and spoke highly of him. (Colossians 4:10, II Timothy 4:11)
- D. Peter called Mark "**my son**" (I Peter 5:13), which may indicate that Peter was the one who brought John Mark to faith in Christ.

II. Mark's Theme.

- A. Mark wrote primarily for Roman readers.
 1. His explanation of Jewish customs and Aramaic words indicates a Gentile audience.
 2. Mark also places emphasis on discipleship and persecution.
- B. Mark's emphasis is on Jesus Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. (Mark 10:44-45, cp. Phil. 2:7-8)
 1. One of his key words is "**straightway**," used nineteen times in the book.
 2. He portrays Jesus as the Servant of God constantly on the go and meeting peoples' needs.
- C. The Gospel of Mark was undoubtedly a great encouragement to suffering Christians during the persecution under Nero in A.D. 64-67.

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Sanctification (Introduction). (1:1-13)
 1. Mark wastes no time introducing us to Jesus.
 - a. He simply opens with, "**The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**"
 - b. He presents the beginning of the Gospel, not the beginning of Jesus.
 2. Right away, four voices startle us with their announcement.
 - a. Mark: "**Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**" (1:1)
 - b. Isaiah: "**Prepare ye the way of the Lord.**" (1:3)
 - c. John: "**One mightier than I after me.**" (1:7)
 - d. God: "**Thou art my beloved Son.**" (1:11)
- B. Service. (1:14-8:30)
 1. Jesus' ministry begins by Him "**preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.**" (1:14-15)
 2. Straightway we have a rapid series of astounding exploits.
 - a. A demon is cast out in the synagogue. (1:26)
 - b. A fever is healed in a home. (1:31)
 - c. Crowds of invalids are cured at a door. (1:34)
 - d. A leper is cleansed by the wayside. (1:42)
 3. The responses of the people to these things are diverse.
 - a. "**They were astonished at his doctrine.**" (1:22)
 - b. "**He taught them as one that had authority.**" (1:22)
 - c. "**They were all amazed.**" (1:27)
 - d. "**His fame spread abroad throughout all the region.**" (1:28)
 - e. "**They came to him from every quarter.**" (1:45)

4. On the very heels of all this, chapter 2 brings a quick succession of hostile criticism.
 - a. The scribes: **“Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?”** (2:7)
 - b. The Pharisees: **“How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”** (2:16)
 - c. John’s disciples: **“Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”** (2:18)
 - d. The Pharisees again: **“Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?”** (2:24)
 5. The remainder of this part of the book is an accounting of some of His work with the disciples, more miracles, and more opposition.
 - a. Such miracles revealed the identity of Christ.
 - b. The light dims and the scene changes very suddenly when Peter confesses, **“Thou art the Christ.”** (8:29)
 - C. Sacrifice. (8:31-15:47)
 1. From 8:31, we hear repeatedly from our Lord’s lips of the cross.
 2. There is an absence of indictments in Mark such as occur in the other Gospels.
 - a. No denunciation of Galilee’s impenitent cities as in Matthew 11.
 - b. No condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees as in Matthew 23 and Luke 11.
 3. The omission of such judgments belong to a King, as in Matthew, and do not befit the servant aspect of our Lord as recorded in Mark.
 - a. In like manner, no reference is made in Mark of the promise of the Kingdom to the dying thief on the Cross or His right to summon legions of angels.
 - b. These, too, were attributes of a King, not a servant.
 - D. Success (Resurrection and Ascension). (16:1-20)
 1. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.
 2. The fact of the resurrection is given by Mark.
 - a. The women, the angel, the stone, and the report of the women to the disciples as to what the angel said are all recorded.
 - b. Jesus Christ is the ascended Lord, the Servant highly exalted – working in and through us. (I Corinthians 3:9)
- IV. A Rich Lesson From Mark. (1:9-13)
- A. Mark’s is a Gospel of Jesus as Jehovah’s Servant, the Perfect Servant.
 1. He is to us the patterned Servant.
 2. He is the ideal Example of service, Whom we ourselves are to follow.
 - B. Jesus shows us four indispensable prerequisites to be effective in Christian service:
 1. A preliminary separation. (1:9)
 - a. There was a separation from His former kind of life; and a separation to His new ministry of teaching and healing, and unto God.
 - b. This is our first prerequisite to Christian service.
 2. A preliminary anointing. (1:10)
 - a. Our Lord saw something and felt something when **“the Spirit descending upon Him.”**
 - b. We must know the heavens are *“opened”* to our prayers and that we are endued with power from on high. (Cp. Acts 1:8)
 3. A preliminary assuring. (1:11)
 - a. The Lord received a preliminary assurance as to His Sonship – **“Thou art my beloved Son.”**
 - b. Our Lord received a preliminary assurance as to His character – **“In whom I am well pleased.”**
 - c. We need the inward assurance of the Spirit and motives of being well-pleasing to God.
 4. A preliminary testing. (1:12-13)
 - a. He was tested with Divine permission. (1:12)
 - b. He was tested with real temptation. (1:13)
 - c. Servants must undergo this preliminary testing, to settle whether they will go God’s way, or their own.

Conclusion: Let all who would serve the Lord of Heaven in this sinful world observe the Servant of Jehovah. The question of all questions for the Christian is: *“Am I really willing to yield myself here and now to Christ for His will alone to be done in and through my life?”*

JOURNEY THROUGH LUKE

Introduction: As we studied our way through the second Gospel we found ourselves saying, “*How different Mark is from Matthew!*” In pressing on through this third Gospel, we cannot help exclaiming: “*How different Luke is from either!*” Though all three cover the same ground, yet it is fascinating to consider the illuminating variations. Not only is the individuality of each evangelist distinguishingly stamped upon all he tells us, but we gradually become aware that “**this same Jesus,**” of whom all focus their attention upon as exhibited to us in different lights and shades, is more than human.

I. Luke, The Author.

- A. Luke, “**the beloved physician**” (Colossians 4:14), wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.
 - 1. Both Luke and Acts are addressed to the same person: “**Theophilus,**” of whom we know nothing about. (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1)
 - 2. Luke never refers to himself in the Gospel, and in the Book of Acts he refers to himself only as being a part of Paul’s group of traveling companions, using the words “**we**” and “**us**” in context. (Acts 16:6-10)
- B. In his Gospel, Luke records what Jesus began to do and teach, and in the Book of Acts, he records what Jesus continued to do and teach by His Spirit through His Church.

II. Theme.

- A. Luke wrote primarily for the Greeks and presented Jesus Christ as the compassionate Son of Man who came “**to seek and to save that which was lost**” (Luke 19:10).
- B. This Gospel has a universal outlook.
 - 1. Our Lord’s genealogy goes back to Adam. (Luke 3:38)
 - 2. The whole world is seen as the sphere of God’s redemption. (Luke 2:14, 32, 3:6)
- C. As a doctor, Luke shows a concern for individuals.
 - 1. More than any other Gospel writer, he mentions women and children.
 - 2. He gives a decided emphasis to prayer, singing, and rejoicing, as well as poverty and wealth.
 - 3. Six of our Lord’s miracles and nineteen of His parables are found only in Luke.
- D. Whereas the emphasis in Matthew is on what Jesus said, and in Mark on what Jesus did, Luke is on whom Jesus is.

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Jesus’ early life. (1:1-4:13)
 - 1. Luke dwells on the birth of Christ and his account has no parallel in the other Gospels.
 - a. Mark and John tell nothing about His birth at Bethlehem.
 - b. Matthew gives an account of His incarnation but does not describe in detail the birth, infancy, and boyhood of the Lord.
 - 2. Matthew and Luke both give a genealogy showing the Lord’s ancestry.
 - a. Matthew gives the genealogy through Joseph who was legally, not physically, the father of Jesus.
 - b. Luke gives his genealogy through Mary who really was the mother of His manhood.
 - c. Matthew starts at Abraham and traces it down through David – Kingship.
 - d. Luke goes back to Adam and traces Christ to the point of His appearance in the history of the race as human – as the Son of Man.
- B. Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. (4:14-9:50)
 - 1. Luke’s account of our Lord’s ministry in Galilee is shorter than either Matthew’s or Mark’s.
 - a. The Galilean ministry begins with Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, with the emphasis at once on the manhood of Jesus Himself. (Luke 4:18, 21-22)
 - b. Only in Luke do we find Jesus’ teaching concerning the abundance of fish and Peter’s realization of His wonderful power to catch men. (5:1-10)
 - c. Peter’s confession (9:18-22) marks a change in Jesus’ ministry, and from this point on He begins to talk about His coming rejection and death.
 - 2. The Transfiguration was a Divine attestation of Jesus as the Son of Man. (9:27-36)
 - a. Jesus is depicted as the Divine Messenger.

- b. **“This is my beloved Son: hear Him.”** (9:35)
- 3. Before going on to Jerusalem, Jesus’ last public miracle in Galilee was the release of the demoniac son. (9:37-50)
- C. Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem. (9:51-19:44)
 - 1. In all these chapters only five miracles are reported, as compared to the twenty-one miracles in the few chapters of His ministry in Galilee.
 - 2. In this section there are a great number of sayings, doings, parables and rebukes, all reflecting the Matchless Man.
 - 3. This section divides into almost two equal sections.
 - a. The first ends with Jesus’ first lament over Jerusalem. (13:34)
 - b. The second ends with Jesus’ second lament over the city. (19:41-44)
- D. Jesus’ sacrifice and triumph. (19:45-24:53)
 - 1. This last section begins with the Lord in the Temple and ends with His crucifixion, entombment, resurrection and ascension.
 - 2. His Manhood is seen throughout this section, from His **“sweat . . . as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”** (22:44), to His praying and passion.
 - 3. His Deity is also seen in His answers, His submissiveness, His resurrection, and His ministry as the risen Christ.

IV. The Humanness Of Jesus.

- A. In this Gospel the humanness of our Lord is seen early.
 - 1. Right away we are in the hearts and homes and hopes of simple-living, godly, likable folk like Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna.
 - 2. There is a tarrying at the unusual cradle, to see the Babe in those humble swaddling wraps.
- B. His dependence on Prayer.
 - 1. Throughout Luke’s Gospel we see Jesus’ human dependence on God expressing Himself in prayer.
 - a. When Jesus was endued by the Holy Spirit at Jordan, He was **“praying.”** (3:21)
 - b. When He withdrew Himself from the incessant throngs, He **“prayed.”** (5:16)
 - c. Before He chose the Twelve, He solitarily **“continued all night in prayer.”** (6:12)
 - d. At His transfiguration, He had climbed the mountain **“to pray.”** (9:28-29)
 - e. He assured Peter, **“I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”** (22:32)
 - f. In Gethsemane, He **“prayed more earnestly.”** (22:44)
 - g. Both His first and last utterances on the Cross were prayers. (23:34, 46)
 - 2. Jesus’ human dependence on prayer reappears in His teaching.
 - a. The parable of the midnight appeal teaches the importunity in prayer. (11:5-10)
 - b. The parable of the harried judge and the widow teaches the constancy of prayer. (18:1-8)
 - c. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican in the Temple teaches the humility in prayer. (18:9-14)
- C. His need of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. Only Luke describes the preconception activity of the Holy Spirit. (1:35)
 - a. Only Luke speaks of **“Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit”** following His baptism. (4:1)
 - b. Luke says, **“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit,”** following His temptations. (4:14)
 - c. Only Luke prefaces our Lord’s declaration at Nazareth: **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel . . .”** (4:18)
 - 2. Luke closes with the Savior’s parting promise of endowment of the Holy Spirit. (24:49)
- D. His touch of poverty.
 - 1. Luke opens with the baby Boy for whom there was **“no room for them in the inn.”** (2:7)
 - a. His parents were so poor that when they dedicated Him in the Temple they could bring only an offering of two birds instead of the regulation lamb. (2:24)
 - b. From the start, Jesus announced Himself as anointed **“to preach the gospel to the poor.”** (4:18)
 - c. Jesus’ parable of the **“great supper”** emphasized the poor, maimed and halt. (14:21)
 - 2. It is Luke who brings us the story of the rich man and Lazarus. (16:19-31)

Conclusion: The unifying emphasis of this third Gospel is the humanity our Lord. How that manhood ought to speak to those of us who are Christians. He is our perfect example. His humanity is our pattern. We are called to live like Him.

JOURNEY THROUGH JOHN

Introduction: We cannot possibly come to the Gospel of John with too much eagerness to learn from its spiritual teachings. It neither disappoints the early seeker or the continuing searcher. There is no polysyllabic wording to deter the simple, and no ambiguity to puzzle the earnest. All the way through there is transparent simplicity. Just as there are interior meanings too profound for language, and depths of understanding as deep as infinity, so every new exploration yields a new reward.

I. John, The Author.

- A. John, the Apostle is the author.
 - 1. He was the son of Zebedee, the brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)
 - 2. These two were surnamed by our Lord, **“The sons of thunder.”** (Mark 3:17)
- B. John penned this Gospel, three Epistles, and **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”**
 - 1. John became the beloved pastor of the church at Ephesus.
 - 2. He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos by the Emperor Domitian in 95 AD., where he wrote *“The Book of Revelation.”*

II. John, The Book.

- A. The Gospel of John brings to a climax the full purpose of God in Christ.
 - 1. In the three preceding Gospels we learned what Jesus Christ was; now John presents the completion of who He is.
 - a. The other three are a presentation of Christ; John is an interpretation of Him.
 - b. The first three show Jesus outwardly; John shows Him inwardly.
 - c. The earlier three writers are mainly concerned with our Lord’s public utterances; John majors on His private conversations and thoughts.
 - 2. John truly exposes the Divine, the God-Man.
- B. John’s central truth flashes like a torch all the way through his Gospel and finds final expression at the end, where he writes, **“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”** (20:31).
 - 1. In the Synoptics the simple facts of Jesus’ life are set forth, while John is directed to the securing of a verdict.
 - a. By the time anyone has gone through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the biggest decision must be made.
 - b. It may have been made long before John is reached, but it cannot any longer be side-stepped.
 - 2. The reader is directly challenged, and must choose, to receive and be saved, or to reject and perish forever. (John 3:36)

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The Prologue. (1:1-18)
 - 1. John states certain facts concerning Jesus Christ in his brief introduction.
 - a. The preexistence of the Son: **“In the beginning was the Word.”** (1:1a)
 - b. The personality of the Son, distinct from the Father: **“and the Word was with God.”** (1:1b)
 - c. The deity of the Son: **“and the Word was God.”** (1:1c)
 - d. The eternity of the Son: **“The same was in the beginning with God.”** (1:2)
 - e. The creativity of the Son: **“All things were made by him.”** (1:3)
 - f. The enabling of the Son: **“In him was life.”** (1:4)
 - g. The revelation of the Son: **“The light shineth in darkness.”** (1:5)
 - 2. He came into the world from a preexistent state to fulfill a specific mission.
 - a. The Son is referred to by John as **“the Word.”**
 - (1) This is the most revealing name for the Son.
 - (2) To John, **“the Word”** is a Person who has come into the world to reveal the person of the Father to men. (1:14)
 - b. Jesus Christ became the divine communication of the holy Father to sinful man. (1:12)

VERSE 1	VERSE 14
In the beginning was the Word	⇒ And the Word was made flesh
and the word was with God	⇒ and dwelt among us
and the Word was God.	⇒ full of grace and truth.

B. His Public Ministry. (1:19-12:50)

1. John records seven signs or miracles which prove that Jesus is the Son of God. (John 3:2)
 - a. Turning water into wine. (2:1-11)
 - b. Healing the nobleman's son. (4:46-54)
 - c. Healing the man at Bethesda. (5:1-18)
 - d. Feeding of the 5,000. (6:1-14)
 - e. Walking on the water. (6:15-21)
 - f. Healing the blind man. (9:1-41)
 - g. Raising of Lazarus. (11:1-57)
2. During His public ministry, Jesus reveals Himself in many private ways.
 - a. To Nicodemus, He is the new birth. (3:1-21, esp. vss. 3 and 7)
 - b. To the Samaritan woman, He is the water of life. (4:1-42, esp. vs. 14)
 - c. To Martha, He is the resurrection. (11:1-44, esp. vs. 23-26)

C. His Private Ministry. (13:1-17:26)

1. Here we see the heart of Jesus' teaching.
2. This section opens with Jesus' teaching on humility and ends with His intercessory prayer. (17:20)

D. His Suffering and Death. (18:1-19:42)

1. From His prayer ending in chapter 17, Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane (18:1), followed by His arrest, trials, scourging, crucifixion, and death.
2. The **"Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief"** (Isaiah 53: 3) was **"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Philippians 2:8).

E. His Victory over Death. (20:1-21:25)

1. On the third day the tomb was empty and He came out of the grave with a spiritual body.
2. His last word of instruction to Peter, and to us, is, **"Till I come . . . follow thou me"** (21:22).

IV. Eternal Life Through Believing.

A. John gives his practical purpose for writing as, **"that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"** (20:31).

1. The word **"believe"** occurs in several forms ninety-eight times.
2. The words **"life"** and **"live"** occur fifty-five times.

B. The principal references to eternal life reveal an unmistakable progress of doctrine.

1. *"Eternal Life"* is in the Son, and the first action upon the soul is to give light, the light which reveals spiritual realities, human sin and Divine truth. (1:4)
2. *"Eternal Life"* is imparted through faith in the work of the Savior (Son) on Calvary. (3:14-16)
3. *"Eternal Life"* is a present possession of the believer. (3:36)
4. *"Eternal Life"* is not only a present possession but an inward satisfaction. (4:14)
5. The possession of *"Eternal Life"* through faith in the Savior gives exemption from judgment. (5:24)
6. *"Eternal Life"* not only ensures the salvation of the soul, but includes the promise of immortality for the body. (6:40)
7. The picture of saved ones being held secure in the interlocked grasp of both the Son and the Father is the strongest possible assurance that *"Eternal Life"* means eternal preservation. (10:27-29)
8. The possessors of *"Eternal Life"* in Christ are to share in the age-end transfiguration. (11:25)
9. The *"Eternal Life"* which believers possess through the Savior is to be consummated in a heavenly glorification. (17:24)

Conclusion: John closes His Gospel by assuring us that the world itself could not contain all the books that could be written about Christ's life (21:25). Just as the four Gospels are not *"lives of Christ,"* but rather four different portraits of Jesus, each with a different emphasis, so today, each believer becomes a portrait of Christ.

JOURNEY THROUGH ACTS

Introduction: Twenty-eight thrilling chapters lie before us. Any one of them can be read a dozen times, only to find its fascination growing with each reading. Acts is the sequel to the mighty events of the four Gospels, and the gateway to the glorious doctrines of the Epistles. This stage covers a period of approximately thirty-eight years, from the miracle of Pentecost to the martyrdom of Paul. It marks one of the great turning points in history.

I. The Writer.

- A. Luke, the beloved physician, is the author of Acts.
 - 1. Luke was a doctor (Colossians 4:14) who joined Paul's party at Troas (Acts 16:8-10) during his second Missionary Journey, and traveled extensively with him thereafter.
 - 2. The **"former treatise"** (Acts 1:1) is the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1-4).
- B. It is generally believed that Luke was a Gentile.

II. Theme.

- A. The four Gospel accounts record the life of the Lord Jesus as He lived it.
- B. The Book of Acts records the life of the Lord Jesus as lived through the early disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- C. Acts 1:8 is the key to the Book of Acts, **"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."**

III. Structure.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES	
<i>"Ye Shall Be Witnesses" – Acts 1:8</i>	
OPERATION HOLY LAND CRUSADE (Chapters 1-12)	OPERATION WORLD-WIDE CRUSADE (Chapters 13-28)
Headed up by Peter, the Fisherman	Headed up by Paul, the Tentmaker
Assisted by John, Stephen & Philip	Assisted by Barnabas, Silas, Mark, Timothy & Luke

IV. Overview.

- A. The Church was fully empowered at Pentecost, but was not fully revealed by God until later, primarily through the writings of Paul
 - 1. Christ had promised to build His Church (Matthew 16:18), but almost in the same breath He gave Peter the **"keys of the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 16:19).
 - 2. Peter used these **"keys"** to open the doors of faith.
 - a. To the Jews at Pentecost (**"in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea"**). (Acts 2:14)
 - b. To the Samaritans (**"in Samaria"**), those of Jewish-Gentile mix. (Acts 8:14)
 - c. To the Gentiles (**"unto the uttermost part of the earth"**), beginning with the conversion of Cornelius. (Acts 10:5-6)
- B. The apostles' ministry began in Jerusalem – **"to the Jew first"** (Romans 1:16).
 - 1. Through chapter 7, the focus continues to be on **"the Jew first."**
 - 2. In chapter 8, a transition shifts from the Jews to the Samaritans, those of Jewish/Gentile mix.
 - 3. In chapter 10, the stress shifts from the Samaritans to the Gentiles.
 - 4. In chapters 11-12, Peter is for the last time regarded as the leader among the believers.
 - 5. In chapter 13, Paul takes on the significant role throughout the rest of the book.

V. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The ministry of Peter: The apostle to Israel. (Chapters 1-12)
 - 1. Peter preaches on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2)

2. God pours out His Spirit in a miraculous way. (2:1-4)
 3. Peter's message. (2:14-36)
 - a. His defense. (2:14-21)
 - (1) We are not drunken. (2:15)
 - (2) This is the fulfillment of prophecy. (2:16, cp. Joel 2:28-32)
 - b. His proclamation, the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. (2:22-36)
 - (1) His incarnation. (2:22)
 - (2) His crucifixion. (2:23)
 - (3) His resurrection. (2:24-32, cp. Psalm 16:8-11)
 - (4) His exaltation. (2:33-36)
 - c. His application. (2:37-40)
 - (1) Conviction. (2:37)
 - (2) Repent, believe and be baptized. (2:38-40)
 - (a) Not faith plus baptism.
 - (b) Faith demonstrated by baptism.
 4. The people's response. (2:41)
 - a. **"They . . . gladly received his word."**
 - b. The ministry of the early Church. (2:41-47)
 - (1) They had right doctrine.
 - (2) They had great fellowship.
 - (3) They had two ordinances – communion and baptism.
 - (4) They had fervent prayer.
 - (5) They had concern for others.
 - (6) They had fruitful service.
- B. The ministry of Paul: The apostle to the Gentiles. (Chapters 13-28)
1. Paul's first missionary journey. (13:1-14:28)
 - a. His call. (13:1-2)
 - b. His commissioning. (13:3)
 - c. His journey. (13:4-14:28)
 2. Paul defends the Gospel. (15:1-40)
 - a. The dissension. (15:1-4)
 - b. The discussion. (15:5-21)
 - c. The decision. (15:22-35)
 3. Paul's second missionary journey. (16:1-18:22)
 - a. As a father is concerned for his children, so Paul was concerned for his spiritual children scattered across Cyprus and Asia Minor.
 - b. Paul went to Barnabas and said, *"Let's go back and visit our brothers and sisters in every city where we have preached the Word of our Lord, and see how they are doing."*
 - c. The *"Macedonian Call."* (16:9-10)
 - (1) Although the man of Macedonia represented all the culture, intelligence, religion, and achievements of Greek civilization, he was spiritually bankrupt.
 - (2) The response to the call was immediate action, no procrastination.
 4. Paul's third missionary journey. (18:23-21:17)
 5. Paul's arrest and journey to Rome. (21:18-28:31)

VI. Paul's Giving Of Himself. (Acts 20:17-38)

- A. He gave without prejudice – Paul reminded the Ephesian leaders of the unblemished character of his own ministry. (20:17-19)
- B. He gave in spite of personal trial – Paul told them he did not feel free as he went toward Jerusalem. (20:20-22)
- C. He gave the whole counsel of God – Paul told them he wanted to finish his course. (20:23-27)
- D. He gave them overseers to continue the ministry – Paul directed the Ephesian pastors to take care of God's Church. (20:28-31)
- E. He gave them over to the grace of God – He expected nothing in return so that they might see Jesus. (20:32-35)

Conclusion: The Book of Acts ends abruptly, but the Church goes on. The heroes that lost their lives in this book each contributed to the spreading of the Gospel. We are presently writers of the 29th chapter of Acts. What will we do to see the Gospel continue to go forward?

JOURNEY THROUGH ROMANS

Introduction: The Book of Romans is Paul's MAGNUM OPUS (his most important masterpiece). Here we see him at his greatest as a constructive thinking and theologian. The Epistle to the Romans is a complete and mature expression of the apostle's main doctrines, which he unfolds in due order and proportion and combines into a whole. For the purpose of systematic theology it is the most important book in the Bible. It is both the alphabet and charter of evangelical Christianity. To master its contents is to be "*grounded and settled*" in the faith, and to acquire a life-long enrichment. More than any other, it has determined the course of Christian thought.

I. Importance Of Romans.

- A. While all Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable, there are some parts of the Bible that contain more doctrinal truth than others.
 - 1. What Paul has to say in Romans is of more practical value to us than some of the lists in Numbers.
 - 2. St. Augustine was converted through reading Romans.
 - 3. Martin Luther launched the Reformation on Romans 1:17, "**The just shall live by faith.**"
 - 4. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was converted while listening to someone read from Luther's commentary on Romans.
- B. If there is one book that every Christian should understand, it is the Epistle to the Romans.
 - 1. It presents doctrinal truth: justification, sanctification, adoption, judgment, and identification with Christ. (Chapters 1-8)
 - 2. It presents dispensational truth: showing the relationship between Israel and the Church in the eternal plan of God. (Chapters 9-11)
 - 3. It presents practical truth: teaching the secret of Christian victory over the flesh, the duties Christians have one toward another, and their relationship to government. (Chapters 12-16)
- C. An understanding of this book is a key to unlocking the entire Word of God.

II. Background To Romans.

- A. Romans was written by Paul during his three-month visit in Corinth. (Acts 20:1-3)
- B. How did there come to be a group of believers at Rome?
 - 1. One tradition, without historical foundation, is that Peter lived in Rome for twenty-five years.
 - a. This fact cannot be proved.
 - (1) If Peter had started the work at Rome, then certainly there would have been an organized church there rather than a scattered bodies of believers.
 - (2) Note that Paul does not address his letter to "*the church at Rome*," but rather, "**to all that be at Rome**" (Romans 1:7).
 - (3) Paul greets many friends in chapter 16, but not Peter; yet in his other letters, he always sent greetings to the spiritual leaders.
 - (4) Paul would have mentioned Peter if that great apostle were ministering anywhere in Rome.
 - b. The most telling argument against Peter as the founder of the work is Romans 15:20.
 - (1) There Paul states that he did not build on another man's foundation.
 - (2) Paul was anxious to visit Rome to minister to the saints there, but he would not have made those plans if another apostle had already started a work there.
 - 2. Acts 2:10 indicates that there were people in Jerusalem on Pentecost from Rome.
 - a. Priscilla and Aquila were Roman Jews who knew the Gospel.
 - b. The names in chapter 16 are all Gentile, indicating that Gentile Christians from other cities had gravitated to Rome and carried the Gospel with them.

III. Position In The Bible.

- A. Romans is the first of three letters in the New Testament based on one verse of Scripture: "**The just shall live by his faith**" (Habakkuk 2:4).
 - 1. The theme of Romans is "**the just.**" (Romans 1:17)
 - 2. The theme of Galatians is how the just "**shall live.**" (Galatians 3:11)
 - 3. The theme of Hebrews is the just living "**by faith.**" (Hebrews 10:38)

- B. Romans, the first epistle in the New Testament, follows the order set down in II Timothy 3:16, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for . . .”**
 - 1. **“Doctrine”** – Romans (the great doctrinal book).
 - 2. **“Reproof”** – I and II Corinthians (where Paul reproves sin).
 - 3. **“Correction”** – Galatians (where Paul corrects false teaching).
 - 4. **“Instruction in Righteousness”** – Ephesians thru the remainder of Paul’s writings (where Paul teaches holy living based on Christian doctrine).

IV. Structure Of The Book.

- A. The need for righteousness. (Chapters 1-3)
- B. The provision for righteousness. (Chapters 4-8)
- C. The rejection of righteousness, by Israel. (Chapters 9-11)
- D. The daily living of righteousness. (Chapters 12-16)

V. The World Before God. (Romans 1-6)

- A. All mankind is charged as a sinner, who cannot enter God’s heaven because man has no righteousness that God can accept. (Romans 3:23)
- B. Paul identifies three kinds of sinners, representing all the people of the world since Adam.
 - 1. The heathen sinner. (1:18-32)
 - a. The heathen sinner represents the multiplied millions of the world who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ.
 - b. This sinner is guilty for two reasons:
 - (1) The rejection of the witness of creation. (1:19-20)
 - (2) The rejection of the knowledge of God. (1:21-28)
 - 2. The civilized sinner. (2:1-16)
 - a. The civilized sinner represents millions of children, teenagers, and adults from around the world who know the difference between right and wrong.
 - (1) This sinner works hard and has already determined his life’s goals.
 - (2) He is considerate of others and is always ready to lend a helping hand to his friends.
 - b. The civilized sinner is guilty because of the witness of his conscience. (2:1)
 - (1) God judges according to truth. (2:2)
 - (2) God judges according to accumulated guilt. (2:5)
 - (3) God judges according to works. (2:6)
 - (4) God judges without respect of persons. (2:11)
 - (5) God judges according to performance, not knowledge. (2:13)
 - (6) God judges according to the secrets of the heart. (2:16)
 - 3. The religious sinner. (2:17-29)
 - a. The religious sinner typifies all strictly religious people who believe they can buy their way into heaven by their religious rites and rituals.
 - b. The religious sinner is condemned by the very thing he boasts of keeping and teaching – the Law of God – which stands for God’s perfect standard of righteousness. (2:21-24)
- C. The conclusion: **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** (3:23)
- D. God’s solution: Justification by faith through the Lord Jesus Christ. (6:23)

VI. The By-Products Of Justification By Faith. (Romans 5:1-11)

- A. **“We have peace with God.”** (5:1)
- B. **“We have access by faith.”** (5:2)
- C. **“We rejoice in hope.”** (5:2)
- D. **“We glory in tribulation.”** (5:3)
- E. We celebrate **“the love of God . . . shed in our hearts.”** (5:5)
- F. **“We shall be saved from the wrath.”** (5:9)
- G. **“We joy in God.”** (5:11)

Conclusion: Eternal life is God’s free gift of salvation. Man cannot buy it, work for it, or steal it. A man can only be saved by grace (God’s part) through faith (man’s part). Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches us, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Many have never been told the gospel of the grace of God. They do not know that Someone has paid a full reprieve for their sin and offers them pardon. Will you tell them the Good News, or will you let them perish in their sins?

JOURNEY THROUGH I CORINTHIANS

Introduction: Corinth was the most important city in Greece, mainly because it was located on the most important travel route from North to South. It was noted for commerce, culture and idolatry. The gospel was first preached in Corinth by Paul on his second missionary journey. While living and working with Aquila and Priscilla, he preached in the synagogue until opposition forced him out of the city. After leaving, Paul wrote the church a letter, which has been lost (5:9), but disturbing news about the believers and questions they asked Paul in a letter they had sent to him (7:1) prompted the writing of I Corinthians. No letter in the New Testament deals so greatly with local church problems.

I. The City.

- A. It was located about forty miles west of Athens.
 - 1. It was a commercial center of the Roman Empire with three great harbors.
 - 2. The city boasted an outdoor theater that accommodated 20,000 people and athletic games, second only to the Olympics.
- B. The city of Corinth was the “*sin center*” of the Roman Empire in Paul’s day.
 - 1. It was home to the great temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, with its 1,000 temple prostitutes.
 - 2. It was noted for everything sinful.

II. The Occasion To Write.

- A. This letter is Paul’s response to a letter he had received filled with questions. (7:1a)
- B. The Corinthian church was decaying because the worldliness of the city had gotten into its midst.
 - 1. It was all right for the church to be in Corinth, but it was spiritually fatal when Corinth got into the church.
 - 2. Many great churches have been destroyed from the inside out, not the outside in.
- C. Paul’s reply is a letter to correct error and confirm truth.
- D. His message centers on the Wisdom of God. (I Corinthians 2:4-8)

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Salutation and Thanksgiving. (1:1-9)
 - 1. In a most tactful way, Paul opened his letter by reminding the believers of the wonderful blessings they had in Christ.
 - a. He does this before he reproves them for their sin, for they were living beneath their privileges as Christians.
 - b. They were not walking in a manner worthy of their calling in Christ. (Ephesians 4:1-3)
 - 2. He lists some of their spiritual blessings that they were ignoring and thus depriving themselves of spiritual power.
 - a. Called of God. (1:2)
 - (1) They were set apart and members of that elect group, the church.
 - (2) Though they were saints (positionally), they were not living like saints (practically).
 - b. Grace of God. (1:3-4)
 - (1) Grace means that God gives us what we don’t deserve; mercy means He doesn’t give us what we do deserve.
 - (2) Grace comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. Gifts from God. (1:5, 7)
 - (1) Paul discusses spiritual gifts in chapters 12-14, but it is evident that the Corinthians were wonderfully blessed with spiritual gifts.
 - (2) Yet with their spiritual gifts they lacked love and could not get along with one another. (13:1-3)
 - d. Testimony for God. (1:6)
 - (1) Everything Paul said that Christ could do for them came to pass in their lives.
 - (2) God’s Word is true.
 - e. Hope from God. (1:7-9)
 - (1) They were waiting for Christ’s return, but were not living in the light of it. (I John 2:28)

- (2) Though the Corinthians were sinful on earth, God would be able to present them blameless in heaven.
 - (3) These verses should not be used as an excuse for sin, but rather as an encouragement that God is faithful even though we may fail Him.
- B. Reproof concerning schisms in the church. (1:10-6:20)
 - 1. The Corinthian church had received many spiritual gifts from God (1:7), but this did not insure them spirituality as believers.
 - 2. Reports which came to Paul concerning factions and quarreling within the church troubled him and he set about to correct these conditions. (1:10-11)
 - 3. The cause of this party spirit seems to have been an undue reliance upon **“the wisdom of this world”** (2:6) rather than upon the true wisdom of God.
 - a. They were divided into factions. (1:12)
 - b. They were trusting in the wisdom of men. (2:5)
 - c. They were glorying in the works of men. (3:21)
 - d. They were comparing one servant with another and boasting about men. (4:6)
 - e. Paul further explained that Christ is not divided, for we are all part of one body. (1:13, cp. 12:12-27)
 - 4. The wisdom of this world creates and fosters pride and self-centeredness in those who hold it, resulting in division.
 - 5. The wisdom of God, which is contained in the Holy Scriptures, is received differently by different kinds of men.
 - a. The *“Natural Man,”* that is, the one who has not been born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot receive it at all. (2:14)
 - b. The *“Spiritual Man”* is a believer in Christ who has yielded himself to the Holy Spirit of God and is capable of discerning all things. (2:15)
 - c. The *“Carnal Man”* is a believer in Christ who willfully has not yielded to God and who has not grown spiritually, but remains a babe. (3:1-4)
 - (1) The *“Carnal Man”* is *“Spiritual”* in nature, but *“Natural”* in practice.
 - (2) He’s the *“Babe in Christ”* who chooses to remain a *“Baby.”*
 - 6. The Corinthian believers were still carnal, permitting their old natures to dominate their lives.
 - 7. Paul shows that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation, not the wisdom of men. (3:11)
 - a. It is possible to build on this foundation either that which is lasting, **“gold, silver, precious stones,”** or that which will be destroyed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, **“wood, hay, stubble.”** (3:12-15)
 - b. Faithfulness is necessary since we are God’s stewards. (4:1-2)
 - c. Unless there is a change in this condition in Corinth, it will be necessary for the apostle to deal with it severely when he comes to them again. (4:18-21)
 - 8. Not only are there divisions in the Corinthian church, but there is also a lack of church discipline.
 - a. They failed to excommunicate a man who claimed to be a believer and yet persisted in gross immorality. (5:1)
 - b. They were going to law before the pagan courts rather than settling their differences and disputes among themselves. (6:1-8)
 - 9. This section closes with a reminder of the sanctity of the body. (6:19-20)
 - a. This was in contrast to the immoral conditions which were common in the city of Corinth.
 - b. They were not their own, but were bought with a price.
- C. Answers to enquiries: the reply sections are marked off by the little conjunction **“now.”** (7:1-16:24)
 - 1. Concerning marriage. (7:1-40)
 - 2. Concerning meats offered to idols. (8:1-11:1, cp. 10:31)
 - 3. Concerning public worship. (11:2-11:34)
 - 4. Concerning spiritual gifts. (12:1-14:40, cp. 12:31)
 - 5. Concerning the resurrection. (15:1-58)
 - 6. Concerning giving. (16:1-24)

Conclusion: In the final verses, Paul expresses his deep love for all the believers in Corinth (16:19-24). Although they were carnal and selfish, Paul still loved them and encouraged them to show their love for one another. This epistle clearly teaches that the only way to kill church conflicts and problems is with LOVE!

JOURNEY THROUGH II CORINTHIANS

Introduction: While others of Paul's epistles may be more profound, scarcely could any be more precious than this second heart-outpouring of Paul to the Corinthians. It was written with a quill dipped in tears, from the apostle's "*anguish of heart*." It contains more human pathos than any other of his letters. Yet there is a lovely rainbow shining through it all, for in his dire distress and deep disappointments he has discovered more than ever before that "**the Father of mercies**" is the "**God of all comfort**," and that the heavenly Master's strength is made perfect in His servant's weakness.

I. Background.

- A. Review the notes on I Corinthians for the background of the founding of the Corinthian Church.
 - 1. Paul wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus, where he had been ministering for three years.
 - 2. He sent I Corinthians to the church by Timothy (I Corinthians 4:17), but problems in the church only grew worse.
 - 3. Perhaps it was young Timothy's timidity that made the believers at Corinth disobey Paul's words.
 - 4. At any rate, Paul then sent Titus to Corinth to make sure the church obeyed the apostolic instructions Paul had earlier given them. (II Corinthians 7:13-15)
- B. Meanwhile, the riot discussed in Acts 19:21-41 forced Paul to leave Ephesus.
 - 1. Paul had promised the Corinthians that he would visit them (I Corinthians 16:5-7), but circumstances were such that he was delayed along the way.
 - a. He had hoped to meet Titus at Troas (II Corinthians 2:12-13), but that plan failed.
 - b. As you read II Corinthians 1-2, you feel the burden and heartache of Paul, suffering both physically and emotionally
 - 2. While at Troas, Paul did some preaching, then made his way to Macedonia.
 - a. He and Titus finally met, probably at Philippi (II Corinthians 7:5-6), and Titus gave Paul the good news that the majority at Corinth were behind him and would obey his word.
 - b. It was this joy that prompted him to write this second letter to the Corinthians.

