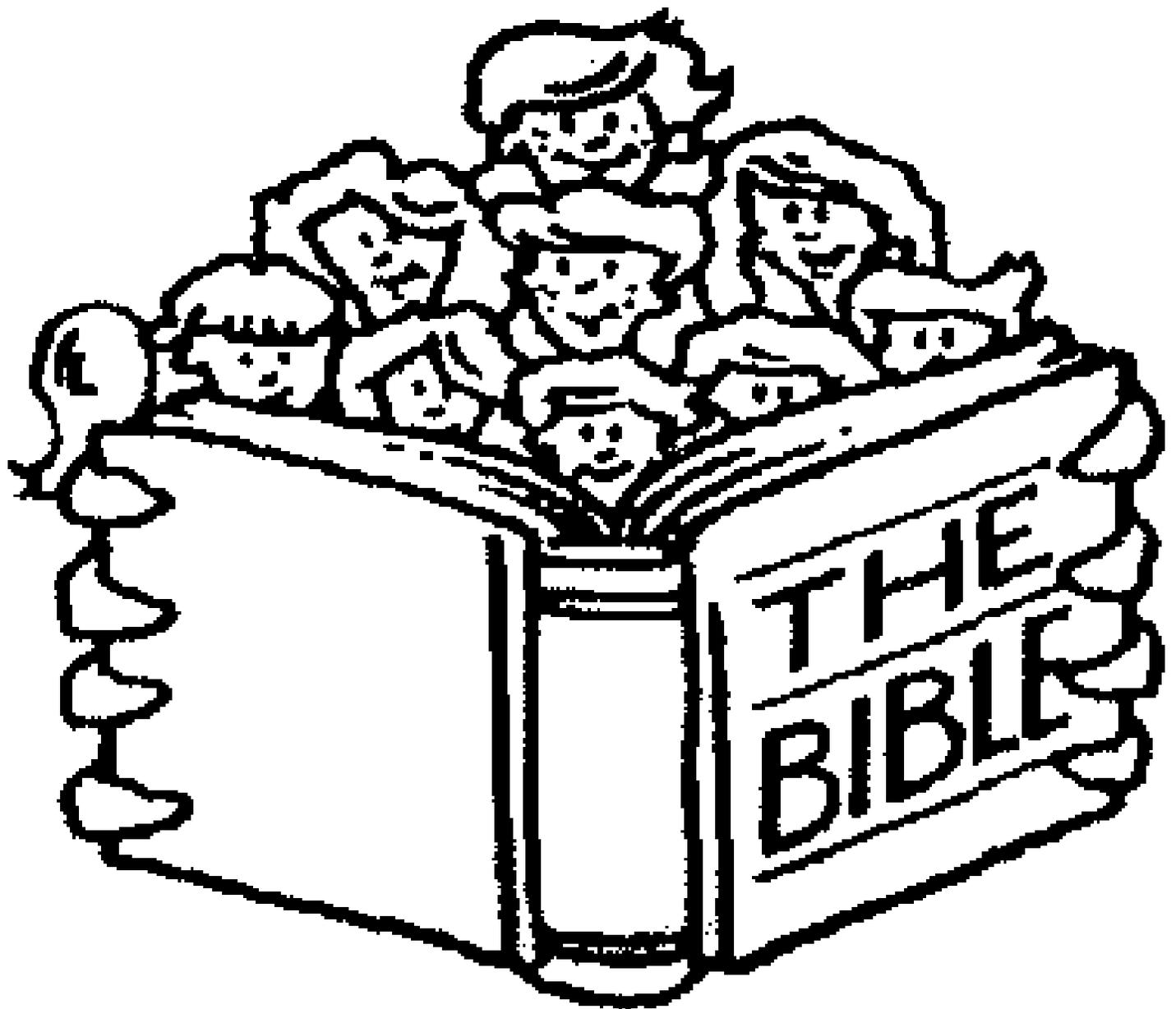


The Outlined Bible



Steve Flatt

Introduction

The outlined Bible provides a quick reference for each book in the Bible. As a reference book it gives limited background information on the author and purpose of the book, a brief outline and key themes. There are also footnotes referring to various other The Bible Way Online lessons should you desire a more detail study.