II. Purposes.

- A. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote this letter.
 - 1. To explain why he had apparently "*changed his plans*" and not visited them as he had promised. (II Corinthians 1:15-16, cp. I Corinthians 16:3-7)
 - 2. To commend the church for disciplining an offender, and to encourage them to forgive and receive him. (II Corinthians 2:5-11, cp. I Timothy 5:20, Galatians 6:1)
 - 3. To answer those who accused him of wrong motives. (II Corinthians 4:1-2)
 - 4. To encourage the church to share in the offering for the Jerusalem saints. (II Corinthians 8-9)
 - 5. To answer those in the church who were questioning his apostolic authority. (II Corinthians 10:1-2, cp. Hebrews 13:17)
 - 6. To prepare them for his planned visit. (II Corinthians 13)
- B. This letter is in direct contrast to the tone of I Corinthians.
 - 1. It is deeply personal and filled with the deep emotions of the dedicated apostle.
 - 2. If I Corinthians "*takes the roof off*" the church at Corinth and lets us look in, II Corinthians "*opens the heart*" of Paul and lets us see his love and concern for the work of the Lord.
 - 3. In the first letter, Paul is the instructor, answering questions and setting matters right; in this second letter he is the loving pastor, the minister of Christ, pouring out his life that his spiritual children might be perfected in the faith.
- C. No letter in the New Testament says so much about giving, suffering, spiritual triumph and the true character of Christian ministry, as this one.
- D. The overall theme of II Corinthians is the comfort of God through Christ. (II Corinthians 1:3, 13:11)

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Paul's Comfort in God. (1:1-7:16)
 - 1. Paul's sufferings in Ephesus were serious. (Chapter 1)
 - a. He personally illustrated the comfort wrought by those who had been comforted. (1:3-4)

- b. In verses 3-7 the words **“comfort”** and **“consolation”** are used 10 times.
 - c. He had the **“sentence of death”** hanging over him. (1:9)
 - d. Paul uses his own sufferings as a testimony to the Corinthians that God sustains and comforts us so that we might comfort others. (1:8-12)
- 2. Paul rejoices in the triumph which God gives in Christ. (2:14)
 - a. He describes the ministry of the new covenant in its contrast with the old covenant of the law. (3:6-18)
 - b. The conclusion to the contrasts between the Old and New Covenants is that the believer is to be a mirror reflecting the glory of the Lord. (4:3-6)
- 3. As clay vessels, we must be broken for the light to shine out, **“that the power may be of God, and not of us.”** (4:7)
 - a. **“We are troubled,”** but **“not distressed.”** (4:8)
 - b. **“We are perplexed, but not in despair.”** (4:8)
 - c. We are **“persecuted, but not forsaken.”** (4:9)
 - d. We are **“cast down, but not destroyed.”** (4:9)
 - e. Though the **“outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed”** daily. (4:16)
 - f. Suffering in this life works **“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”** (4:17)
- 4. Even in death there is comfort. (5:1)
 - a. Physical death means the departure from the body (**“tabernacle”**).
 - b. The bodies we have are temporary and face suffering. (5:2-5)
 - c. Death means that we leave these bodies and are immediately transported into the presence of the Lord. (5:6-8)
- 5. After death, the believer appears before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards. (5:9-13, esp. verses 9-10)
 - a. Salvation was settled at the time one accepted Christ.
 - b. This is not a judgment for sin, Jesus having already completed that task, but of works done for Christ.
- 6. Even in distress, the ultimate aim of Paul's ministry is to reconcile men to God. (5:14-21)
- 7. Paul lists many of his experiences in ministry. (6:4-7)
 - a. He then lists nine contrasts that cover many other areas of life. (6:8-10)
 - b. Paul gives a personal appeal to the Christians at Corinth to be separated from the world. (6:11-18, especially verses 14 and 17)
- 8. The comfort of God is found in the heart of Paul. (7:4, 6-7, 13)
- B. Paul's appeal for Christian Stewardship. (8:1-9:15)
 - 1. Giving is a grace. (8:1)
 - 2. Biblical giving begins with the giving of one's self. (8:1-6)
 - 3. Further principles (not rules) for giving:
 - a. Give in spite of circumstances. (8:1-2)
 - b. Give enthusiastically. (8:3-4)
 - c. Give as Jesus gave. (8:5-9)
 - d. Give willingly. (8:10-12)
 - e. Give by faith. (8:13-24)
 - f. Give bountifully. (9:6, cp. Luke 6:38)
 - g. Give cheerfully. (9:7)
- C. Paul's vindication of his apostleship. (10:1-13:14)
 - 1. Although the Corinthian church generally had received Paul's earlier letter in the right spirit, there were those among them who still rebelliously denied Paul's apostolic authority.
 - a. He refutes the accusations which have been made against him. (10:1-11)
 - b. Paul's **“boasting”** was in the Lord, and not for his own edification. (10:8)
 - 2. Paul's defense in chapter 11 is very personal; he had paid the price.
 - a. He paid his own way. (11:1-15, esp. verse 9)
 - b. He suffered many things. (11:23-28)
 - 3. The heart of Paul's defense is God's comfort. (12:9)
 - a. **“My,”** meaning God's.
 - b. **“Grace,”** unearned or undeserved favor.
 - c. **“Is,”** present tense.
 - d. **“Sufficient,”** more than enough.

Conclusion: Paul concludes this letter where he began – with the comfort of God. (13:11)

JOURNEY THROUGH GALATIANS

Introduction: The epistle to “**the churches of Galatia**” is more of a polemic pamphlet, refuting an error, rather than an ordinary letter. It is Paul’s aggressive attack against the perversion of the Gospel. Yet it is a letter, atmosphered in the warm emotion and personal concern of the writer for those to whom he wrote. At stake is the preservation of the purity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is an altogether remarkable blend of Divine inspiration with human skill and fervor.

I. Background.

- A. Ancient Gaul was peopled by warlike tribes which migrated across Europe into Asia Minor several centuries before the Christian era.
 1. They founded a nation called “**Galatia**” which means “*the country of the Gauls.*”
 2. About a quarter of a century before Christ was born, the Romans made the region a part of one of their larger provinces, and called the entire area “**Galatia.**”
 3. Paul wrote this powerful letter to the churches, plural, in the Roman province of Galatia, including the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
- B. The message of the Kingdom was presented by Peter and the rest of the Twelve in the first chapters of Acts, offering Christ to the Jews.
 1. Their answer was the stoning of Stephen. (Acts 7)
 2. The message was then given to the Samaritans (Acts 8), and to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11).
 3. Between these two great events, Paul was saved. (Acts 9)
 4. God especially revealed to Paul that He was doing a new thing and that the prophetic message of the Kingdom had been replaced (temporarily) by the mystery of the Church.
 5. However, the masses of believers (some of whom continued to be faithful to their Jewish religion) did not realize that this wonderful new program of Grace, for both Jew and Gentile, had come onto the scene.
- C. The issue was finally debated at Jerusalem. (Acts 15:1-5)
 1. There were Jews who would not receive the simple message of Grace and who tried to mix it with the Law, blending improperly the Kingdom message and the Church message.
 2. We call these people “*Judaizers,*” since their aim was to entice Gentile believers into the Jewish system.
 - a. They taught that a believer was sanctified and enabled to live a holy life in the same manner.
 - b. They wanted the believers to follow the Jewish laws and customs of religious holidays, circumcision, etc.
 3. Galatians is God’s strongest word against legalism today.
 - a. The flesh loves to do religious things – celebrate holy days, practice rituals, mix law and grace, and present a garbled, confused way of salvation that is actually a way of bondage. (Galatians 4:9-11, 5:1)
 - b. Keeping the Sabbath, dietary laws, an earthly priesthood, holy days, obeying rules – all of these are swept away in Galatians and replaced by the glorious liberty that the believer has through faith in Christ.
- D. The conclusion of the debate (led by the Spirit of God) was:
 1. God’s program for today is to take out a Gentile people for His name.
 2. Paul was God’s apostle to the Gentiles, with a special ministry to the Body of Christ.
 3. The Kingdom program would be resumed after the Body is completed.
 4. The only Gospel that God approves of, and blesses, is the Gospel of the grace of God – justification by faith in Christ Jesus alone.

II. The Central Message: Grace Alone.

- A. We are justified with God by His grace alone. (Romans 5:1-2)
- B. In the Cross, Jesus has purchased our pardon, doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.
- C. The practical side of the Gospel of Grace is not the license to keep sinning (Romans 6:1-2), but the “**liberty to stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has bade us free**” (Galatians 5:1).
- D. To receive salvation is to begin the process of working the grace of God out in our lives. (Cp. Colossians 2:6)

III. Structure Of The Book.

A. The Authenticity of the Gospel – Personal. (Chapters 1-2)

1. Paul's announcement of His gospel. (1:1-5)
 - a. The Judaizers who had **"bewitched"** the Galatians (3:1) were telling them that Paul's apostleship and message were not trustworthy because he lacked official endorsement from Jerusalem.
 - (1) Paul begins his letter by affirming that his message and ministry came directly from Jesus Christ. (1:1)
 - (2) Paul's Gospel was centered in Christ – His death, burial and resurrection – and not in Moses or the Law. (1:4)
 - b. Paul was astonished that they were so quick to receive another message after having experienced the blessings of salvation. (1:6)
 - (1) They were in the process of turning from simple Grace to a mixture of Law and Grace.
 - (2) The apostle speaks forcefully in condemning any other gospel, regardless of who the preacher might be, even if he were an angel. (1:8)
2. Paul defends his ministry. (1:11-24)
 - a. He received the Gospel personally from Christ. (1:11-14)
 - (1) Paul saw the risen Christ (Acts 9) and received his commission and message directly from Him.
 - (2) The only way to explain the wonderful transformation from Saul to Paul is to accept the fact that Paul met Jesus Christ.
 - b. He received the Gospel apart from the other Apostles. (1:15-17)
 - (1) God never meant for Paul to be part of the Twelve.
 - (2) Their ministry was primarily to the Jews and was related to the Kingdom; Paul's preaching was to be to the Gentiles and was related to the mystery of the Church.
 - c. His ministry was further attested to by the churches he ministered in. (1:18-24)
3. His gospel was ultimately defended by the Apostles. (2:1-10)
4. Paul's message was further approved before Peter. (2:11-21)
 - a. After the Jerusalem conference, Peter had visited a Gentile church at Antioch.
 - (1) When he first went to Antioch, Peter mingled with some Gentiles and ate with them.
 - (2) Nothing wrong thus far.
 - (3) The problem arose when some Jewish visitors arrived from Jerusalem and he withdrew himself by putting himself once again under the old Jewish barriers.
 - b. Paul showed Peter the folly of going back to the Law. (2:17-18)
 - (1) To go back to the Law is to confess that you are still a sinner.
 - (2) If the Law is God's way of salvation, then Christ died in vain.

B. The Superiority of the Gospel (over the Law) – Doctrinal. (Chapters 3-4)

1. A personal argument. (3:1-5, esp. verse 3)
2. A scriptural argument. (3:6-14, esp. verse 11)
3. A logical argument. (3:15-29, esp. verse 24)
4. A dispensational argument. (4:1-11, esp. verses 3-5)
5. A sentimental argument. (4:12-18)
6. An allegorical argument. (4:19- 31)

C. The True Liberty of the Gospel – Practical. (Chapters 5-6)

1. Paul's first admonition is for believers to stand fast in their Christian liberty. (5:1)
 - a. If we step back into legalism, we risk entanglement and bondage.
 - b. Paul further reminds his readers that liberty is not the license to sin, but the freedom to serve one another. (5:13)
 - c. The Christian who argues, *"I have liberty to sin!"* understands nothing of the cross or of God's grace.
2. Paul's second admonition is to **"Walk in the Spirit."** (5:16)
 - a. Those who live according to the Law depend on the energy of the flesh; those who live by grace depend on the power of the Spirit.
 - b. **"The flesh"** refers to the fallen nature still within the believer. (5:19-21)
 - c. To **"walk in the Spirit"** means to have our daily lives under His control, and under the direction of the Word of God. (5:22-23)
3. The Grace of God leads to the Law of Love for others. (6:2)

Conclusion: The rule we are to walk by is that of Grace and the new creation in Christ by faith.

JOURNEY THROUGH EPHESIANS

Introduction: Although not nearly the longest of Paul's epistles, Ephesians is generally conceded to be his most profoundest. There is a grandeur of conception about it, a majesty and dignity, and a richness and fullness which are peculiar to it.

I. Background.

A. The city.

1. Ephesus was one of the great cities of Asia Minor.
 - a. At the time, it was the capital of Roman government in western Asia Minor.
 - b. Its center of worship was found in the Temple of Artemis (or Diana).
 - c. It possessed a wealthy commercial port, located on an ample harbor that invited trade.
2. The Temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and the worship of this goddess was jealously guarded.

B. The church,

1. Paul paid a brief visit to Ephesus on his second missionary journey, leaving his associates Priscilla and Aquila there. (Acts 18:18-28)
2. He returned to Ephesus on his third journey and remained there for three years. (Acts 20:31)
3. His ministry had a tremendous effect on the city:
 - a. Those who practiced witchcraft turned to Christ and burned their magical books. (Acts 19:19)
 - b. Many people were won to the worship of the true God.
 - c. The profits of the silversmiths were greatly undermined. (Acts 19:24-27)
 - d. Paul's clear teaching and preaching of the Word of God so aroused the enemy that a riot resulted, and Paul was forced to leave the city. (Acts 19:28-40, esp. verse 40)

C. The Letter.

1. Paul was a Roman prisoner when he wrote this letter. (Ephesians 3:1, 4:1)
 - a. While in Jerusalem, Paul went to the Temple and was arrested on false charges. (Acts 21:27-28)
 - b. When Paul appealed for a trial before the emperor, he was then sent to Rome. (Acts 27-28)
 - c. While a prisoner in his own house, Paul was free to receive visitors.
 - d. It was while under house arrest that he wrote Ephesians.
2. This letter deals with Church truth in general, not the kind of local problems you would find in the two letters to the Corinthians or the first letter to the Thessalonians.
 - a. It teaches us what the Church is in the mind of God.
 - b. It teaches us how it should be viewed in practice before the eyes of men.
3. Paul's theme is Christ and the Church, the eternal plan of God to **"gather together in one all things in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:10).
 - a. The letter begins in eternity past and carries us into eternity future.
 - b. We see the believer seated in the heavenlies, but also walking with Christ on the earth and fighting against Satan.
4. Ephesians balances Doctrine with Duty.
 - a. Paul first reminds us of what God has done for us (Chapters 1-3), and then he tells us what we must do for Him in response to His mercies (Chapters 4-6).
 - b. The believer who does not know his wealth in Christ will never be able to walk in Christ.
 - c. Too many Christians live in their study of doctrines, chapters 1-3, but fail to move on in their practice of duties, chapters 4-6.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. Doctrinal – The Wealth of the Christian. (Chapters 1-3)

1. Our possessions in Christ. (1:1-14)
 - a. The blessings from the Father. (1:1-6)
 - (1) He has **"chosen us."** (1:3-4)
 - (2) He has **"adopted"** us. (1:5)
 - (3) He has **"accepted"** us. (1:6)

- b. The blessings from the Son. (1:7-12)
 - (1) He has *“redeemed”* us. (1:7a)
 - (2) He has *“forgiven”* us. (1:7b)
 - (3) He has revealed God’s will in us. (1:8-10)
 - (4) He has made us **“an inheritance.”** (1:11-12)
 - c. The blessings from the Spirit. (1:13-14)
 - (1) He has **“sealed”** us. (1:13)
 - (2) He has assured us. (1:14)
 - 2. Our enlightenment in Christ – **“That ye may know . . .”** (1:15-23)
 - a. Spiritual understanding. (1:17-18a)
 - b. The **“hope of His calling.”** (1:18b)
 - (1) Because God chose us in Christ **“before the foundation of the world”** (1:4), we have a **“blessed hope”** (Titus 2:13) for all eternity that depends not on our goodness, but on His grace.
 - (2) The Christian who does not know his **“high calling”** (Philippians 3:14), his **“holy calling”** (II Timothy 1:9), and his **“heavenly calling”** (Hebrews 3:1), will never be able to **“walk worthy”** of his calling (Ephesians 4:1).
 - c. The riches of His inheritance. (1:18c)
 - d. His power. (1:19-23)
 - (1) The very power that raised Jesus from the dead is available for our daily lives.
 - (2) God’s people do not fight for victory, but from victory!
 - 3. Our position in Christ. (2:1-22)
 - a. Raised and seated on the throne. (2:1-10)
 - (1) What we were – **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** (2:1-3)
 - (2) What God did – **“quickened us together with Christ.”** (2:4-9)
 - (3) What we are now – **“His workmanship.”** (2:10)
 - b. Reconciled and built up – **“no more strangers . . . but fellowcitizens.”** (2:11-22)
 - 4. Our enablement in Christ. (3:1-21)
- B. Practical – The Walk of the Christian. (Chapters 4-6)
 - 1. Walk in unity. (4:1-16)
 - a. Paul describes our *“high calling”* in chapters 1-3.
 - b. Now we are to **“walk worthy”** of that calling in chapters 4-6. (4:1)
 - 2. Walk in purity. (4:17-32)
 - a. **“Put off”** – the former lifestyle. (4:22-23)
 - b. **“Put on”** – the new lifestyle. (4:24)
 - c. *“Put away”* – all falsehood. (4:25)
 - d. **“Walk in love”** – with Christ as our example. (5:1-6)
 - e. *“Walk in light”* – as **“children of light.”** (5:7-14)
 - f. *“Walk carefully”* – **“redeeming the time.”** (5:15-17)
 - 3. Walk in harmony – **“filled with the Spirit.”** (5:18-6:9)
 - a. Believer and Holy Spirit. (5:18-20)
 - b. Husbands and wives. (5:21-33)
 - c. Parents and children. (6:1-4)
 - d. Masters and servants. (6:5-9)
 - 4. Walk in victory. (6:10-24)
 - a. The enemy we fight. (6:10-12)
 - b. The equipment we wear. (6:13-17)
 - (1) Truth. (6:14a)
 - (2) Righteousness. (6:14b)
 - (3) Peace. (6:15)
 - (4) Faith. (6:16)
 - (5) Salvation. (6:17a)
 - (6) The Word of God. (6:17b)
 - c. The energy we use. (6:18-24)
 - (1) Prayer. (6:18a)
 - (2) The Spirit of God. (6:18b)

Conclusion: Not only are we to appropriate our wealth in Christ, but we are to walk worthy of His name and stand victorious in warfare against Satan.

JOURNEY THROUGH PHILIPPIANS

Introduction: As we open the pages of the letter to the Philippians, we find Paul literally in chains, arrested and held in a Roman prison for preaching Christ. Though he is chained to a Roman soldier, he is not “*chained*” to his circumstances. His situation could have easily lent itself to discouragement, depression, or self-pity. However, Paul writes with a joyful spirit to his dear Philippian friends.

I. Background.

A. The city.

1. Philippi was a Roman colony, governed by Roman laws and subject to Roman rule.
2. It was a little Rome in the midst of a Greek culture, just as the Church is a “*colony of heaven*” here on earth. (Philippians 3:20)
3. The original city, named after King Philip who had conquered it from the Thracians, was noted for its gold as well as its farming.

B. The church.

1. The first church founded in Europe was planted by Paul in Philippi (Acts 16) on his second missionary journey.
2. After Paul moved on to Thessalonica, the Philippian believers sent him support. (Philippians 4:15, II Corinthians 11:9)
3. Five years later, while on his third journey, Paul visited Philippi on his way to Corinth, and then on his return trip. (Acts 20:1-6)
4. There was a deep love between Paul and the people at Philippi.

C. The letter.

1. The church had heard of Paul's house arrest in Rome and wanted to send him aid.
 - a. They sent one of their men, Epaphroditus, to carry their offering to the needy apostle.
 - b. The journey from Philippi to Rome usually took about a month.
 - c. Epaphroditus remained with Paul in Rome and ministered to him and with him, so much so that he became ill. (Philippians 2:25-30)
 - d. The church then became concerned about him as well as Paul.
 - e. When Epaphroditus regained his strength, Paul sent him back home with the letter that we know as “*The Epistle to the Philippians*.”
2. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote this letter.
 - a. To explain his circumstances to friends concerned about himself.
 - b. To explain Epaphroditus' situation and defend him to his critics.
 - c. To thank the Philippians again for their generous support.
 - d. To encourage them in the Christian life.