In your personal Bible study, you are encouraged to read directly from your Bible, perhaps from one than one version, rather than accept opinions from a preacher, pastor, or some writer, including writers of BibleWay Publishing.

The Outlined Bible lessons were adapted from "A Look at The Book" a series of Bible studies by Steve Flatt
"except for the minor prophets which were from The Minor Prophets by Al Maxey called "."

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THE FIRST LOOK AT THE BOOK

Introduction: Some basic factors behind the study:

The mission - The mission is to survey the entire Bible and establish a foundation for a lifetime of study.

The motivation - The motivation is to help us better understand the covenants, continuity and character development of scripture.

The method - The method will focus directly on the Bible. In our study the Bible is primary and these notes are secondary.

I. Basic Facts About the Bible:¹

A. The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by 40 persons over a period of 1600 years.

1. Its parts were originally penned in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.
2. God used men of all walks of life - fishermen, shepherds, poets, prophets, kings, physicians, etc. - as His authors.
3. It combines with remarkable unity to form one central message.

B. The Bible is divided into the Old and the New Testaments.

1. The Old Testament:

- a. God reveals the beginning – creation, man and man’s sin (rebellion). (Genesis 1- 3:19)
- b. Shares God's covenant to redeem and bless all mankind. (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3)
- c. Focuses primarily on God's use of the Jews as the race of people He chose to bring about redemption through Christ. (Exodus 19:4-6; 34:27)
- d. Contains the Law of Moses, Covenant with the Jews, which is fulfilled with the coming of Christ, His atoning sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection. (Matthew 5:17; Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:23-25; and Hebrews 9:15-17)
- e. Is still valuable for our study. (Romans 15:4; II Corinthians 10:11)
- f. Contains 39 books that can be divided or grouped into the following manner:
 - [1] Law (5 books): Genesis-Deuteronomy
 - [2] History (12 books): Joshua - Esther
 - [3] Poetry (5 books): Job-Song of Solomon
 - [4] Major Prophets (5 books): Isaiah-Daniel
 - [5] Minor Prophets (12 books): Hosea-Malachi

2. The New Testament also referred to as the New Covenant

- a. Is the New Covenant given through Christ? (Jeremiah 31:31-35; I Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 9:15)

- b. Is God's revelation and will for all peoples? (Mark 16:15-16; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 2:11-22)
- c. Provides what we know of Jesus Christ, His plan for our salvation, and His will for our lives. (See II. C. below)
- d. Contains 27 books that can be divided or grouped in the following manner:
 - [1] Gospels (4 books): Matthew - John
 - [2] Church History (1 book): Acts
 - [3] Pauline Epistles (13 books): Romans - Philemon
 - [4] General Epistles (8 books): Hebrews - Jude
 - [5] Prophecy (1 book): Revelation

II. Key Premises About the Bible:

- A. The Bible is "God-breathed" or "inspired." - "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16-17)
 - 1. This claim of inspiration is found throughout the scripture. (II Peter 1:21; II Samuel 23:1-3; Jeremiah 1:9; Micah 3:8; Acts 1:16; II Corinthians 14:37, etc.)
 - 2. Inspiration entails infallibility and inerrancy
 - 3. The way God inspired the human writers varied:
 - a. Verbal utterances (Exodus 20 and Revelation 2-3)
 - b. Visions (Acts 10:9-16)
 - c. Directing an individual's research or study. (Luke 1:1-4)
 - d. In unknown ways (I Corinthians 11:23)
- B. The Bible represents God's complete, revealed, and objective will.
 - 1. Throughout history, God revealed more and more of His will. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 1:1-2; John 16:12-13; Acts 2:4; II Corinthians 13:8-10)
 - 2. Jesus promised the apostles that the Spirit of God would guide them "into all truth" (i.e. - all revealed truth - John 13:16) during their lifetimes.
 - 3. Near the chronological end of the giving of scripture, the apostles told believers to be on guard against false revelation. "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8-9)
- C. The Bible is how we came to know Christ and the salvation He offers.
 - 1. There are several secular historical references to Jesus.² However, the Bible is the only source that gives us an inspired account of the mind and work of Christ. (Philemon 3:8-10; 1 Peter 2:21)
 - 2. One's faith in Christ is rooted in what he learns through scripture. (Romans 1:16-17; 10:17)
- D. The Word of God sets the direction and course of one's life. (Psalm 119:105; II Peter 1:19; Proverbs 3:5-6)
- E. The Bible can be understood by the common man.
 - 1. The Bible was written in the common languages of the day with the expectation that it would be read and heard by all.
 - 2. Believers are encouraged to seek and feed on the word. (I Peter 2:2)
 - 3. Paul wanted his letters read to a large audience. (cf. I Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16)
 - 4. If you and I cannot understand God's Word, it poses either a power or character dilemma with God.

GENESIS

Introduction: The book of Genesis is an epic, a drama on a grand scale. We see God's good creation progressively soured as a result of man's sin. However, we also see how God's eternal plan to save and restore fallen man begins to unfold.

Name:

- 1. Genesis means origin or beginning

2. The first four words of Genesis are "In the beginning God."

Author: The author is Moses.

1. The New Testament regards him as the author of the Pentateuch. (Matthew 19:8; John 5:46-47; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:5)
2. The account of his death must have been added by a later writer. (Deuteronomy 34)

Purpose and main message:

1. Genesis is accurately called the "book of beginnings," for it relates:
 - a. The origin of the universe. (1:1-25)
 - b. The origin of man and woman, marriage and the home. (1:26-2)
 - c. The origin of sin and death. (3:1-7)
 - d. The origin of God's promise to redeem humanity. (3:8-24)
 - e. The origin of sacrifice. (4:1-15)
 - f. The origin of civilization. (4:16-9:29)
 - g. The origin of diverse languages and nations. (10-11)
 - h. The origin of the Hebrew nation as a specially chosen people through whom the Messiah would come into the world. (15-20)
2. Genesis sets the stage for the great story of Redemption.

I. Outline of the Book (Genesis covers the historical period from creation to the descent of the Hebrew people into Egypt in the days of Joseph.)

A. Creation of the world and the beginnings of mankind. (1:11-11:32)

1. Genesis opens with the creation of the universe as man's home. (1:1-2:3)
2. Attention quickly turns to humanity's place in the creation. (2:4-25)
3. Sin enters the world and we learn of the consequences of the fall. (3:1-4:26)
4. As sin increased, God purged the earth of sin by the Flood. (6:1-9:29)
5. Noah and his family were the means for the survival of the human race and the repopulating of the earth. (10:1-11:32)

B. The life of Abraham. (12:1-25:18)

1. God called Abram and made a covenant with him and his descendants. (12:1-14:24)
2. The covenant was confirmed with circumcision as its sign. (15:1-17:27)
3. Sin persisted, as can be seen in events at Sodom. (18:1-19:28)
4. Even Abraham himself acted shamefully against Abimelech. (20:1-18)
5. After years of waiting for God to fulfill His promise, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. (21:1-34)
6. Abraham's faith was severely tested when God told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. (22:1-19)
7. Isaac marries Rebekah, and we read of other accounts of Abraham. (22:20-25:18)

C. The life of Isaac and his family. (25:19-26, 35)

1. Esau and Jacob are born to Isaac (25:19-28), and the older sells his birthright to the younger. (25:29-43)
2. As his father had done earlier, Isaac deceived Abimelech II. (26:1-16)
3. Isaac faces conflict, and Esau's marriages displease his parents. (26:17-35)

D. The life of Jacob. (27:1-28:22)

1. Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother's blessing, leading to his flight into exile where he encountered the Lord and a renewal of God's covenant with Abraham. (27:1-28:22)
2. While in exile, Jacob married Leah and Rachel and began a large family that emerged into the nation of Israel. (29:1-36:43)

E. The life of Joseph. (37:2-50:26)

1. Joseph's boyhood (37:1-26) and Judah's experience with Tamar. (38:1-30)
2. Joseph is sold into slavery and God providentially placed him in positions which enabled him eventually to save both Egypt and his family from starvation. (39:1-41:57)
3. After years of not seeing his family, Joseph is reunited with them. (42:1-50:26)
4. Genesis closes with the Israelites prospering in Egypt.