D. The emphasis.

1. One of the key themes in Philippians is “*Joy*,” being mentioned in one way or another nineteen times in these four brief chapters.
 - a. Another emphasis is the mind.
 - b. As we read Philippians, note how many times Paul talks about remembering and thinking.
2. We can summarize the theme of the book as “*the Christ-like mind that brings Christian joy*.”
 - a. In each chapter, Paul describes the kind of mind Christians must have if they are to enjoy Christ's peace and joy.
 - b. Certainly our thoughts have a great influence on our lives, and wrong thinking leads to wrong living. (Cp. Proverbs 23:7a)
3. Paul further teaches us about Christ in this epistle.
 - a. Christ is our life. (Chapter 1)
 - b. Christ is our example. (Chapter 2)
 - c. Christ is our goal. (Chapter 3)
 - d. Christ is our strength. (Chapter 4)

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. The single mind. (Chapter 1)

1. The fellowship of the Gospel. (1:1-11)
 - a. “*I have you in my mind*.” (1:1-6, esp. verse 3)

- b. *"I have you in my heart."* (1:7-8)
 - c. *"I have you in my prayers."* (1:9-11)
 - 2. The furtherance of the Gospel. (1:12-26)
 - a. He puts Christ first. (1:12-21, esp. verse 12)
 - b. He puts others second. (1:22-24, esp. verse 24)
 - c. He puts himself last. (1:25-26, esp. verse 25)
 - 3. The faith of the Gospel. (1:27-30)
 - a. *"You are not standing alone."* (1:27)
 - b. *"You are on the winning side."* (1:28)
 - c. *"It is a privilege to suffer for Christ."* (1:29-30)
- B. The submissive mind. (Chapter 2)
 - 1. Example of Christ. (2:1-11, esp. verse 5)
 - 2. Example of Paul. (2:12-18, esp. verses 16-17)
 - 3. Example of Timothy. (2:19-24, esp. verses 20-21)
 - 4. Example of Epaphroditus. (2:25-30)
 - a. He was a balanced Christian. (2:25)
 - (1) **"A brother"** – which means he knew the fellowship of the Gospel.
 - (2) **"Companion in labor"** – which tied him to the furtherance of the Gospel.
 - (3) A **"fellovsoldier"** – which means he knew how to battle for the faith of the Gospel.
 - b. He was a burdened Christian. (2:26-27)
 - c. He was a blessed Christian. (2:28-30)
- C. The spiritual mind. (Chapter 3)
 - 1. The Christian's past: salvation. (3:1-11, esp. verse 7)
 - a. Paul was religious before he was saved, but his religion could not save him.
 - b. He had to lose his religion in order to find eternal life.
 - 2. The Christian's present: sanctification. (3:12-16, esp. verse 12)
 - a. In the previous section, Paul is a *"spiritual accountant"* figuring his gains and losses.
 - b. In this section, he is a runner, pressing toward the prize. (3:13-14)
 - 3. The Christian's future: glorification. (3:17-21, esp. verses 20-21)
 - a. Paul weeps over the professed Christians whose lives were bearing out worldly-mindedness.
 - b. He describes them:
 - (1) They are **"the enemies of the cross of Christ."** (3:18)
 - (2) They are given over to **"earthly things,"** or things of the flesh. (3:19)
 - (3) Their **"end is destruction."** (3:19)
 - c. The true Christian lives for the glory of heaven and not for the praise of this earth. (3:20)
- D. The secure mind. (Chapter 4)
 - 1. God's presence. (4:1-5)
 - a. That **"the Lord is at hand"** (4:5) does not mean His coming is soon, but that He is nigh unto us.
 - b. Therefore . . .
 - (1) **"Stand fast in the Lord."** (4:1)
 - (2) **"Be of the same mind in the Lord."** (4:2)
 - (3) **"Rejoice in the Lord."** (4:4)
 - c. This is art of *"practicing the presence of Christ."*
 - 2. God's peace – the result of: (4:6-9)
 - a. Right praying. (4:6-7)
 - b. Right thinking. (4:8)
 - c. Right living. (4:9)
 - 3. God's power. (4:10-13)
 - a. Paul was never a victim of circumstances.
 - b. He had learned by experience the secret of peace. (4:13)
 - 4. God's provision. (4:14-19)
 - a. Distinctive giving. (4:14-15)
 - b. Fruitful giving. (4:16-19)
 - 5. God's praise. (4:20-23)

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Conclusion: Paul had peace in his heart concerning his personal needs, for God had promised to supply his every need. When the child of God is in the will of God, all of the universe works for him.

JOURNEY THROUGH COLOSSIANS

Introduction: The Epistle to the Colossians is a profound and priceless little document. The first two of its four chapters are doctrinal; the other two are practical. In its doctrinal half Paul combats mysticism and asceticism (avoiding joy of life and practicing self-denial) with its false teachings and angel-worship. Its dominant theme is the fullness and pre-eminence of Christ and the full completeness of Christian believers in Him.

I. Background.

A. The city.

1. Colosse was one of three cities (Hierapolis and Laodicea being the other two) located about 125 miles southeast of Ephesus.
2. This was a rich area both in mineral wealth and merchandising, with a large population.

B. The church.

1. Paul had never visited Colosse. (2:1)
2. During his three years of ministry at Ephesus, “**all Asia**” heard the Gospel. (Acts 19:10, 26)
3. One of Paul’s converts in Ephesus was a man named Epaphras, whose home was in Colosse.
4. Epaphras had taken the message of the Gospel back home, and through his ministry the church at Colosse was founded. (1:4-7, 4:12-13)

C. The crisis.

1. Paul was now a prisoner in Rome.
 - a. Epaphras had come to visit him and to report that a new teaching was invading the church and causing trouble.
 - b. This heresy today is generally called “*gnosticism*,” which means “*to know*.”
2. The Gnostics were “*in the know*,” professing to have a superior knowledge of spiritual things.
 - a. Their doctrine was a strange blend of some Christian truth, Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and Eastern mysticism.
 - b. The Gnostics proposed a complex series of “*emanations*” (including angels) between man and God and thus denied the preeminence of Christ.
3. Their system supposedly gave the believer a special “*full knowledge*” not possessed by others.
 - a. The Gnostics loved to use the word “*fullness*,” and so you find Paul using it many times.
 - b. Their doctrine called for legalistic practices (2:16), and strict discipline of the flesh. (2:18-23)
 - c. The system had a resemblance of spirituality but was of no real spiritual value. (2:21-23)
4. The correspondence.
 - a. It is likely that Paul sent Onesimus and Epaphras, along with Tychicus, back to Colosse with the letters to the Colossian Christians, to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21-22), and to his friend Philemon.
 - b. Colossians emphasizes the preeminence of Christ.
 - (1) Paul’s theme is that “**Christ is all, and in all**” (3:11) and that we “**are complete in Him**” (2:10).
 - (2) Since believers are made full in Christ, Christ is all we need.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. Doctrine – Christ’s preeminence declared. (1:1-29)

1. In the Gospel message. (1:1-12, esp. verses 3-4)
2. In the cross. (1:13-14)
 - a. The cross causes Jesus Christ to stand out head and shoulders above all others.
 - b. Religious rules will never produce forgiveness?
3. In creation. (1:15-17)
4. In the Church. (1:18-23, esp. verse 18)
 - a. The Church is His body, and He is the Head.
 - b. The false teachers might spin webs of doctrine about angels and “*emanations*,” but Christ still has preeminence as the Head of the Church.

5. In Paul's ministry. (1:24-29)
- B. Danger – Christ's preeminence defended. (2:1-23)
 1. Beware of empty philosophies. (2:1-10)
 - a. Walk in Christ. (2:6)
 - b. Grow up in Christ. (2:7)
 - c. Follow Christ alone. (2:8)
 2. Beware of religious legalism. (2:11-17, esp. verse 16)
 - a. The flesh loves to be religious, so long as that religion does not have a cross to crucify the flesh.
 - b. All that we need has been accomplished by Christ on the cross.
 3. Beware of man-made discipline and self-discipline. (2:18-23)
 - a. Our union with Christ is a living union.
 - b. This life cannot be controlled by man's laws, but only by the principles that God has put into the body.
- C. Duty – Christ's preeminence displayed in the believer. (3:1-4:18)
 1. In relation to the Son of God. (3:1-4)
 - a. Let your earthly practice be worthy of your heavenly position.
 - b. Live up to what Christ has done for you.
 2. In relation to personal purity. (3:5-12)
 - a. Paul compares the new life to a change of clothes.
 - b. **"Put off . . . put on."**
 3. In relation to Christian fellowship. (3:13-15)
 - a. Christian fellowship in the local church cannot be legislated by a constitution; true fellowship must come from within, from the hearts of the believers.
 - b. If a believer is out of fellowship with another, it is because one or both of them have gotten out of fellowship with God.
 4. In relation to the Word of God. (3:16)
 - a. To be filled with the Word of God produces the same blessings as being filled with the Spirit. (Compare 3:16-18 with Ephesians 5:18-22)
 - b. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are those that teach and admonish.
 5. In relation to the work of God. (3:17)
 - a. **"Do all"** things in the name of Christ.
 - b. We are to represent Him with His approval.
 6. In relation to the home. (3:18-21)
 - a. The first place our Christian faith should go to work at is in the home.
 - b. What blessings would come to our homes if each member would say, *"I will live each day to please Christ and make Him preeminent in all things."*
 7. In relation to daily work. (3:22-4:1)
 - a. Christian employees are actually ministers of Christ as they operate their machines, use their tools, drive their trucks, or work at whatever vocation they might have.
 - b. Work must come from the heart.
 - c. The half-hearted, unfaithful worker will be judged when Christ returns.
 8. In relation to prayer. (4:2-4)
 - a. Christ teaches us that to **"watch . . . and pray"** is the way to victory over temptation. (Mark 14:38)
 - b. Prayer is never a substitute for our alertness.
 9. In relation to the unsaved. (4:5-6)
 - a. It is important that Christians live wisely when among the lost, for the unsaved look at our lives to find things to criticize and then excusing themselves for their own sins.
 - b. The salt of holiness must always flavor our speech.
 10. In relation to Christian service. (4:7-18)
 - a. While we honor Paul as the great apostle, we must never forget the many dedicated Christians who assisted Paul in his ministry.
 - b. No pastor, evangelist, or missionary can do the Lord's work alone.

Conclusion: May we increasingly become heavenly-minded, not in any mystical sense, but in practical Christ-like godliness.

JOURNEY THROUGH I THESSALONIANS

Introduction: There is a pleasing, straightforward orderliness about I Thessalonians. Our English version breaks it into five short chapters, each of which ends with a reference to the Lord's return. This tells us at once that everything here is being viewed in the light of the coming climax.

I. Background.

- A. The first letter to the Thessalonian church was written from Corinth about 53 A.D.
 - 1. This historical background of the church at Thessalonica is given in Acts 17:1-15.
 - 2. Paul wasted no time in establishing a church there.
 - a. He preached in the synagogue of the Jews. (17:1-2)
 - b. He preached from the Scriptures. (17:2)
 - c. He preached basic truths. (17:3)
 - d. Immediate results are given. (17:4-5)
 - e. Paul was forced to leave the city. (17:10)
- B. The central message of Paul's letter is found in the second half of 5:23, **"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."**
 - 1. Each chapter of this epistle ends with a reference to the Second Coming of Christ.
 - 2. Paul relates His coming to . . .
 - a. Salvation. (1:9-10)
 - b. Service. (2:19-20)
 - c. Stability. (3:13)
 - d. Sorrow. (4:18)
 - e. Sanctification. (5:23)

II. Looking Back. (Chapters 1-3)

- A. How the church was born. (1:1-10)
 - 1. An elect group. (1:1-5)
 - a. The word *"church"* means *"a called-out assembly."*
 - (1) The church is not a social club, but a spiritual organism; an organization composed of people whom God has **"called out of darkness into His marvelous light"** (I Peter 2:9).
 - (2) This calling is purely of grace. (Ephesians 1:3-14)
 - (a) **"Chosen us [that are] in him . . . that we should be . . ."**
 - (b) Not *"chosen us to be in him . . ."*
 - b. Paul knew these people were saved because of three evidences in their lives. (1:3)
 - (1) **"Work of faith."**
 - (a) When people honestly trust Christ, that faith will be shown by good works.
 - (b) Faith that does not lead to good works is not saving faith. (James 2:14-26)
 - (2) **"Labor of love."**
 - (a) Unsaved people live for themselves. (Ephesians 2:1-2)
 - (b) The true believer is willing to toil because of his love for Christ and others. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - (3) **"Patience of hope."**
 - (a) The lost are without hope.
 - (b) Believers can endure in life's trials because they know Christ is coming again. (Titus 2:13)
 - 2. An exemplary group. (1:6-7)
 - a. It is wonderful when *"hearers"* become *"followers."*
 - b. These believers heard the Word of God, received it, suffered for it, and exemplified it before others.
 - 3. An enthusiastic group. (1:8)
 - a. The verb **"sounded out"** has the idea of blowing a trumpet.
 - b. While these saints were waiting for the trumpet to blow to call them home (4:16), they were *"trumpeting out the Gospel"* loud and clear to their lost friends.

4. An expectant group. (1:9-10)
 - a. Having turned from their idols, their priorities became serving God with anticipation.
 - b. While the lost are blindly worshipping and serving their idols, the saved are serving the living God and rejoicing in the living hope that Christ will come again.
 - B. How the church was nurtured.
 1. As a faithful steward. (2:1-6, esp. verse 4)
 - a. We often speak of stewardship of material things, but we need to remember that every believer is a steward of the Gospel and the Word of God.
 - b. Paul's message was true, his motive was pure, and his method was holy. (2:3)
 2. As a gentle mother. (2:7-8)
 3. As a concerned father. (2:9-13, esp. verse 11)
 4. As a loving brother. (2:14-20, esp. verse 17)
 - C. How the church was established. (3:1-13)
 1. Through the Word of God. (3:1-5, esp. verse 2)
 2. Through prayer. (3:6-13, esp. verse 10)
- III. Looking Forward – Practical. (Chapters 4-5)
- A. Walk in holiness. (4:1-8, esp. verse 7)
 1. Immorality is basically selfishness and robbery.
 2. Paul exhorts them to live to please God and not themselves.
 - B. Walk in love. (4:9-10)
 - C. Walk in honesty. (4:11-12)
 - D. Walk in hope. (4:13-18)
 1. The Rapture (meeting Christ in the air) is in sight here; not the Revelation (the return of Christ to establish His Kingdom). (See II Thessalonians 1:7-12)
 2. Christians are expected to mourn when loved ones die, but they need not grieve as do the people of the world who have no hope.
 - a. To **"sleep in Jesus"** means the death of the Christian.
 - b. At death, the believer's soul goes on to be with Christ. (Philippians 1:20-24, II Corinthians 5:6-8)
 3. When Christ comes back, the sleeping saints will be raised first, and then the living will be caught up together to meet Christ.
 - E. Walk in light of the times. (5:1-10)
 - F. In light of Christ's coming this book closes with 22 things that Christians ought to do. (5:11-27)
 1. Comfort (encourage) yourselves. (5:11)
 2. Edify (build up) one another. (5:11)
 3. Know them who teach (labor in) the Word. (5:12)
 4. Honor the preacher or teacher. (5:13)
 5. Be at peace. (5:13)
 6. Warn the unruly. (5:14)
 7. Comfort the faint-hearted. (5:14)
 8. Support the weak. (5:14)
 9. Be patient toward all men (don't lose your temper). (5:14)
 10. Don't fight against each other. (5:15)
 11. Follow that which is good. (5:15)
 12. Rejoice evermore. (5:16)
 13. Pray continually. (5:17)
 14. Give thanks in everything. (5:18)
 15. Quench not the Spirit. (5:19)
 16. Despise not the Word of God. (5:20)
 17. Prove all things (don't be taken in by flattery). (5:21)
 18. Hold fast to that which is good. (5:21)
 19. Abstain from all appearances of evil. (5:22)
 20. Pray for God's servants. (5:25)
 21. Greet one another appropriately. (5:26)
 22. Read this epistle. (5:27)

Conclusion: God is faithful to build us up in holiness if we but yield to Him. Prayer, brotherly love, and attention to the Word of God will sanctify us and keep us ready for Christ's return.

JOURNEY THROUGH II THESSALONIANS

Introduction: It is generally agreed that this second letter to the Thessalonians was written within a few months of the first, while Paul was still at Corinth. Its main purpose is made quite clear by its contents.

I. Background.

- A. A few months after Paul had written his first letter to the Thessalonians, he received word that there were some who misunderstood his first letter.
 1. The church was going through persecution (1:4-7), and some of the believers thought they were already in the “**Day of the Lord**” (Joel 1:15), that time of tribulation in which the whole world will be judged.
 2. This was partially brought about by some “*forged*” letter supposedly coming from the hand of Paul (2:1-2), and the people had “*been shaken in mind.*”
 3. Paul writes to explain God’s program for the age and to encourage these suffering Christians to remain true to the Lord.
 4. The central theme may be found in 2:15, “**Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught.**”
- B. The two phases of the return of Christ.

<i>RAPTURE</i>	<i>REVELATION</i>
Pertains to saved Entails the removal of all believers Saints caught up into the air The saints will meet Christ in the air The saints go to heaven Results in inception of Tribulation Imminent A mystery Bears a message of hope Relates to the Church Believers to be judged The world is unjudged and continues in sin Israel’s covenants unfulfilled Satan is unbound Christ comes for His Bride	Pertains to saved and lost Entails the manifestation of the Son of God Christ returns to the earth Christ plants His feet on the Mount of Olives The saints stay on earth Results in inception of Millennial Kingdom Preceded by a multitude of signs Predicted in both Old and New Testaments Bears a message of judgment Relates to Israel and the world Israel and nations to be judged The world is judged and righteousness established Israel’s covenants fulfilled Satan is bound Christ comes with His Bride

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Encouragement in Suffering. (1:1-12)
 1. Suffering helps us to grow. (1:3-5)
 - a. History proves that “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*”
 - b. The Thessalonians had a reputation for a growing faith, abounding hope, and radiant love (I Thessalonians 1:3), and their difficult experiences were causing their faith, hope and love to grow.
 - (1) Furthermore, their testimony was growing as well, for all the churches heard about them and their stand for the Lord. (I Thessalonians 1:6-8)
 - (2) Their steadfast endurance was an encouragement to other believers.
 - c. When suffering comes, it will either make us or break us.
 - (1) If we accept the suffering, yield to God’s will, and by faith continue to stand true, then the suffering will cause us to grow.
 - (2) If we resist the suffering, complain to God, and give up in unbelief, then the suffering will break us and weaken our testimony. (I Peter 4:12-19)
 2. Suffering prepares us for glory. (1:6-10)
 - a. When Paul said that they should be counted “**worthy of the kingdom of God**” (1:5), he is not suggesting that they could earn a place in heaven by their own merit.

- (1) **“Worthy”** describes fitness, not merit.
- (2) God fits us through suffering for the glory that lies ahead.
- (3) Our suffering today is but preparation for the glory yet to be revealed.
(Romans 8:18, II Corinthians 4:16-18)
- b. It may seem that God is not judging the sins of the world, but this is not true.
 - (1) If we walk in unbelief, we will get discouraged, thinking that God is not vindicating His own, but God is preparing judgment for the wicked.
 - (2) Knowing this, we can rest with confidence.
- c. Unbelievers will suffer eternal hell for two reasons. (1:8)
 - (1) Willful ignorance – They would not come to know God. (Romans 1:18-22)
 - (2) Willful disobedience – They will not obey God. (Acts 17:30)
3. Suffering glorifies Christ today. (1:11-12)
 - a. If the sinful world seems to be winning the battle today, we can rest in faith for the war has already been won.
 - b. Our responsibility is to live worthy of this high calling (1:11) and to allow God to work out His perfect will in faith and power.
- B. Enlightenment about the Day of the Lord. (2:1-17)
 1. The apostasy must take place. (2:1-3)
 - a. The phrase **“a falling away,”** means *“apostasy.”*
 - b. Here it refers to a falling away from the truth of the Word of God.
 - c. We live in a day of *“Christian unbelief,”* with people saying they are Christians and yet denying the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and so on.
 - d. This apostasy is foretold of in I Timothy 4:1 and II Timothy 3:1-7.
 - e. Much of the professing Church, *“Christendom”* as a whole, has departed from the faith.
 2. The Temple must be rebuilt. (2:4-5)
 - a. Paul promises the rise of a world dictator who will be energized by the devil to unite the nations of Europe into a great federation. (Daniel 7)
 - b. This Antichrist will cooperate with the apostate world church in his rise to power, and then destroy this religious system when he doesn’t need it anymore.
 - c. At the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will desecrate a rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by placing himself there to be worshipped.
 - d. This will be the climax of man’s great sin of self-deification, in open defiance of God.
 3. The Restraint must be removed. (2:6-12)
 - a. Satan’s **“mystery of iniquity”** is already working in the world, and we see its godless activities increasing rapidly.
 - b. The One who hinders Satan’s evil program is the Holy Spirit, Who will continue to hinder Satan’s activities until He is taken *“out of the midst”* when the Church is raptured.
 - c. This will give Satan free course to fill the cup of iniquity to the full.
 4. The Church must be completed. (2:13-17)
 - a. The purpose of the Tribulation is the punishment of the Gentiles and the purification of the Jewish nation.
 - b. But Antichrist cannot begin his rise to power until Christ has taken the Church from the earth.
 - c. Paul makes this wonderful application: Don’t be moved by world situations, political upheaval, or religious apostasy, for God is still on the throne.
 - d. As the end of the age draws near, it will be more and more difficult to live for Christ, but **“stand fast.”**
- C. Establishment in Christian Living. (3:1-18)
 1. It is not enough to know about Christ’s coming, or to believe it; we must practice it in daily living.
 2. Paul gives three practical admonitions in chapter 3:
 - a. Pray and be patient. (3:1-5)
 - b. Work if you want to eat. (3:6-13)
 - c. Hear the Word and do it. (3:14-18)

Conclusion: The life-style which prepares believers for the coming of Christ is all-important. Paul is consistent with the teaching of Jesus Who said, **“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”** (Matthew 24:44).

JOURNEY THROUGH I TIMOTHY

Introduction: The First Epistle to Timothy is one of three short letters which are often called collectively the “*Pastoral Epistles*.” The other two are II Timothy and Titus. These letters contain instructions primarily for those who have the oversight of churches, but every child of God can find instruction and blessing from a careful study of them.