II. Key Themes of the Book

A. Creation: the beginning of all things

1. Genesis 1-2 tells the story: God simply spoke the world into being in six days, and at the end of each day God pronounced His work good.
2. Creation declares God's glory and Majesty. (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20)
3. God gave mankind responsibility to use the creation wisely. (1:28; 2:15)
4. What an awesome responsibility we have to care for the earth
5. Can we trust Genesis 1-11 to be an accurate account of the beginning of things?
 - a. Liberal scholars label these chapters "Hebrew myth."
 - b. But Scripture treats Genesis 1-11 as historical.
(Exodus 20:11; Romans 5:12-14)

B. The Uniqueness of Human Beings.

1. On the 6th day God created both animals and Adam.
2. But man was different from the other animals; he was distinct.
 - a. Only man was made in the image or likeness of God.³ (1:26-27)
 - b. God gave life to all creatures, but only to man did He give an eternal spirit (sometimes referred to as soul).
3. Man was created for God, able to respond, and also able to reject his creator.

C. Because humans are made in God's image, each one had dignity and great value.

1. God forbade murder because man was valuable. (9:6)
2. Since human beings are made in God's image, we ought not to curse and degrade other human beings. (James 3:9)

D. The beginning of marriage and the home.

1. For an undetermined period of time Adam lived in the garden without the company of another human being. (2:18; 21-25)
2. Companionship is pictured throughout Scripture as a primary human need.
3. God chose to meet Adam's need for companionship not by creating Adam's duplicate, but by creating Adam's opposite, and also his complement.
4. God's design for marriage was for man and woman to leave father and mother, be united to one another, and to become one flesh.

E. Sin entered the world, and the fall of man occurred. Genesis 3 tells this tragic story.

1. Satan, through the serpent, placed doubt in Eve's mind. (3:1-5)
2. Because Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, their perfect home was shattered and their unrestricted relationship with God was broken.
 - a. Sin is the rejection of God's intention for our lives.
 - b. Adam and Eve allowed something other than God to be the center of their lives.
3. Sin degraded man and disrupted his relationships with:
 - a. Other human beings.
 - b. His universe, with nature.
 - c. Ourselves - now we experience doubt, fear, frustration, anxiety, depression, disease, and death.
 - d. God - sin alienates and separates us from God.
4. From the moment of the fall, the mortal effects of sin are a major theme in Scripture.
 - a. Fundamentally, sin is a heart problem. (Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9)
 - b. Ever since Adam and Eve, human beings have tried to sidestep their guilt of sin and the consequences that come with sin.

F. The beginning of salvation.⁴

1. Man's sin never changed the fact that God loves human beings whom He made in His own image.
2. However, the punishment for rebellion against God is death.
3. But even in God's punishment, His grace is evident.
4. God disciplined Adam and Eve to bring them to their senses so that they might repent and be saved and to show others the seriousness of sin. God disciplines us still because He loves us. (Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 3:11-12)

5. The first promise of salvation is Genesis 3:15.
6. Beginning with Abraham, God selected a nation of people through whom He would make salvation available to the whole world.
 - a. God wanted Israel to be his first missionaries to the rest of humanity.
 - b. It was through Israel that the Savior was to come. God sent His own Son to do what Israel alone could not do.
7. God wants to renew and restore us in His own image. (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24)
8. Like Israel, God wants us to be bearers of the gracious invitation of God - to be royal ambassadors of salvation through Jesus Christ.
9. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (I Corinthians 15:22)

EXODUS

Introduction: The book of Exodus is probably the single-most important Old Testament book for the Christian to know and understand as background to the New Testament. It records the beginning of the national life of Israel and the covenant that God made with the Israelites through Moses at Sinai. This covenant did not replace or fulfill the Covenant He made with Abraham.

Name - The word exodus means going out - departure.

Author - The book was written by Moses. (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-8; Numbers 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24)

1. He was the central figure of the book and an eyewitness of its primary events.
2. He almost certainly wrote it during the 40-year wandering period.

Purpose - The purpose of the book is to share with the reader what transpired between the initial covenant God made with Abraham and the subsequent development of the covenant nation through which the promised Messiah would come. The covenant with the Israelites through Moses would be fulfilled when its purpose was completed i.e. the coming of the Messiah.