I. Background.

- A. This epistle is addressed to “**Timotheus**” (Timothy), who is first mentioned in Acts 16:1.
 - 1. He lived in Lystra, one of the cities which Paul visited twice on his first missionary journey.
 - 2. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, he decided to take Timothy with him as a companion and helper in his travels.
 - 3. From this time on, Timothy was intermittently with the apostle on his journeys.
- B. It seems likely that Paul was released from imprisonment some time after the close of the book of Acts, possibly in A.D. 63 or 64.
 - 1. During the next few years he likely traveled to various parts of the Roman Empire.
 - 2. This epistle was written about A.D. 65, between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonments.
 - a. Timothy had been left to serve in the church at Ephesus. (I Timothy 1:3)
 - b. This epistle was written to instruct him concerning problems which he had to face as a spiritual leader in the church.
 - c. He was still a comparatively young man (I Timothy 4:12) and seems by nature to have been rather timid (II Timothy 1:6-8).
- C. The central message of this epistle might be found in I Timothy 3:15, “ . . . **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.**”

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The Church and Its Message. (Chapter 1)
 - 1. Teach sound doctrine. (1:1-11)
 - a. Timothy was not at Ephesus just because Paul had put him there; it was God who had entrusted to him a ministry in that important city. (1:3-4)
 - (1) “**Godly edifying**,” in verse 4, might read “*a stewardship of God.*”
 - (2) God had given Timothy a special stewardship, and He expected him to be faithful.
 - (3) The false teachers at Ephesus were ministering their own program, not a stewardship that God had given them.
 - b. These false teachers were trying to make a name for themselves as teachers of the Law but did not know what they were talking about. (1:5-7)
 - (1) They had turned away from the truth of the Word and were listening to fables, endless genealogies, and raising more questions than they could answer.
 - (2) Paul contrasts the false teachers and their ministries with that of the true stewards of God's grace, manifested by their “**charity out of a pure heart**” (3:5).
 - (3) The object of God's steward is to see people love one another with a love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.
 - c. Paul explains to Timothy the significance of the Law: to show the lost their need for Christ. (1:8-11, Galatians 3:24)
 - 2. Preach the Gospel. (1:12-17)
 - a. Paul refers to himself as an example of one whom God enabled, by grace, to serve effectively.
 - b. Though a previous “**blasphemer, and a persecutor**,” by the “**grace of our Lord**,” Paul became a minister of the Gospel.
 - c. Timothy was disturbed because he thought he was too young and lacked the necessary qualifications for ministry.
 - d. Paul considered his salvation and call an example of what God could do for lost sinners.
 - (1) He was always careful to give God the glory for his life and ministry.
 - (2) Paul lists the three motivating forces in his life as “**grace**,” “**faith**” and “**love**.” (1:14)

3. Defend the Faith. (1:18-20)
 - a. The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battlefield.
 - b. Timothy had been enlisted by God to be **“a Christian soldier.”** (II Timothy 2:3-4)
 - c. It is not enough to have correct doctrine; the Christian soldier must also have correct living – a **“faith and a good conscience.”** (1:19)
- B. The Church and Its Members. (Chapters 2-3)
 1. Prayer in the local, New Testament church. (2:1-8)
 - a. By Paul listing prayer *“first of all,”* he shows it priority. (2:1)
 - (1) The local church does not pray because it is the expected to do so.
 - (2) The local church prays because it is vital to its very life and existence.
 - b. Prayer helps to maintain the peace of society. (2:2)
 - c. Prayer pleases God and glorifies Christ. (2:3)
 - d. Prayer ought to be made for the salvation of the lost. (2:4-7)
 - e. Three conditions for public prayer. (2:8)
 - (1) **“Without wrath,”** or loving one another.
 - (2) With **“holy hands,”** that is, with clean and obedient lives.
 - (3) **“Without . . . doubting,”** meaning, *“with faith.”*
 2. Women in the local, New Testament church. (2:9-15)
 - a. Christianity, like no other religious faith, has elevated the position of women and children.
 - b. Paul gives the characteristics of the ideal Christian woman in the church.
 - (1) Modesty – modest apparel glorifies Christ. (2:9)
 - (2) Purity – professing godliness. (2:10a)
 - (3) Industry – she practices good works. (2:10b)
 - (4) Humility. (2:11-15)
 3. The pastor of the local, New Testament church. (3:1-7)
 - a. His personal qualifications. (3:2-3)
 - b. His family qualifications. (3:4-5)
 - c. His church qualifications. (3:6-7)
 4. The deacon of the local, New Testament church. (3:8-13)
 - a. **“Likewise”** indicates that God has equally important standards for the deacon, for he is to assist the pastor in guiding the affairs of the local church.
 - b. Note that both pastors and deacons are to be proved before given the office.
 5. The importance of the local, New Testament church. (3:14-16)
- C. The Church and Its Minister. (Chapter 4)
 1. A good minister: preaching the Word. (4:1-6)
 - a. The danger of false doctrines. (4:1-3)
 - b. A good minister will feed on the Word that he might be able to feed others. (4:4-6)
 2. A godly minister: practicing the Word. (4:7-12)
 - a. Spiritual food and spiritual exercise are a happy combination.
 - b. The Christian, and especially the pastor, must practice the Word of God and be known for godliness. (4:12)
 3. A growing minister: progressing in the Word. (4:13-16)
 - a. Giving attention to the Word. (4:13)
 - b. Exercising spiritual gifts. (4:14)
 - c. Profitable dedication. (4:15)
 - d. Personal examination. (4:16)
- D. The Church and Its Ministry. (Chapters 5-6)
 1. To older saints. (5:1-2)
 2. To widows. (5:3-16)
 3. To church leaders. (5:17-25)
 4. To slaves. (6:1-2)
 5. To troublemakers. (6:3-5)
 6. To the rich. (6:6-19)
 7. To the educated. (6:20-21)

Conclusion: Timothy is to *“guard the deposit”* that God committed to him through Paul. God had given the Gospel message, the deposit of truth, to Paul (1:11), who had in turn committed it to Timothy (1:18-19). Timothy was to guard it (6:20) and pass it on to others (II Timothy 2:2). This is the task of the Church today.

JOURNEY THROUGH II TIMOTHY

Introduction: If the first epistle to Timothy is a “charge,” then this second letter develops that charge into a challenge. It is a challenge to fortitude and faithfulness in the face of present trials and of further testings which were yet to come.

I. Background.

- A. Paul wrote this second letter to Timothy from the Mamertine Prison in Rome.
- B. He speaks in this letter of a great apostasy that will almost blot out the “**faith**.” (Luke 18:8)
 - 1. This may be the result of many “*professors*” who are not “*possessors*” of the faith.
 - 2. The exponents of the “*social gospel*” who expect to transform the world by better programs and human know-how seldom turn to this Book because it makes all men stop and reflect.
- C. This is Paul’s last writing.
 - 1. He was facing death – martyrdom.
 - 2. He had so much to say in so little time.

II. The Central Message.

- A. This letter is intensely personal.
 - 1. Paul is alone in Rome, awaiting trial and certain death.
 - a. He sees apostasy and defeat all around him.
 - b. He longs to see his spiritual son, Timothy, and to encourage him to take his place in the ministry of the Gospel.
 - 2. The “*some*” of I Timothy has become “*all*” in II Timothy.
 - a. The theme of I Timothy:
 - (1) “**Some having swerved have turned aside.**” (1:6)
 - (2) “**Some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.**” (1:19)
 - (3) “**Some are already turned aside after Satan.**” (5:15)
 - (4) “**While some coveted after [money], they have erred from the faith.**” (6:10)
 - (5) “**Some professing have erred concerning the faith.**” (6:21)
 - b. The theme of II Timothy:
 - (1) “**All they which are in Asia be turned away from me.**” (1:15)
 - (2) “**All men forsook me.**” (4:16)
- B. The central message of II Timothy may be found in chapter 1, verse 12, “ . . . **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.**”
- C. Another very important verse is chapter 2, verse 15, “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

III. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Paul, the Preacher. (Chapter 1)
 - 1. A praying friend. (1:1-5)
 - a. Facing death, Paul was thinking about the “**promise of life which is in Christ Jesus**” (1:1).
 - b. He assures Timothy of his love and prayers, and of his good remembrance of him “**night and day.**”
 - c. He reminds Timothy that there is much to be thankful for, in spite of the problems he was facing.
 - 2. A wonderful gift. (1:6-7)
 - a. Paul reminds Timothy “**to neglect not the gift**” (I Timothy 4:14) that had been entrusted unto him, but to “*stir it up*,” as a man would fan into flame the embers of a dying fire.
 - b. When the Spirit is in control, we will experience peace and poise, and fear and cowardice will vanish.
 - 3. A holy calling. (1:8-11)
 - a. When Christians suffer for righteousness’ sake, we are joined to “**the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings.**” (Philippians 3:10)
 - (1) The same power that saves us also strengthens us for battle.

- (2) Paul emphasized that our calling is by grace; we do not deserve to be saved.
 - b. If God permits us to suffer, after giving us such a wonderful salvation, what right have we to complain or quit!
 - c. God has a purpose in mind, Paul advised, so let Him work it out.
- 4. A faithful Savior. (1:12-14)
 - a. What an encouragement to know that Christ is faithful and able to keep His own.
 - b. Paul had a sure confidence, not an “*I hope*,” or “*I think*. “
- 5. A godly example. (1:15-18)
 - a. Onesiphorus went to Rome, sought out Paul, and served him without fear or shame.
 - b. What an example for Pastor Timothy to follow and for all of us to observe.
 - c. Here is a deacon in the church showing zeal, love, and courage.
- B. Paul, the Example. (Chapter 2)
 - 1. How to endure suffering. (2:1-13)
 - a. It is part of your calling. (2:1-7)
 - (1) Christians must learn how to endure hardness for Christ. (2:3)
 - (2) The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battlefield.
 - (3) It takes discipline, dedication and direction for an athlete to be a winner, and it takes these same qualities to produce a winning Christian life.
 - b. It is a privilege from Christ. (2:8-13)
 - (1) Paul reminds Timothy that he too was suffering, but that their sufferings had a dual blessing. (2:10)
 - (a) They were suffering for and with Christ.
 - (b) They were suffering for the “**elect’s sakes**,” that is for the benefit of the Church.
 - (2) Verses 11-13 may have been an early Christian hymn or confession of faith.
 - (a) It emphasizes the believer’s oneness with Christ.
 - (b) It teaches us that our unbelief will not cancel out God’s faithfulness.
 - 2. How to deal with false teachers. (2:14-23)
 - a. Rightly divide the Word. (2:14-15)
 - b. Reject lies and fables. (2:16-18)
 - c. Look for godly living. (2:19-23)
 - 3. How to settle church problems. (2:24-26)
- C. Paul, the Prophet. (Chapter 3)
 - 1. An explanation of the future. (3:1-9)
 - a. “**The last days**” is a period of time that actually began with the life and ministry of Christ on earth. (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - b. However, the New Testament indicates that “**the last days**” refers particularly to the time just prior to the Second Coming of Christ.
 - c. Timothy was not to get involved with Christ-denying deceivers, even if it meant being branded as a “*crank*.”
 - 2. An example from the past. (3:10-13)
 - a. Paul had been a divine object lesson to young Timothy, as we ought to be examples to our youth and others.
 - b. As never before, we need Christians who will, like Paul, live for Christ completely.
 - 3. An exhortation for the present. (3:14-17)
 - a. Since these satanic seducers are going to continue, what should the Christian do?
 - b. Answer: Continue to be faithful to the Word of God.
- D. Paul, the Prisoner. (Chapter 4)
 - 1. Preach the Word! (4:1-4, esp. verse 2)
 - 2. Fulfill your ministry. (4:5-8, esp. verse 5)
 - 3. Do thy diligence. (4:9-18, esp. verse 9)
 - 4. Greet my friends in Christ. (4:19-22)

Conclusion: Paul is about to leave the scene, and somebody must take his place. Should the Lord tarry, the torch must be passed. Young people in our churches need to seriously consider that they are the future of the church. Paul is literally declaring, “*I am ready to be poured out like a drink-offering, and the time is at hand for loosing the anchor and setting sail, for taking down the tent and moving on.*”

Paul has no regrets as he faces eternity: he had been a good soldier, a faithful runner, and a faithful steward of the treasure of the Gospel. He looked forward to receiving his reward from the Lord. And so ought it to be with all of God’s servants.

JOURNEY THROUGH TITUS

Introduction: The same kind of urgent interest clings around the letter to Titus as we found in the two letters to Timothy. The Lord's return is in view (2:13). Paul's sense of responsibility continues as he comes near to the end of his own (1:3). Yet, the progress of the Gospel is endangered by **"unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers"** (1:10).

I. Background.

A. The man.

1. Titus was a Greek believer (Galatians 2:3), who was probably won to Christ through Paul's ministry (Titus 1:4).
 - a. We know little about his background.
 - b. He is not even mentioned in the book of Acts.
2. Titus was likely a convert from heathenism whom the apostle enlisted for service.
 - a. He met Paul at Troas with a report of the Corinthian situation. (II Corinthians 7:5-16)
 - b. He carried II Corinthians back to the Corinthians for Paul. (II Corinthians 8:16-24)
3. Titus was Paul's helper.
 - a. He was left at Crete to organize the church (Titus 1:5) until Paul could send Tychicus or Artemas to take over (Titus 3:12).
 - b. Titus was at Rome during Paul's second imprisonment, from whence he traveled to Dalmatia on a mission for the apostle. (II Timothy 4:10)
 - c. Paul spoke of Titus as **"my partner and fellowhelper."** (II Corinthians 8:23)

B. The letter.

1. Paul's haste in leaving Titus at Crete made it necessary for him to write to encourage and instruct this dedicated co-laborer.
 - a. The Cretians were not the easiest people to work with. (Titus 1:12-13)
 - b. We do not know who started the church at Crete, but this much we know: the organization of the church and the lives of the members had both fallen into disrepute.
2. It is likely that the church suffered from two sources:
 - a. Visiting Judaizers who mixed law and grace.
 - b. Ignorant Christians who abused the grace of God and turned it into license.
3. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote this letter:
 - a. To remind Titus of his work of organizing the church and appointing elders.
 - b. To warn him about false teachers.
 - c. To encourage him in pastoring the different kinds of people in the church.
 - d. To emphasize the true meaning of grace in the life of the Christian.
 - e. To explain how to deal with troublemakers in the church.

C. The emphasis.

1. Several words are repeated in this brief letter, helping us to understand the burden that was on Paul's heart.
 - a. There is a major emphasis on good works. (1:16, 2:7, 14, 3:1, 5, 8, 14)
 - b. Christian doctrine and Christian living are to be sound. (1:9, 13, 2:1-2, 8)
 - c. There ought to be a life of godliness, not worldliness. (1:1, 2:12)
 - d. God's grace leads a person to live a godly life. (1:4, 2:11, 3:7, 15)
2. The key verse for this letter is found in 3:8, **"They which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."**

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. Put things in order. (Chapter 1)

1. Titus was to proclaim the Word. (1:1-4)
 - a. This formal greeting is more than the opening part of a letter.
 - (1) It is a statement of the place of the Word of God in the life of the local church.
 - (a) Paul was a **"servant"** and **"apostle . . . according to the faith"** of God's church.
 - (b) His ministry was not apart from the church, but was directly connected to it.
 - (2) This **"faith"** is what Jude calls **"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"** (Jude 1:3).

- (a) It is that deposit of truth that God gave to Paul. (I Timothy 1:11)
 - (b) Paul had in turned passed it on to Titus and Timothy. (II Timothy 2:2)
 - b. One of the problems in Crete was an abuse of the grace of God.
 - (1) *"God has saved us by grace,"* these people argued, *"therefore we are free to sin."*
 - (2) Paul answered by defining the faith as the **"truth which is after godliness."** (1:1)
 - (3) Paul explains that grace saves us and also disciplines us to live dedicated lives.
 - c. Here, then, is the message Titus was to preach:
 - (1) God's grace saves sinners and sanctifies believers.
 - (2) A holy life follows true faith in Christ.
 - (3) Christ's return should be viewed as a daily expectation.
- 2. Titus was to organize the church. (1:5-9)
 - a. Paul left Titus in Troas to organize the church there and to remedy the weaknesses that existed.
 - b. As long as Christians are in this body of flesh, there will be problems in our churches.
 - (1) When these problems arise, the answer is not to hide them or resign from office.
 - (2) The answer to church problems is to face them honestly and prayerfully, and settle them according to the Word of God, setting them **"in order."** (1:5)
 - c. Titus was to **"ordain"** elders/bishops (The two names in 1:5 and 1:7 speak of the same office) **"in every city,"** indicating the spread of the Gospel.
 - (1) The **"elder,"** the principle official in a local church, was called by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), recognized by other elders, or **"presbytery"** (I Timothy 4:14), and qualified according to the standards of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
 - (2) His duties include:
 - (a) Ruling. (I Timothy 5:17, I Peter 5:3)
 - (b) Pastoring, overseeing, or shepherding, the flock. (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:2)
 - (c) Guarding the Truth. (Titus 1:9)
 - (d) General oversight of the work, including finances. (Acts 11:29-30)
- 3. Titus was to refute the false teachers. (1:10-16)
 - a. Wherever Christ sows good seed, Satan follows with counterfeit seed and false teachers. (Cp. Matthew 13:24-26)
 - b. There were in Crete a group of people who contradicted the teachings of Paul and taught instead Jewish fables (legalism) and the commandments of men (traditionalism).
 - c. Whenever Law is mixed with Grace, false doctrine results. (Galatians 1:6-7)
 - d. Paul describes these teachers as **"unruly and vain talkers and deceivers."** (1:10)
- B. Adorn the doctrine. (Chapter 2)
 - 1. If Titus had spent all his time refuting false teachers, he would have neglected other matters that are necessary for a healthy church.
 - 2. Paul exhorts Titus to remind three groups of people their obligations in the Lord:
 - a. The aged saints. (2:1-3)
 - b. The young men and women. (2:4-8)
 - c. The servants. (2:9-10)
 - 3. Live in anticipation of **"that blessed hope,"** which is Christ's coming. (2:11-15)
- C. Maintain good works. (Chapter 3)
 - 1. Before civil rulers. (3:1)
 - a. Christians ought to be good citizens.
 - b. While our **"citizenship is in heaven"** (Philippians 3:20), we ought to apply our Christian faith in practical daily life.
 - 2. Before all people. (3:2-8)
 - a. The motive for honest living is the remembrance of the grace of God.
 - b. The believer is justified by grace and is an heir of God.
 - 3. Before Heretics. (3:9-11)
 - a. A heretic is subverted, which means he is twisted and turned away from the truth of Christ and His Word.
 - b. How many millions of people have been led astray within churches by false teachers and others who have turned away from the truth of Christ and His Word?

Conclusion: Along with the instructions concerning godly Christian living, Paul gives Titus the constant reminder of what God has done for us in making us His children. Faith in Christ and godly living are seen going hand-in-hand. (Titus 3:8)

JOURNEY THROUGH PHILEMON

Introduction: Even in the best art galleries there is always a space for a choice miniature. This personal note from Paul to Philemon is such a graceful little masterpiece that one can only wonder sadly at those who have begrudged it the little niche which it adorns.