I. Background of the book

A. The book begins in Egypt where we last left Jacob's family. (cf. Genesis 50:12-14)

1. Two hundred seventy five years have passed since Joseph died.
2. The likely date for the exodus is around 1450 BC.
 - a. 1 Kings 6:1 says Solomon began to build the Temple 480 years after Israel left Egypt.
 - b. Construction of the Temple began about 967 BC.
 - c. Adding 480 years to 967, we get a date of 1447 BC for the exodus.

B. New leadership now reigned in Egypt.

1. Joseph had risen to authority under the Hyksos' rule of Egypt.
2. The Hyksos, like the Hebrews, were of Semitic origin.
3. They ruled Egypt from approximately 2160 to 1580 BC.
4. In 1580 BC the Hyksos were expelled by native Egyptians.
 - a. The new Pharaoh did not "know" Joseph in the sense that he did not appreciate that period of his nation's history.
 - b. He also feared that the massive number of Hebrews (now totaling 2 to 3 million) would ally themselves to another foreign invader.
 - c. A plan of grievous oppression is implemented upon the Hebrews. (1:11-22)
 - [1.] It begins with slave labor. (1:11-14)
 - [2.] The plan escalates to the slaughter of children. (1:15-22)

II. The Main Message of the book

A. The primary message of Exodus is **deliverance**.

B. It vividly displays God's faithfulness in keeping and developing the covenant made with Abraham.

C. The book also reveals God's providential control over men and nations to bring about His desired end.

D. The deliverance of God's people from Egyptian bondage is a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ's deliverance of God's people from sin's bondage.

III. Outline of the book

A. The deliverance story - Exodus 1-12:

1. The book begins with the story of Moses' birth and adoption by the Egyptian princess. (2:1-10)
2. Now 40 years old Moses is incensed over an episode where he witnesses an Egyptian beat a Hebrew slave. He murders the Egyptian and flees to Midian. (2:11-15)
3. For the next 40 years, Moses serves as a shepherd of his father-in-law Jethro's flock. (2:16-25)
4. God calls Moses from a burning bush to return to Egypt to deliver the Hebrews from bondage. (3:1-4:31)
5. After Moses' initial demands of freedom, Pharaoh increases the burden of the Israelites. (5:1-6:13)
6. God then sends a series of ten terrible plagues against the land. (7:14-12:36)
7. The people begin their exodus. (12:37-51)

B. The journey to Sinai - Exodus 13-19:

1. After leaving Egypt, Pharaoh is angered and sends his chariots to destroy the Israelites. (14:1-13)
2. God parts the waters of the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to cross. As Pharaoh's chariots try to follow, the waters collapse on them. (14:14-31)
3. Moses and his sister Miriam sing praise to the Lord for his deliverance. (15:1-21)
4. Traveling from the Red Sea to the Desert of Sin (Exodus 15:22-16:1), the people began to grumble over lack of food and water. (16:2-3)
5. God responded to their grumbling by giving them:
 - a. Manna. (16:4-36)
 - b. Water at Rephidim. (17:1-7)
6. God also provided a great victory over the Amalekites. (17:8-16)
7. Jethro (Moses father-in-law), joins the Israelites and advises Moses to organize the people and administer judgments. (18:1-27)
8. They arrive at Sinai and prepare to receive the law. (19:1-25)

C. At Sinai - Exodus 20-40

1. The Ten Commandments are given. (20:1-17)
2. A series of civil laws is given. (20:18-23:19)
3. The covenant is confirmed. (24:1-18)
4. Instructions for the construction and furnishings of the Tabernacle are given. (25:1-27:21)
5. Instructions for priestly garments, Tabernacle ministry, and Sabbath observation are given. (28:1-31:18)
6. While Moses is on the mountain, the people fashion and worship a golden calf. (32:1-33:23) After the destruction of the golden calf the covenant with God is renewed. (34:1-35)
7. The account of the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings is detailed. (35:3-40:33)

IV. Key Themes of the Book

A. Deliverance

1. The four words most of us associate with the exodus are, "Let my people go!"
2. The deliverance was accomplished in such a way that only God could receive glory. (Exodus 3:14)