I. Background.

A. The man.

1. Philemon was a Christian of Colosse.
2. It is possible that his son, Archippus, pastored the church at Laodicea. (1:2, cp. Colossians 4:16-17)
3. There was an assembly in Philemon's house. (1:2)
4. Philemon had been won to Christ through Paul's ministry. (1:19)

B. The letter.

1. Onesimus was one of Philemon's slaves. (1:16)
 - a. He had robbed his master and fled to Rome.
 - b. By the providential leading of the Lord, this runaway slave met Paul, who led him to Christ.
 - c. Legally, Philemon could have had his slave put to death for breaking the law, but Paul stepped in to intercede for the new Christian and to save his life.
2. Paul's purposes for writing were:
 - a. To inform Philemon that his slave was not only safe, but saved.
 - b. To ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus.
3. The main lesson of the letter is its picture of Christ as the Redeemer of lost sinners.
 - a. Just as Paul was willing to pay the price to save disobedient Onesimus, so Christ paid the price on the cross for His wayward children.
 - b. *"Receive him as you would receive me,"* Paul wrote, reminding us that we are **"accepted in the Beloved"** (Ephesians 1:6).
 - c. When the believer stands before the Father, Christ says to Him, *"Receive him as you would receive Me."*
4. The key thought is found in the second part of verse 18, **"Put that on mine account."**

C. Slavery.

1. Slavery was an accepted institution in the Roman Empire.
2. Romans and Greeks brought multitudes of slaves (old and young) home from their wars, and the buying and selling of slaves was a daily part of life.
3. Paul encourages slaves to be the best Christians possible and to win their freedom lawfully if possible.
4. We do not read that Paul specifically attacked the institution of slavery; the Gospel itself, preached and lived in the early church, ultimately destroyed this social problem.
5. Paul's letter is a classic example of how Christ changes a home and society by changing lives.
6. It was not that Paul avoided the problem of slavery; rather, he realized the true solution would be found as men and women gave their hearts to Christ.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. Paul's prison ministry. (1:1-3)

1. Paul's greeting identifies him as a prisoner.
2. Paul was **"a prisoner of Jesus Christ,"** not of Rome, and he was not ashamed of his bonds.
3. Paul accomplished more from a Roman prison than we often do as free citizens.

B. Paul's praise of Philemon. (1:4-7)

1. A Spirit-led man is always gracious and tactful, and Paul illustrates this attitude in his approach to the problem of the runaway slave.
 - a. Instead of immediately pleading for the man's life, Paul expressed his sincere appreciation for his friend Philemon.
 - b. This was not mere empty flattery, but sincere Christian appreciation; it was **"the love of God shed abroad"** (Romans 5:5) in Paul's heart.

2. Philemon sounds like the kind of man any of us would want to have as a friend.
 - a. He was a man of **“love and faith.”** (1:5, Titus 3:15)
 - b. He possessed a two-fold concern: upward **“toward the Lord Jesus,”** and outward **“toward”** others. (1:5)
 3. Philemon did not keep his faith to himself, but **“communicated,”** or shared it, with others. (1:6)
 - a. Paul had been praying that Philemon might **“become effectual,”** or *“go to work”*, and be a blessing to others.
 - b. Verse 7 indicates that Philemon was a *“refreshing Christian”* and the kind of man others appreciated.
 4. Philemon was about to face a serious test of his **“love and faith”** as he learned about the conversion of his slave, Onesimus.
- C. Paul's plea to Philemon. (1:8-17)
1. Paul might have used his apostolic authority and commanded Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus, but this would not have been right.
 - a. It would not have helped Philemon to experience the full blessing of the situation.
 - b. *“Love”* is a much stronger motivator than *“Law.”*
 2. Paul's appeal is based on several factors.
 - a. He had already appealed to Philemon's Christian love. (1:5)
 - b. He called the disobedient slave his own son in the faith, reminding Philemon that Onesimus was now a brother in Christ. (1:10)
 - c. The play on words in verse 11 is based on the meaning of the name **“Onesimus,”** which means *“profitable,”* for Onesimus was now profitable.
 - d. Paul would have kept Onesimus as one of his own fellow laborers (1:1), but he wanted to do nothing without his friend's knowledge and consent (1:14).
 3. The doctrine of the believer's identification with Christ is beautifully portrayed here.
 - a. **“Receive him, that is, mine own [heart]”** (1:12), was Paul's plea.
 - (1) Onesimus was so a part of Paul that it pained Paul even to send him back home.
 - (2) Verse 17 is what Jesus Christ says to the Father of every true believer, *“Receive him as You receive Me.”*
 - b. Onesimus was not returning home the same old person.
 - (1) He had a completely new standing before his master; he was now a brother beloved, identified with Paul, and therefore accepted.
 - (2) That is what the Bible means by justification: we are in Christ and therefore accepted before God. (Ephesians 1:6)
- D. Paul's pledge to Philemon. (1:18-25)
1. What about the Roman law?
 - a. How could Philemon forgive if there was to be no restitution?
 - b. *“I will pay anything due!”* says the aged apostle. (1:18-19a)
 2. Christ found us as runaway slaves, law-breakers, and rebels, but He forgave us and identified with us.
 - a. He went to the cross and paid the debt for us.
 - (1) This is the doctrine of *“Imputation.”*
 - (2) To *“impute”* means *“to put to one's account.”*
 - (3) Our sins were put to Christ's account, and His righteousness was put to our account when we believed on Him. (II Corinthians 5:21)
 - b. The Christian needs to keep in mind the distinction between *“accepted in Christ”* and *“acceptable to Christ.”*
 - (1) The one who has trusted Christ for salvation is forever accepted in Christ and can never be rejected by the Father. (John 10:27-29)
 - (2) Whenever believers sin, they are *“accepted,”* but their actions are not *“acceptable.”*
 - (a) It is necessary to confess that sin and receive Christ's cleansing. (I John 1:9)
 - (b) Because we are accepted in Him, we have *“Sonship”*; as we live lives acceptable to Him, we have *“Fellowship.”*
 3. Paul closed with personal greetings to Philemon and his household, reminding his friends of the many obligations they had to him.

Conclusion: Philip P. Bliss wrote, *“Free from the law, O happy condition; Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall; Grace hath redeemed us once for all.”*

JOURNEY THROUGH HEBREWS

Introduction: The Epistle to the Hebrews is a rich part of the New Testament canon. In a unique fashion it exalts the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, it makes immensely valuable contributions to the doctrines of His Incarnation, His substitutionary death, and His priesthood. Among the other truths to which the epistle effectively contributes are those involving the relationship between the New Covenant and the Old, the interpretation of the Old Testament, and the life of Faith. The Church would be poorer without the teaching of this inspired book.

I. Background.

A. The Message.

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews presents several interesting problems.
 - a. Here is a book that begins like a sermon, yet ends like a letter.
 - b. No author's name is attached to it, nor is its destination clearly given.
 - c. It is important to study Hebrews in the light of all the Word of God, and not as an isolated book
2. The main message is summarized in 6:1, **"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION [spiritual maturity]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."**
 - a. The people to whom Hebrews was addressed to were not growing spiritually. (5:11-14)
 - (1) God had spoken in His Word, but they were not practicing it faithfully.
 - (2) They were neglecting God's instruction and drifting away from His blessings.
 - (3) The writer seeks to encourage them to move forward in their spiritual lives by showing them that *"in Christ"* they have the *"better"* blessings.
 - b. He is the **"author and finisher [perfecter] of our faith."** (12:2)
3. The book presents the Christian faith and life as superior to Judaism or any other religious system.

B. The Writer.

1. The earliest traditions have attached Paul's name to this writing.
2. Others have suggested Apollos, Luke, Philip the Evangelist, Mark, and even Priscilla and Aquila.
3. The writer is obviously a Jew, since he identifies himself with his Jewish readers. (1:2, 2:1, 3:1)

C. The "Warnings."

1. Five exhortations for believers help develop the outline of the book:
 - a. Warning against drifting from God's Word. (2:1-3, esp. 2:1)
 - b. Warning against doubting God's Word. (3:7-15, esp. 3:8)
 - c. Warning against growing dull toward God's Word. (5:11-6:1, esp. 5:12-14)
 - d. Warning against despising God's Word. (10:28-29)
 - e. Warning against disobeying God's Word. (12:14-19, esp. 12:15)
2. There is an urgency in all of these warnings, and a reminder of the certainty of judgment.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. The Superiority of the Person of Christ. (1:1-4:16)

1. Christ is superior to the prophets. (1:1-4)
 - a. God's revelations in old times were given in many portions and in many ways, but no prophet received the complete revelation.
 - b. Christ is God's *"last Word"* in these **"last days."**
 - c. Anyone today who boasts of having a *"new revelation from God"* is deceived.
 - d. God is not giving revelations today; He is illuminating His once-for-all revelation in Christ.
2. Christ is superior to the angels. (1:5-2:18)
 - a. Angels played a vital role in the Jewish religion.
 - b. The Law was given through the ministry of angels. (Galatians 3:19)
 - c. If the Jews paid attention to the Law, given through angels, then they ought to give greater heed to the message given by Christ, Who is greater than the angels.

3. Christ is superior to Moses. (3:1-6)
 - a. Moses was the great hero of the Jewish nation.
 - b. For the author of Hebrews to prove Christ's superiority over Moses was tantamount to proving the superiority of the Christian faith over Judaism.
 - c. Moses was a servant; Christ is the **"Apostle and High Priest of our profession."**
 - d. Moses ministered to an earthly people; Christ ministers to a heavenly people.
4. Christ is the supreme object of faith. (3:7-4:16)
 - a. The catastrophe of unbelief. (3:7-19, esp. 3:11-12)
 - b. The consequences of unbelief. (4:1-10, esp. 4:1)
 - c. The cure for unbelief. (4:11-16, esp. 4:14)
- B. The Superiority of the Priesthood of Christ. (5:1-10:39)
 1. Superior in His qualifications. (5:1-6:20)
 - a. The qualifications of an earthly man. (5:1-5, esp. 5:1)
 - b. The qualifications of our heavenly Christ. (5:6-10, esp. 5:10)
 - c. Parenthetical warning: don't degenerate from Christ. (5:11-6:20, esp. 6:4-6)
 2. Superior in His priesthood. (7:1-8:13)
 - a. The portrait of Melchisedec. (7:1-3, cp. Genesis 14:17-20)
 - b. The preeminence of Melchisedec's priesthood. (7:4-13, esp. 7:17-22)
 3. Superior in His ministry. (9:1-10:18)
 - a. The earthly priesthood. (9:1-10, esp. 9:8-9)
 - b. Christ's priesthood. (9:11-10:18, esp. 10:11-12)
 - c. Parenthetical warning: don't despise Christ. (10:19-39, esp. 10:26-29, cp. Num. 15:30-31)
- C. The Superiority of the Power of Christ. (11:1-13:19)
 1. The Power of Faith in Christ. (11:1-40)
 - a. The description of faith. (11:1-2)
 - (1) The word **"substance"** means *"foundation," "assurance," or "confirmation."*
 - (a) The word **"evidence"** means *"conviction."*
 - (b) The phrase **"hoped for"** means *"to trust in."*
 - (2) **"Faith"** could therefore be defined as, *"the confirmation of what we trust in and the conviction of things not yet seen."*
 - (a) Faith is trusting and possessing all that God says.
 - (b) The reward of such faith is God's approval. (11:2)
 - (3) Biblical faith is not *"I think so"* or *"I hope so,"* but *"I know so because God said it!"*
 - b. The demonstrations of faith. (11:3-40)
 - (1) Demonstrated through the lives of past saints, faith is never static, but always active.
 - (2) The author tells us, **"But WITHOUT FAITH it is IMPOSSIBLE to please [God]: for he that cometh to God MUST BELIEVE that HE is, and that He is a REWARDER OF THEM THAT DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM"** (11:6).
 2. The Power of Hope in Christ. (12:1-29)
 - a. Regarding difficult things. (12:1-3)
 - (1) One of the paradoxical truths of Scripture is that suffering and trials result in joy. (James 1:2-4)
 - (2) The author of Hebrews upheld Jesus as the example of such sufferings and joy.
 - b. Regarding discipline in life. (12:4-11)
 - (1) Discipline is part of the educational process by which a believer is fitted to share God's holiness. (12:10)
 - (2) Therefore, **"despise not . . . the chastening of the Lord"** (12:5).
 - c. Regarding direction in life. (12:12-17)
 - d. Regarding drive of life. (12:18-24)
 - e. Regarding duty of life. (12:25-29)
 3. The Power of the Love of Christ. (13:1-19)
 - a. Love in relation to social duties. (13:1-6)
 - b. Love in relation to spiritual duties. (13:7-19)
 4. The Power of the Perfecting of Christ. (13:20-25)

Conclusion: The benediction of verses 20-21 explains how the Christian is enabled to live for Christ in this wicked world: Christ works in us by faith from His throne in heaven. He, who is our High Priest, Shepherd and Helper, works in us to give us the grace and power to live for Him and serve Him.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

Introduction: One of the New Testament epistles which is least known and studied by evangelical Christians is that of James. Great stress has been laid on the Pauline writings (and rightly so), but it should be remembered that the other New Testament books are likewise of real value. Indeed, it seems that James fills a pressing modern need more fully than does many other portions of the New Testament.

I. Background.

A. The writer.

1. Three men in the New Testament are named James.
 - a. The son of Zebedee, brother of John, and one of the apostles. (Mark 1:19)
 - b. The son of Alphaeus, also one of the apostles. (Matthew 10:3)
 - c. The half-brother of our Lord, being born of Mary and Joseph. (Matthew 13:55)
2. It is likely that James, the brother of our Lord, wrote this epistle.
 - a. During Christ's ministry, James and his brothers were unbelievers. (John 7:1-10, esp. verse 5)
 - b. Sometime shortly after His resurrection, James was given a special visit by the Lord (I Corinthians 15:7), which undoubtedly brought him to salvation.
 - c. We see him with the believers in the Upper Room. (Acts 1:4)
3. After Peter moved off the scene as leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17), James took his place.
 - a. It was James who directed the conference of Acts 15 and who handed down the final decision. (Acts 15:13ff)
 - b. In Galatians 2:9-10, Paul acknowledged the leadership of James.

B. The Letter.

1. James addressed the letter to Jewish Christians who were "**scattered abroad**" in the Dispersion. (James 1:1-2)
 - a. This Dispersion was composed of Jews who had left Palestine due to persecution, but kept in contact with their "*fatherland*."
 - b. This Jewish emphasis is seen clearly in the Epistle of James.
2. There are strong parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount, which was Christ's spiritual explanation of the Law.
3. There are also many parallels between James and I Peter (which was also written to Jews of the Dispersion).
4. These Christian Jews were true believers, but they still maintained their Jewish ways in their Jewish communities.
 - a. They were born again. (James 1:18)
 - b. They expected the return of Christ. (James 5:7)
5. We do not find the well-developed doctrines of the church in James that we find in Paul's letters.

C. James and Paul.

1. There are no conflicts between James and Paul on the matter of "*Justification by Faith*."
 - a. Martin Luther rejected the Book of James because of its strong emphasis on works.
 - b. Paul explains that sinners are justified by faith. (Romans 3-4)
 - c. James explains that a person's faith is dead unless it is proved by works. (2:14-26)
2. We are not saved by works, but the faith that saves us leads us to good works. (Eph. 2:8-10)
 - a. Paul wrote about our "*Standing before God*."
 - b. James wrote about our "*Standing before the world*."

D. Basic Theme.

1. Woven throughout the letter are two themes:
 - a. Persecution from outside the fellowship.
 - b. Problems within the fellowship.
2. The believers were experiencing trials, and James sought to encourage them.
 - a. But there were also divisions and sins within the assembly which James sought to settle.
 - b. One of the key thoughts is perfection or spiritual maturity.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. The Believer and Suffering. (Chapter 1)

1. The perfect work – God’s purpose. (1:1-12)
 - a. The experiences that come to the children of God are not by accident. (Romans 8:28)
 - b. We have a loving Heavenly Father who controls the affairs of the world and who has a purpose behind each event. (I Peter 5:10)
2. The perfect gift – God’s goodness. (1:13-18)
 - a. God wants His children to grow up and experience new blessings of His grace, and one way we can mature in our faith is by going through “*trials*.”
 - (1) The word “**temptation**,” in verse 2, means “*trials*.” (Cp. 1:13)
 - (2) Though both “*temptations*” and “*trials*” bring their unique challenges, they are not the same.
 - b. God never “*tempts us*”; temptations arise out of our own sin nature.
 - (1) Satan sends temptations to bring out the worst in us.
 - (2) God sends trials to bring out the best in us.
3. The perfect law – God’s Word. (1:19-27)
 - a. “**Swift to hear**,” reminds us of how the Christian should hear and obey God’s Word.
 - b. We must receive the Word. (1:21)
 - c. We must do the Word. (1:22)
 - d. We must examine our hearts and confess our sins. (1:22-25)
 - e. We must allow the Word to rule in our private lives. (1:26-27)

B. The Believer and Service. (Chapter 2)

1. Faith proved by love. (2:1-13)
 - a. “**Have not**” literally means “*practice not*.”
 - b. We are not simply to have faith; we are to practice it in our daily lives.
 - c. We show love to others by accepting them for what they are and seeing them as a person for whom Christ died.
2. Faith proved by works. (2:14-26)
 - a. Being a Christian is not a matter of what we say; it involves what we do with our life.
 - b. People have no right to believe that we are saved if they don’t see that we are saved.

C. The Believer and Speech. (Chapter 3)

1. The exhortation. (3:1-2)
 - a. When God gave us the faculty of speech, He gave us a tool to build with.
 - b. It can also become a weapon of destruction.
2. Illustrations: (3:3-12)
 - a. The bit and rudder – power to direct. (3:3-4)
 - b. The fire and animal – the power to destroy. (3:5-8)
 - c. The fountain and tree – power to delight. (3:9-12)
3. The application – the tongue of the believer can be filled with true wisdom “**from above**” or the false wisdom “*from below*.” (3:13-18)

D. The Believer and Separation. (Chapter 4)

1. The enemies we must fight. (4:1-7)
 - a. The flesh. (4:1-3)
 - b. The world. (4:4-5)
 - c. The devil. (4:6-7)
2. The admonitions we must heed. (4:8-17)
 - a. Warnings against pride. (4:8-10)
 - b. Warnings against criticism. (4:11-12)
 - c. Warnings against self-confidence. (4:13-17)

E. The Believer and Christ’s Coming. (Chapter 5)

1. Be patient when wronged. (5:1-11)
2. Be pure in speech. (5:12)
3. Be prayerful in trials. (5:13-18)
4. Be persistent in soul-winning. (5:19-20)

Conclusion: James message is both tough and tender, firm with conviction, yet full of compassion. A study of his epistle can change the life of anyone who would renew his or her commitment to live “**soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ . . .**” (Titus 2:12-13).

JOURNEY THROUGH I PETER

Introduction: I Peter was the child of many tears and of much sorrow. It was probably written about A.D. 65, when the followers of Jesus were regarded with growing dislike, while clouds of suffering and persecution were passing over the house of God. The disciples had already begun to learn by bitter experience that they were to follow their Master's steps by way of the Via Dolorosa to the light of the Resurrection morn; and that they must not expect softer names or usage than had been accorded to Him. They needed comfort, a stimulus to patience, and a rehearsal of the arguments for heroic endurance, all of which the Spirit of God supplied through these paragraphs.

I. Background.

A. Author.

1. The Apostle Peter is the author of the two letters that bear his name.
2. In writing these letters, Peter was continuing to fulfill the commandment Christ gave him to **"feed"** His sheep and the lambs. (John 21:15-17)

B. Situation.

1. Nero began a terrible persecution of Christians in October, A.D. 64.
 - a. It was most severe in Rome itself, where Nero even burned Christians alive to illuminate his gardens at night.
 - b. Silas and Mark are mentioned with Peter (I Peter 5:12-13), so Paul may have left them at this time and journeyed to Spain with other companions (Romans 15:28).
 - c. Nero burned Rome in July and started his persecution of the Church in October.
2. Peter knew that the **"fiery trial"** (4:12ff) would spread from Rome to the Roman provinces, and he wanted to encourage the saints there.
 - a. Paul was not on hand to do it, so Peter wrote these two letters, inspired by the Spirit, to the churches Paul had founded in Asia Minor. (I Peter 1:1, II Peter 3:1)
 - b. These believers had already been faced with local, personal persecutions (1:6-7), but Peter wanted them to be ready for the severe trials still on the way (4:12ff, 5:9-10).
3. This first epistle was probably written toward the end of Peter's life.
 - a. It is thought that after this epistle he was arrested and tried.
 - b. Between his trial and execution he wrote II Peter. (II Peter 1:13-21)
 - c. Peter eventually faced martyrdom, pleading to be crucified upside down, not thinking himself to be worthy of dying in like manner of his Master.

C. Key Words.

1. The key word in this epistle is **"suffering."**
 - a. It, or its equivalent, is used sixteen times.
 - b. Six times it speaks of Christ's suffering.
 - c. Ten times it speaks of the believer's suffering.
2. Another important word is **"grace,"** which appears eight times.
3. Peter's aim is to testify of the sufficiency of God's grace, especially during times of suffering.

II. The Development Of The Doctrine Of Christ.

A. The incarnation of Christ. (1:20)

B. The names for Christ.

1. A spotless Lamb. (1:19)
2. The **"Chief Cornerstone"** – His relationship to the Scriptures. (2:6)
3. The **"Precious"** Stone – His relationship to the believer. (2:7)
4. The **"Stumbling"** Block – His relationship to unbelievers. (2:8)
5. The **"Bishop of [our] souls."** (2:25)
6. The **"Chief Shepherd."** (5:4)

C. His sinless life. (1:19, 2:22)

D. His suffering and death. (1:11, 2:23-24, 3:18, 4:1, 13, 5:1)

E. His resurrection. (3:21-22)

F. His ascension. (3:22)

G. His presence at God's right hand. (3:22)

H. His second coming. (1:13, 4:13, 5:4)

III. Peter's Descriptions Of Believers.

- A. The **"elect"** of God. (1:2)
- B. **"Obedient children."** (1:14)
- C. **"Newborn babes."** (2:2)
- D. **"[Living] stones."** (2:5)
- E. **"A holy priesthood."** (2:5)
- F. **"A chosen generation."** (2:9)
- G. **"A royal priesthood."** (2:9)
- H. **"A holy nation."** (2:9)
- I. **"A peculiar people."** (2:9)
- J. **"The people of God."** (2:10)
- K. **"Strangers and pilgrims."** (2:11)
- L. **"The oracles of God."** (4:11)
- M. **"Christian."** (4:16)
- N. **"The righteous."** (4:18)
- O. **"The flock of God."** (5:2)

IV. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. God's Grace in Salvation. (1:1-2:10)
 - 1. The source of our salvation – the entire Trinity. (1:1-2)
 - a. The Father elected us, based on His foreknowledge. (Cp. Romans 8:29-30)
 - b. The Spirit sanctified us.
 - c. The Son redeemed us.
 - 2. The blessings of our salvation. (1:3-4)
 - a. A lively hope.
 - b. An incorruptible inheritance.
 - 3. The trials of our salvation. (1:5-9, esp. verse 7)
 - 4. The Old Testament prophets misunderstanding of our salvation. (1:10-12)
 - 5. The holy angels and our salvation. (1:12)
 - 6. The high calling of our salvation. (1:13-17)
 - a. **"Gird up the loins of your mind."**
 - b. Keep sober in spirit.
 - c. Fix your hope completely on God's grace.
 - d. Avoid returning to one's former life style.
 - e. **"Be ye holy,"** separated unto God in all behavior.
 - f. Conduct yourself in a respectful awe of God.
 - 7. The cost of our salvation. (1:18-22, esp. verses 18-19)
 - 8. The method of our salvation. (1:23-25, esp. verse 23)
- B. God's Grace in Submission. (2:1-3:12)
 - 1. Submission to Christ and His Word. (2:1-10, esp. verse 9)
 - 2. Submission to authorities. (2:11-17, esp. verse 13)
 - 3. Submission to masters. (2:18-25, esp. verse 18)
 - 4. Submission in the home. (3:1-7, cp. Ephesians 5:21)
 - 5. Submission in the church. (3:8-13, esp. verses 8-9)
- C. God's Grace in Suffering. (3:14-4:19)
 - 1. Suffering purifies the saint. (3:14-15)
 - 2. Suffering justifies the sinner. (3:16-18, esp. verse 18)
 - 3. Suffering separates the dead. (4:1-6, esp. verses 1-2))
 - 4. Suffering unifies the church. (4:7-11, esp. verse 8)
 - 5. Suffering glorifies the Savior. (4:12-19, esp. verses 12-13)
- D. God's Grace in Service. (5:1-14)
 - 1. Serving as a shepherd. (5:1-4, esp. verse 5:2)
 - 2. Serving as a saint. (5:5-7, esp. verse 5:5b)
 - 3. Serving as a soldier. (5:8-14, esp. verse 8)

Conclusion: I Peter 5:10 indicates that God allows us to suffer that He might be able to shed His grace upon us. People who attempt to handle their own troubles by their own means and in their own strength are following a recipe for disaster. Peter's teaching and testimony in this letter is to urge God's people to stand in the true grace of God. Suffering helps us to grow in Him.

JOURNEY THROUGH II PETER

Introduction: II Peter may be titled, *“The Believer’s Conflict in the Latter Days.”* The apostle opened and closed II Peter with the theme of victory. But within the epistle he focused primarily on how to live when surrounded by the problems and perplexities of the End Time. After painting a landscape complete with false teachers, fallen angels, flagrant immorality, and feeble scoffers. Peter charged his readers **“in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God”** (3:11-12). Faithful living in difficult times is the lesson Peter would have us learn through this dynamic letter.

I. Background.

- A. This is Peter’s second and final epistle.
- B. This epistle contains the only inter-connective reference from one apostolic epistle to another.
 - 1. Peter refers to Paul’s writings. (3:15-16)
 - 2. II Peter may be favorably compared to II Timothy.
 - a. Both books are the last written by their authors.
 - b. Both contain a key passage on inspiration. (II Peter 1:20-21, II Timothy 3:16)
 - c. Both warn against false teachers. (II Peter 2:1ff, II Timothy 3)
 - d. Both men knew they would soon die a martyr’s death for Christ. (II Peter 1:13-15, II Timothy 4:6)
- C. The theme of I Peter was *“suffering,”* while that of II Peter is *“full knowledge.”*
 - 1. The key word in II Peter is **“knowledge,”** and the danger Peter writes about is false teaching.
 - a. In I Peter 5:8, Satan was described as **“a roaring lion,”** for Peter’s theme there was the fiery persecution that was about to come to the saints.
 - b. In II Peter, Satan is a serpent seeking to deceive. (John 8:44-45)
 - 2. False teaching from within the church is far more dangerous than persecution from without. (Acts 20:28-32)
 - a. Persecution has always cleansed and strengthened the church.
 - b. False teaching always weakens the church and ruins its testimony.
 - c. The answer to false teaching is the Truth, therefore Peter emphasizes spiritual knowledge.
 - 3. The summary statement of II Peter is 3:18, **“But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The multiplication of the power of God. (1:1-4)
 - 1. The **“exceeding great and precious promises”** (1:4) consist totally of the glorious doctrinal facts presented in the Word of God.
 - 2. Peter speaks of these as being **“multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”** (1:2).
 - a. This knowledge is the knowledge of God’s Word.
 - b. Shallow knowledge makes superficial Christians.
- B. The additions of the child of God. (1:5-9)
 - 1. This chapter has been called the *“math chapter.”*
 - a. Multiplication: **“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you”** (1:2).
 - b. Addition: **“Add to your faith . . .”** (1:5).
 - c. Subtraction: **“He was purged from his old sins”** (1:9).
 - 2. Peter lists seven qualities that believers are to expand and develop.
 - a. **“Virtue”** – moral excellence.
 - b. **“Knowledge”** – discernment, coming from a study of the Bible.
 - c. **“Temperance”** – self-control.
 - d. **“Patience”** – godly, and gracious endurance.
 - e. **“Godliness”** – the right devotion and worship to God.
 - f. **“Brotherly Kindness”** – acts of goodness.
 - g. **“Charity”** – a love for saints, sinners, the Scripture, and the Savior.

- C. The examination of the **“calling”** of God. (1:10-12)
 - 1. We are to possess confidence concerning both our salvation from God and our service for God.
 - 2. No child of God is effective if he has doubts concerning either of these.
- D. The revelation to the apostle of God – his approaching death. (1:13-15)
- E. The transfiguration of the Son of God. (1:16-18)
- F. The inspiration of the Word of God. (1:19-21)
 - 1. The importance of God’s Word: **“a more sure word of prophecy.”** (1:19)
 - 2. The interpretation of God’s Word. (1:20)
 - 3. The impartation of God’s Word. (1:21)
 - a. The authors of the Bible were carried along by the Spirit of God in writing the Bible.
 - b. They did not go into a coma or trance, but were fully aware of what was happening.
 - c. The same Holy Spirit, who originally gave the Word, now desires to teach it both to and through men of God today. (I Corinthians 2:9-12)
- G. The deviation by the enemies of God. (2:1-3:4)
 - 1. The identity of these enemies.
 - a. In former days.
 - (1) Wicked angels. (2:4)
 - (2) People of Noah’s day. (2:5)
 - (3) Citizens of Lot’s day. (2:6-9)
 - (4) False prophets. (2:1, 15)
 - b. In the latter days.
 - (1) False teachers. (2:1)
 - (2) Scoffers. (3:3)
 - 2. The iniquity of these enemies.
 - a. They bring about destructive heresies. (2:1)
 - b. They deny the Lord who bought them. (2:1)
 - c. They speak evil of the **“way of truth.”** (2:2)
 - d. They exploit, if possible, the very elect of God. (2:3)
 - e. They walk after the flesh. (2:10)
 - f. They look upon all forms of government with contempt. (2:10)
 - g. They are presumptuous and self-willed. (2:10)
 - h. They possess the nature of brute, wild animals. (2:12)
 - i. They are committed to a perverted, hedonist philosophy. (2:13)
 - j. They are spots and blemishes in their own society. (2:13)
 - k. Their hearts are eaten up with adultery. (2:14)
 - l. They entice the unstable. (2:14)
 - m. They are materialistic to the core. (2:14)
 - n. They are children of cursing. (2:14)
 - o. They have totally forsaken the right way. (2:15)
 - p. They are **“wells without water.”** (2:17)
 - q. They speak vanity. (2:18)
 - r. They play upon the sensual nature of man. (2:18)
 - s. They are the blind leading the blind. (2:19)
 - t. Their **“latter end is worse”** than their beginning. (2:20)
 - u. They are as filthy hogs and dogs. (2:22)
 - v. They ridicule the Second Coming and reject any thought of coming judgment. (3:4)
 - w. They utterly and eternally close their minds to those truths revealed in both God’s Word and His world. (3:5, cp. Romans 1:18-23)
- H. The condemnation of the pre-Noahic, former world of God. (3:5-6)
- I. The annihilation of the present world of God. (3:7-12)
- J. The new creation of the future world of God. (3:13-18)

Conclusion: The theme of I Peter was grace; the theme of II Peter is knowledge. Peter sums up both books by admonishing us to **“grow in grace, and . . . knowledge”** (3:18). It is possible, unfortunately, to grow in knowledge (having Bible truth in our heads) and never grow in grace (showing Bible truth in our lives). Peter wants us to grow in both and warns us of the neglect in either. We should learn and live the Word of God.

JOURNEY THROUGH I JOHN

Introduction: I John is entitled a letter, but it has no opening address nor closing greetings such as the letters of Paul. And yet no one can read it without feeling its intensely personal character. In John 20:31 we read that the purpose of John's gospel was to show men how they might have eternal life. This first epistle of John's was written that men might know that they have eternal life. In this letter it is apparent that John is not only concerned with people believing but also in the acting out their beliefs. John clearly states that the true test of a person's faithfulness to Christ is his conduct and performance.

I. Background.

- A. The Spirit of God directed John the apostle to pen five of the New Testament books.
 1. Apart from Paul, no other author would write as much sacred Scripture in the New Testament as he did.
 2. John wrote his Gospel account to prove the deity of Christ; he now writes his epistles to prove the humanity of Christ.
 - a. In the Gospel, John describes us as sheep in God's fold.
 - b. In his epistles, he describes us as members of God's family.
 - c. In Revelation, he describes us as priests in His kingdom.
- B. The distinctions between John's writings.

Gospel of John	Epistles of John	Revelation of John
Speaks of Justification Speaks of the Past Speaks of Christ the Prophet Speaks of the Cross	Speaks of Sanctification Speaks of the Present Speaks of Christ the Priest Speaks of the Fellowship	Speaks of Glorification Speaks of the Future Speaks of Christ the King Speaks of the Crown

1. It is believed by some that John directed his epistles to the same readers who would later receive the book of Revelation, that is, the seven churches of Asia Minor.
2. Because of the difficulty to outline this first epistle in a chapter-by-chapter fashion, the following subject-matter outline reveals the key theme of I John as "*Fellowship*."

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The source of fellowship.
 1. The incarnation of Jesus Christ. (1:1-2)
 2. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (4:9-10)
- B. The purpose of fellowship.
 1. That we might experience the fullness of joy. (1:4)
 2. That we might know more about the Father. (1:5)
 3. That we might allow the Father's love to be perfected in us. (2:5)
 4. That we might not be seduced by the world. (2:26)
 5. That we might love the family of God. (3:11)
 6. That we might not be surprised in tribulation. (3:13)
 7. That we might understand the Father's love. (3:16)
 8. That we might receive assurance concerning our prayers. (3:22)
 9. That we might love the Father. (4:19)
 10. That we might receive assurance concerning our salvation. (5:13)
- C. The requirements of fellowship.
 1. We must walk in the light. (1:7)
 2. We must recognize our sins. (1:8)
 3. We must confess our sins. (1:9)
 4. We must keep His commandments. (2:3-5)
 5. We must abide in Christ. (2:28)
 6. We must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. (3:3)
 7. We must minister to our brethren in need. (3:17)
- D. The tests of fellowship.

1. John proposes a list of test questions to help us determine our sonship and fellowship.

a. Do I conduct my life in view of the Rapture? (3:3)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
b. Do I continually dwell in <i>"habitual"</i> sin? (3:6, 9)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
c. Do I desire to help my brother? (3:17)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
d. Can I recognize false doctrine when it comes my way? (4:1-3)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
e. Do I enjoy a rapport with other servants of God? (4:6)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
f. Do I really love my brother with an unselfish concern? (4:7)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
g. Am I straight on the Deity of Christ? (4:15)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
h. Am I plagued with constant fear? (4:18)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
i. Do I hate my spiritual brother? (4:20)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
j. Do I really love God? (5:2)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
k. Am I able to overcome the world? (5:4)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
l. Am I straight on the Work of Christ? (5:13, 20)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
2. If one fails the test, then he or she should consider:
 - a. *"Am I saved?"* or, more likely . . .
 - b. *"Do I need to get more into the Word, pray, and grow in grace by serving the Master?"*
- E. The maintenance of fellowship.
 1. Through the occupation of the Son of God.
 - a. He is our Advocate. (2:1)
 - b. He is our Propitiation. (2:2)
 2. Through the habitation of the Spirit of God. (2:20, 27)
 3. Through the cooperation of the saints of God.
 - a. By recognizing our sins. (1:8)
 - b. By confessing our sins. (1:9)
- F. The family of fellowship.
 1. John seems to classify God's family into three groups, according to their spiritual maturity.
 2. The family:
 - a. Little children. (2:13)
 - b. Young men. (2:13-14)
 - c. Fathers. (2:13-14)
- G. The enemies of fellowship.
 1. The systems of this world. (2:15-17)
 - a. In the Bible there are several kinds of worlds.
 - (1) The physical world. (Acts 17:24)
 - (2) The human world. (John 3:16)
 - (3) The spiritual, evil world. (I John 5:19, John 12:31, John 15:18)
 - b. The divisions within this world.
 - (1) The lust of the flesh – **"good for food."** (Genesis 3:6, Matthew 4:3)
 - (2) The lust of the eyes – **"pleasant to the eyes."** (Genesis 3:6, Matthew 4:8)
 - (3) The pride of life – **"to make one wise."** (Genesis 3:6, Matthew 4:6)
 2. The seducers of this world. (2:18-19, 22, 4:1)
 3. The spirits of this world. (4:1, 13)
- H. The promises of fellowship.
 1. Everlasting life with Christ. (2:25)
 2. Assurance at the Rapture. (2:28)
 3. Receiving a new body like His resurrected body. (3:2)
 4. Confidence at the Judgment Seat. (4:17)
 5. Boldness in service down here. (4:18)
- I. The witnesses of fellowship. (5:6-8)
- J. The separation from fellowship. (5:16-17, cp. I Corinthians 11:27-30)
 1. My union with Christ is so strong that nothing can break it.
 2. My fellowship with Christ is so fragile that the slightest sin shatters it.

Conclusion: In his Gospel, John tells us how to be saved – **"that believing ye might have life through his name"** (John 20:31). Yet, many Christians are discouraged because they do not feel *"saved."* In this first epistle John tells us how to be sure we are saved – **"that ye may know that ye have eternal life"** (I John 5:13). Eternal life begins when a person receives Jesus Christ as their Savior, and can never be lost. Yet, although daily fellowship may change, our sonship ever remains the same.

JOURNEY THROUGH II JOHN

Introduction: John's emphasis in his first epistle is on "love," but the key word in this second epistle is "truth." John presently writes to say that truth is worth contending for.

I. Background.

- A. This is the only book in the Bible addressed to a woman.
- B. This is the shortest book in the entire Bible.
- C. John, the apostle, is the writer of this epistle.
 - 1. We call him "*The Apostle of Love*."
 - 2. The Lord Jesus called him a "[son] of thunder" (Mark 3:17).
 - 3. We might rightfully add to the thunder a little lightning, for in his epistles he makes it very clear that you must exhibit love to the brethren or you are not a child of God.
- D. John does not mention his own name or the name of the woman he addresses.
 - 1. This may have been done to prevent persecution from the Roman authorities of the time.
 - 2. Christianity at this time was viewed as a unlawful religion.
- E. The theme of this epistle is: "**For truth's sake.**" (1:2)
 - 1. How important it is not to separate truth from love.
 - a. To practice truth without love leads to legalism.
 - b. To practice love without truth leads to liberalism.
 - 2. Paul combines these two truths when he writes, "**But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ**" (Ephesians 4:15).

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. We must Know the Truth. (1:1-3)
 - 1. John used the word "**truth**" four times in his salutation.
 - a. Basically, it means "*reality*" as opposed to mere appearance.
 - (1) Jesus Christ is "**the Truth**" (John 14:6) and God's Word is "**truth**" (John 17:17).
 - (2) God has revealed truth in the person of His Son and in the pages of His Word.
 - b. God has also given us "**the Spirit of Truth**" to teach us and enable us to know truth. (John 14:16-17, 16:13)
 - 2. Truth is not just objective revelation from the Father, but also subjective experience in our personal lives.
 - a. We are not only to "[**know**] the truth," but we are also to "**love in the truth**" and live "**for the truth's sake.**"
 - b. The truth "**dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.**"
 - c. "*Knowing the truth*" is much more than just giving assent to a body of doctrines.
 - d. "*Knowing the truth*" means that the believer's life is controlled by a love for the truth and a desire to magnify the truth.
 - 3. John opened his letter on this note of "**truth**" because there were false teachers abroad who were spreading error.
 - a. He called them "**deceivers**" and "**antichrist.**" (1:7)
 - b. John is not arguing that all religious teachings are true in one way or another, and that we should not be critical just as long as people are sincere.
 - c. There is a great difference between truth and error, and John does not tolerate error.
 - 4. This elect lady and her children came to know the truth through "**grace**" and "**mercy.**" (1:3)
 - a. God is rich in "**grace**" and "**mercy**" and channels His "**grace**" and "**mercy**" to us in Jesus Christ.
 - b. We are not saved by God's love, but by God's grace.
 - (1) God loves the whole world, yet the whole world will not be saved.
 - (2) Only those who receive His abundant grace experience salvation from sin.
 - 5. It is significant that John here affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ. (1:3)
 - a. The Christian faith stands or falls on the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - b. If He is only man, then He cannot save us, no matter how gifted He might be.
 - c. If He is not God come in human flesh, then the Christian faith stands on the false premises of many lies – not truth.

- B. We must Walk in the Truth. (1:4-6)
1. To “[walk] in the truth” means to obey it, to permit it to control every area of our lives.
 - a. This paragraph opens and closes with an emphasis on obedience.
 - b. It is much easier to study The Truth than it is to practice The Truth.
 2. John’s joy was that the elect lady’s children were “walking in truth.” (1:4a)
 - a. It brings great joy to the Father when He sees His children obeying His Word.
 - b. Few things break the heart of a pastor like a disobedient and rebellious member who will not submit to the authority of God’s Word.
 3. John argued that God has commanded us to walk in “truth and love.” (1:3b, 4b)
 - a. The word “**commandment**” is used five times in these few verses.
 - (1) God’s commandments focus “**the truth**” on specific areas of life.
 - (2) “**The truth**” can be vague and general if we are not careful.
 - (3) “**The commandments**” make that truth specific and binding.
 - b. The commandments are given by “**the Father.**”
 - (1) Each commandment is an expression of love and not simply law.
 - (2) The will of God is the revelation of God’s heart. (Psalm 33:11)
 - (3) Obedience to His Word should be a revelation of our love for the Father.
 - c. False teachers offer their converts “freedom,” ending in “**corruption,**” by making God’s commandments appear harsh and difficult. (II Peter 2:19)
 - (1) The greatest freedom to be obtained is by obedience to God’s perfect will.
 - (2) No believer who loves God would ever consider His commandments to be harsh and unbearable. (I John 5:3)
 4. The commandment is “**that we love one another.**” (1:5)
 - a. Christian love is not simply an emotion, but an act of the will.
 - (1) It is treating other people the same way God treats us.
 - (2) It is possible to love people that we really do not “like.”
 - b. We may not be able to “will” our affections at all times, but we can “will” our attitudes and actions.
- C. We must Abide in the Truth. (1:7-11)
1. From encouraging truth, John turned to opposing error.
 2. John joined with Peter (II Peter 2:1) to warn that there are deceivers in the world.
 - a. The word “**deceiver**” implies much more than teaching false doctrine.
 - b. It includes leading people into false living.
 - c. John has already made it clear that truth and life go together.
 3. It takes constant spiritual vigilance to protect a family or a local church from the insidious attacks of false teachers.
 - a. To abide in the truth means to remain true to the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.
 - b. The false teachers had departed from the truth and the church fellowship and, therefore, they were dangerous.
 4. John points out three dangers the church and its members face because of the deceivers:
 - a. The danger of losing what has already been gained. (1:8)
 - (1) False teachers offer something you do not have, when in reality they take away what you already have!
 - (2) All believers will receive praise at the Judgment Seat of Christ (I Corinthians 4:5), but some will receive more rewards than others (I Corinthians 3:11-15).
 - b. The danger of going beyond the limits of the Word of God. (1:9)
 - (1) The word translated “**transgresseth**” means “*to pass the assigned limits.*”
 - (2) The apostates invite us to join them because they have something “new” to share.
 - (3) But, their “progress” is such that they abandon the doctrine of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The danger of fellowshiping with these false teachers. (1:10)
 - (1) It risks infection of the believer’s testimony by association.
 - (2) It gives the false teacher the impression that his heretical doctrine is acceptable.
- D. We must Fellowship in the Truth. (1:12-13)
1. Note how the gospel had spread throughout this family.
 2. First, one sister was reached for Christ, then the other sister, and then both their children.

Conclusion: This little epistle is a perfect gem of sacred correspondence. But we must not forget the major thrust of the letter: “*Be Alert!*” There are many deceivers in the world!

JOURNEY THROUGH III JOHN

Introduction: John's emphasis in his first epistle is on love and fellowship. His second epistle punctuates continuing in truth. In this third epistle, John's stress is upon love and truth in contrast to pride and strife.

I. Background.

- A. This is the second shortest book in the Bible.
- B. In his second epistle John dealt with the problem of welcoming deceivers (which should not have been done); in this epistle he discusses the error of not receiving believers (which should have been done).
- C. This epistle gives an excellent, though brief, glimpse of church life at the close of the first century.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. Gaius: the Exhorter. (1:1-8)
 - 1. The opening greeting. (1:1)
 - a. There is no question that the Apostle John loved this man.
 - b. Four times John calls him **"beloved."** (1:1, 2, 5, 11)
 - c. Verse 4 suggests that Gaius may have been one of John's converts, and, of course, those we personally lead to faith in Christ are especially precious to us.
 - 2. His spiritual health. (1:2)
 - a. John may have been hinting that his dear friend was not well physically.
 - (1) John also makes it clear that Gaius' spiritual health was evident to all. (cp. II Corinthians 4:16)
 - (2) Physical health is the result of nutrition, exercise, cleanliness, proper rest, and the disciplined order of a balanced life.
 - b. Spiritual health is the result of similar factors.
 - (1) We must nourish ourselves with the Word of God. (I Peter 2:2)
 - (2) We must **"work out"** that nourishment in godly exercise. (Philippians 2:12-13)
 - (3) We must keep ourselves clean. (II Corinthians 7:1)
 - (4) We must avoid the contamination and pollution that is in the world. (II Peter 1:4)
 - (5) While exercise and service are important, it is also important that we rest in the Lord and gain new strength through fellowship with Him. (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - 3. His good testimony. (1:3-4)
 - a. Gaius was recognized as a man who obeyed the Word of God and **"walked in truth."**
 - b. What made Gaius such a good testimony was God's truth.
 - (1) The truth was **"in [him]"** and enabled him to walk in obedience to God's will.
 - (2) Gaius read the Word, meditated on it, delighted in it, and then practiced it in his daily life. (cp. Psalm 1:1-3)
 - (3) It is not enough to merely hear the Word of God or read the Word of God; we must inwardly **"digest"** the Word of God and make it part of our inner person. (I Thessalonians 2:13)
 - 4. His practical ministry. (1:5-8)
 - a. Gaius was a **"fellow-helper"** to the truth. (1:8)
 - (1) In practical ways, he assisted those who were ministering the Word.
 - (2) We have no indication that Gaius himself was a preacher or a teacher, but he opened his heart and home to those who were.
 - b. Gaius not only opened his home, but he also opened his heart and his hands to give financial aid to his guests.
 - (1) The phrase **"bring forward on their journey"** means *"to assist on their journey."*
 - (2) Our love must be expressed by our deeds. (I John 3:16-18)
 - c. What is the motivation for this kind of practical ministry to the saints?
 - (1) It honors God. (1:6)
 - (a) **"After a godly sort"** means *"worthy of God,"* or *"as befits God."*
 - (b) We are never more God-like than when we are sacrificing to serve others.
 - (2) It witnesses to the lost. (1:7)

- (a) While Jesus definitely teaches that God's servants deserve support (Luke 10:7), the standard in the New Testament is that this support comes from God's people.
 - (b) **"Taking nothing of the Gentiles,"** means that these workers would not solicit help from the unsaved.
 - i) When ministers, churches, and other religious organizations go about soliciting from unsaved people and various businesses, it makes Christianity look cheap and commercial.
 - ii) When God's people adequately support God's servants, it is a powerful testimony to the lost.
 - (3) It shows obedience to God. (1:8)
 - (a) Hospitality and support is not only an opportunity, but an obligation. (Galatians 6:6-10)
 - (b) It is unbiblical for church members to send their tithes all over the world and neglect to support the ministry of their own local church.
 - (4) It furthers the truth. (1:8)
- B. Diotrephes: the Egotist. (1:9-10)
 - 1. We can do without this kind of church member.
 - 2. Diotrephes was motivated by pride.
 - a. Instead of giving the preeminence to Jesus Christ he claimed it for himself. (Colossians 1:18)
 - b. He was unlike John the Baptist who said, **"He must increase, but I must decrease"** (John 3:30).
 - c. The Holy Spirit is grieved when the members of the Body are not permitted to exercise their gifts because one member must have his own way. (Ephesians 4:29-30)
 - 3. Guilty of five charges:
 - a. He attempted to occupy the leading place. (1:9)
 - b. He refused to acknowledge the leadership of John. (1:9, cp. Hebrews 13:7, 17)
 - c. He slandered John. (1:10a, cp. I Timothy 5:19)
 - d. He refused to help the brethren. (1:10b)
 - e. He disciplined those who disagreed with him. (1:10c)
 - (1) The New Testament does teach church discipline, and these instructions must be obeyed. (Matthew 18:15-20)
 - (2) Discipline is not a weapon for a dictator to use to protect himself, but rather a tool for a congregation to promote purity and glorify God.
 - 4. People like Diotrephes will always have their enthusiastic followers because many sincere and untaught believers prefer to follow such leaders. (II Peter 2:1-3)
 - a. It is this kind of member that destroys churches.
 - b. They are eager for power and authority, they trample on the truth, they ignore the Bible, and they grieve the Holy Spirit.
- C. Demetrius: the Example. (1:11-14)
 - 1. Demetrius was the kind of Christian worthy of imitation.
 - a. It is right to imitate human leaders if they are imitating Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 11:1)
 - b. You and I cannot see God, but we can see God work in the lives of His children.
 - 2. Demetrius was a man worth imitating because he had a **"good report"** from the church.
 - a. All the members knew him, loved him, and thanked God for his consistent life and ministry.
 - b. While it can be a dangerous thing when **"all men shall speak well of you"** (Luke 6:26), it is a wonderful thing when believers can agree to commend one's life and testimony.
 - 3. Demetrius also had a good witness from the Word itself.
 - a. Like Gaius, Demetrius walked in the Truth and obeyed the Truth.
 - b. John, the apostle, knew firsthand that Demetrius was a man of God, and he was not ashamed to confess it.

Conclusion: Churches today need more members like Gaius and Demetrius, saints who love the Bible, the church family, and lost souls. We can do without those like Diotrephes.

JOURNEY THROUGH JUDE

Introduction: The little epistle of Jude was written under special constraint, as the writer himself tells us in verse 3. The constraint arose from a disturbing consideration of the apostasy which was blighting Christian assemblies through the subversive teachings of false brethren. It speaks with special force to our own times.

I. Background.

A. Author.

1. The writer was the half-brother of Christ, names “**Judas.**” (Mark 6:3)
 2. Jude does not boast of his human relationship to Christ, but prefers to call himself a “**servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.**”
 3. Though Jude speaks of judgment, he is careful to point out that the true believer is kept in Christ. (Jude 1:1, 24)
- #### B. Jude started to write a message on “*salvation*,” but was led by the Spirit to abandon that theme and warned the believers of the false teachers now in the church.
1. Many of the verses in Jude parallel II Peter 2.
 2. Jude was written later, for Peter prophesied of these coming false teachers. (II Peter 2:1, 3:3)
 - a. Jude says that they were present in his days and were at work.
 - b. He reminds us that Peter had already announced their condemnation.
 3. Jude’s response to these false teachers is for believers to “**contend for the faith.**” (1:3)

II. The Structure Of The Book.

A. The Call to “**Contend for the Faith**” – the common salvation. (1:1-3)

B. The Necessity to “**Contend for the Faith**” – there are apostate teachers. (1:4-16)

1. The subtly depraved teachers were guilty of two basic denials. (1:4)
 - a. Denying grace by “**turning**” it into lasciviousness, or carnality.
 - (1) They taught that the more believers sinned the more they magnified the grace of God.
 - (2) Paul taught that the Law was added to vividly show the superabundance of God’s grace. (Romans 5:20)
 - (3) God’s grace is never an excuse to sin. (Romans 6:1-2)
 - b. Denying “**the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.**”
2. The certain doom of these depraved teachers is illustrated by three historical examples of like Divine vengeance. (1:5-7)
 - a. Egypt. (1:5)
 - (1) God delivered Israel from the Egyptian plagues, but afterward destroyed many.
 - (2) Many were “*in the nation*,” yet destroyed because of their unbelief.
 - (3) Merely being “*in the church*” is no evidence of salvation.
 - b. Angels. (1:6)
 - (1) Jude seems to be referring to the angels who consorted with the daughters of men in Genesis 6.
 - (2) These angels who defied God were judged and imprisoned.
 - (3) If God punishes angels, surely He will not spare these false teachers. (II Peter 2:4)
 - c. Sodom and Gomorrah. (1:7)
 - (1) The phrase “**even as**” suggests that the sins of these cities parallel the fornication of the angels in verse 6.
 - (2) Jude says that the judgment of these cities is an illustration of hell.
3. The character and conduct of these false teachers. (1:8-11)
 - a. Their character and conduct described. (1:8-10)
 - (1) Michael, the archangel, is the special angel for Israel. (Daniel 12:1)
 - (2) The reference here has to do with the burial of Moses’ body. (Deuteronomy 34:6)
 - (3) Jude’s point is that the archangel did not rebuke Satan, but allowed God to do the rebuking.

- (4) These false teachers, in their pride, despised authority and spoke evil of holy things in their sin and ignorance.
 - b. Their character and conduct compared to three historical figures. (1:11)
 - (1) The way of Cain is the way of man-made religion, rejecting the revelation of God and the blood of the Savior. (I John 3:11-12)
 - (2) Balaam hired himself out as a prophet and epitomizes deceit and covetousness. (Numbers 22-24)
 - (3) The sin of Korah was rebellion against duly constituted authority. (Numbers 16:1-3)
- 4. The false teacher's deceptive draperies exposed. (1:12-13)
 - a. Pride, greed, and rebellion summarize the iniquities of these ungodly men.
 - b. Their deceptions are summarized:
 - (1) They are selfish. (1:12)
 - (2) They have no water to offer thirsty souls. (1:12)
 - (3) They are fruitless. (1:12)
 - (4) They are unstable, as trees plucked up by the roots. (1:12)
 - (5) They are frothy. (1:13)
 - (6) They are like momentary shooting stars. (1:13)
- 5. This section closes with Enoch's prophecy of coming destruction upon all such. (1:14-16)
- C. The Means to "**Contend for the Faith**" – our true resources. (1:17-23)
 - 1. Remember God's Word. (1:17-19)
 - a. Apostasy has been foretold.
 - (1) From the very beginning, Satan has attacked the Word of God.
 - (2) Once we begin to question God's Word, we are vulnerable to Satan's other attacks, for only the truth of the Word can protect us from the lies of the devil. (Isaiah 8:20)
 - b. Three things to remember.
 - (1) Remember who gave you the Word. (1:17)
 - (2) Remember what they gave you. (1:18)
 - (3) Remember why they gave it to you. (1:19)
 - 2. Build yourself up. (1:20-21)
 - a. Build on the truth of the Word of God.
 - b. Pray by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Keep yourself in the love of Christ.
 - d. Look to the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. Exercise spiritual discernment. (1:22-23)
 - a. There are some people who are wavering. (1:22)
 - (1) These people are converted, but have not been grounded in the truth.
 - (2) Our responsibility is to show compassion toward them, by seeking to lead them away from the influences of the apostates.
 - b. There are some who have accepted the apostasy and left the fellowship. (1:23a)
 - (1) These people need to be snatched out of the fire.
 - (2) The angels took Lot by the hand and pulled him out of Sodom, and sometimes that must be done in order to rescue ignorant and unstable believers from the clutches of false teachers.
 - c. There are some to beware of. (1:23b)
 - (1) Stronger believers must never think they are beyond satanic influence.
 - (2) Even while serving the Lord and seeking to rescue one of His children, we can become defiled by those we want to help.
- D. This little epistle ends with a prophetic doxology visualizing an ultimate heavenly consummation. (1:24-25)

Conclusion: As you read this epistle, you can not help but realize that Christians must defend the truth and oppose false teachers. Christ is guarding us, but He wants us to guard the deposit of truth He has left in our hands (II Timothy 1:13-14, I Timothy 6:20). There is awful doom awaiting those who reject Christ and teach Satan's lies. We might be able to save some, but others we can only pity. May God help us to be faithful until He comes.

JOURNEY THROUGH REVELATION

Introduction: Revelation is the only prophetic book in the New Testament (in contrast to the seventeen books in the Old Testament). It is the only book in all the Bible which begins by promising a special blessing on those who study it (1:3), and ends by promising a special curse on those who add or take away from it (22:18-19).

I. Background.

- A. The Apostle John took over the pastoral work in Ephesus about A.D. 70, including the churches in the surrounding area – the **“seven churches of Asia Minor.”** (Revelation 2-3)
 - 1. The Roman Emperor Nero had persecuted Christians in Rome, but the fiery trial that Peter had promised had not yet begun.
 - 2. When Domitian became emperor (A.D. 81-96), the persecution was intensified.
 - a. Domitian was as cold-blooded a murderer as you will ever meet in the pages of history.
 - b. He promoted *“emperor worship”* and began his announcements, *“Our Lord and God Domitian commands . . .”*
 - c. Everyone who spoke to him had to address him as *“Lord and God.”*
 - d. He was bitter in his treatment of both Jews and Gentiles, and it was at his command that John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, a rocky island ten miles long and six miles wide, in the Aegean Sea.
 - 3. It was from this isolated spot that John received the visions that make up **“The Revelation.”**
- B. Four broad interpretations have been suggested for this book:
 - 1. Preterist – states that everything in this book took place in the first century.
 - 2. Historical – states that the fulfillment of church history is seen in the symbols of Revelation.
 - 3. Spiritual – states that Revelation is a symbolical presentation of the conflict between Christ and Satan, good and evil.
 - *4. Futurist – states that Revelation is prophetic, with chapters 6-22 describing a scenario of events that will transpire on earth and in heaven after the Church is Raptured.
- C. The Key verse to understanding Revelation is 1:19, **“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.”**
 - 1. **“The things which thou hast seen.”** (Chapter 1)
 - 2. **“The things which are.”** (Chapters 2-3)
 - 3. **“The things which shall be hereafter.”** (Chapters 4-22)
- D. The Book of Revelation is truly **“the Revelation of Jesus Christ,”** God’s Lamb.

II. The Structure Of The Book.

- A. The Witnesses of the Lamb instructed. (1:1-3:22)
 - 1. The servant of God. (1:1-10)
 - a. The source of the message. (1:1-2)
 - b. The promises of the message. (1:3a, b, c)
 - c. The reason for the message. (1:3d)
 - d. The recipients of the message. (1:4)
 - e. The theme of the message. (1:5)
 - f. The doxology of the message. (1:6)
 - g. The expectation of the message. (1:7-8)
 - h. The location of the message. (1:9)
 - i. The time and mode of the message. (1:10)
 - 2. The Son of God. (1:11-20)
 - a. His declaration. (1:11)
 - b. His description. (1:12-16)
 - c. His deliverance. (1:17-18)
 - d. His definition. (1:19-20)
 - 3. The churches of God. (2:1-3:22)

- a. Ephesus. (2:1-7)
 - b. Smyrna. (2:8-11)
 - c. Pergamos. (2:12-17)
 - d. Thyatira. (2:18-29)
 - e. Sardis. (3:1-6)
 - f. Philadelphia. (3:7-13)
 - g. Laodicea. (3:14-22)
- B. The Worship of the Lamb invited. (4:4-5:14)
 - 1. The initiation. (4:1-11)
 - a. John sees the Father. (4:1-3)
 - b. John sees the twenty-four elders. (4:4-5)
 - c. John sees the four living creatures. (4:6-8)
 - d. John sees the worship in heaven. (4:9-11)
 - 2. The proclamation. (5:1-2)
 - 3. The investigation. (5:3)
 - 4. The lamentation. (5:4)
 - 5. The manifestation. (5:5-7)
 - 6. The adoration. (5:8-14)
- C. The Wrath of the Lamb invoked. (6:1-19:21)
 - 1. He pours out the seven seal judgments. (6:1-17, 8:1-6)
 - 2. He accepts the praise of the multitudes. (7:1-17)
 - 3. He sounds the seven trumpet judgments. (8:7-9:21, 11:15-19)
 - 4. He reveals the little book and two witnesses. (10:1-11:19)
 - 5. He allows the devil to reign. (12:1-13:18)
 - 6. He proclaims various announcements. (14:1-15:8)
 - 7. He pours out the seven vial judgments. (16:1-21)
 - 8. He destroys the world's religious systems. (17:1-18)
 - 9. He destroys the world's political and economic systems. (18:1-24)
 - 10. He defeats sinners and Satan at Armageddon. (19:1-21)
- D. The Reign of the Lamb instituted. (20:1-15)
 - 1. The great chain. (20:1-3)
 - 2. The great resurrection. (20:6)
 - 3. The great reign. (20:4-6)
 - 4. The great revolt. (20:7-10)
 - 5. The great throne. (20:11-15)
 - a. The fact of this throne. (Hebrews 9:27)
 - b. The Judge of this throne. (John 5:22)
 - c. The jury of this throne: five books.
 - (1) The book of conscience. (Romans 2:15)
 - (2) The book of words. (Matthew 12:36-37)
 - (3) The book of secret works. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)
 - (4) The book of public works. (Matthew 16:27)
 - (5) The Book of Life. (Revelation 20:15)
 - d. The judged of this throne. (Psalm 9:17)
 - e. The judgment at this throne. (Revelation 20:14-15)
- E. The Wife of the Lamb introduced. (21:1-22:21)
 - 1. Her habitation – the fabulous city. (21:1-22:5)
 - 2. Her Husband – the Faithful Savior. (22:6-21)
 - 3. His promise. (22:6-7, 12, 20)
 - 4. His description. (22:13, 16)
 - 5. His invitation. (22:17)
 - 6. His warning. (22:18-19)

Conclusion: Revelation is the outline of God's program for human history. What began ages ago in the first creation will ultimately be completed in the new creation. It shows us that "*history is His story*," that human affairs are in the hands of our victorious Christ. To study this book should encourage us in daily living, inspire us to faithful service, enable us to live clean lives, and ready us for His soon return. **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."**

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