B. Passover

1. The Passover had its origin with the 10th plague - the death of the first born.
2. God provided a plan by which the Israelites' firstborn were "passed over" and protected. (Exodus 12)
3. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were observed together from that time forward to commemorate the exodus. (cf. Exodus 23:15)
4. The image of Passover is central to the concept of the atonement of Christ. (John 1:29; I Corinthians 5:7)

C. The Law of Moses

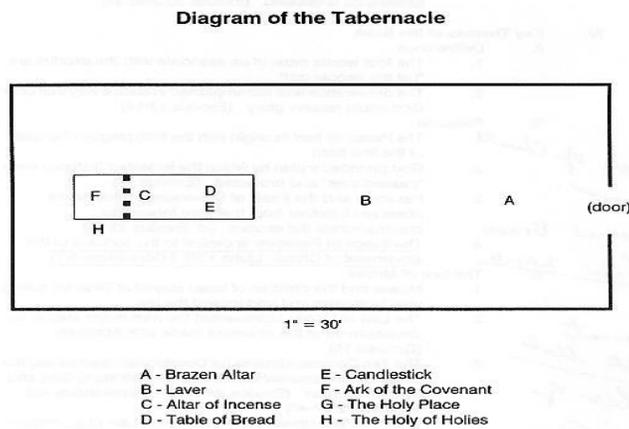
1. Moses and the children of Israel stayed at Sinai for over a year to receive and understand the law.
2. The Law of Moses represented the next major step in the development of the covenant made with Abraham. (Genesis

15)

3. The Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) represented the peoples' fundamental duties and obligations to God and their fellow man. (Exodus 20:17; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-40)
4. The basic principles undergirding the Law (e.g., respect for God, worship, marital fidelity, sanctity of human life, etc.) are part of God's eternal nature and are permanently relevant. However, the law itself (e.g. animal sacrifices, Sabbath worship, dietary restrictions) has fulfilled its purpose (and been superseded by) the coming of Jesus Christ.
5. The Law is later called:
 - a. Curse (Galatians 3:10-13)
 - b. Prison (Galatians 3:23)
 - c. That which leads us to Christ. (Galatians. 3:24)
 - d. A foreshadowing or type. (Hebrews 10:1)
 - e. A gardener or tutor. (Galatians 4:2)

D. The Tabernacle

1. It was a symbol of God's presence and leadership among the people.
2. It was also the focal point of the Israelites' worship.
3. The specifications for its construction were given at Sinai. (Exodus 25-40)



LEVITICUS

Introduction: For the casual reader Leviticus is a difficult book to wade through seemingly endless details about laws, statutes, feast days, festivals, and sacrifices can be more than a little boring. However, the book contains vital background information for a genuine appreciation for the saving work of Jesus.

Name - "Leviticus" derives its name from the work of the priestly tribe of Levi. It literally means pertaining to the Levites.

Author - The book was written by Moses. He likely wrote it about one year after the exodus.

1. Several times the phrase "the Lord spoke to Moses" appears in the book. (Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, etc.)
2. The New Testament attributes the book to Moses. (Matthew 8:4; Luke 2:22; Hebrews 8:5)

Purpose - The purpose of the book is two-fold:

1. To teach the nation of Israel the way to God.
2. To teach them how to walk with God.

I. Background of the book

A. The contents of Leviticus were likely given to Moses during the year Israel is camped at Sinai.

B. It is not a historical narrative; it is a lengthy description of types of sacrifices, commands for proper living, and rules for observance of feasts, festivals, and holy days.

II. Main Message of the book

- A. The primary message of Leviticus is holiness.
 - 1. Leviticus is sometimes referred to as the holiness code.
 - 2. The message is summarized best by Leviticus 11:45 “I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.”
- B. The people would be holy (set apart or consecrated) by:
 - 1. Following divine law.
 - 2. Offering sacrifice to atone for sin.
 - 3. Punishing sin within their community.

III. Outline of the book

- A. Laws dealing with sacrifices - Leviticus 1-7:
 - 1. The burnt offering. (1:1-17)
 - 2. The grain offering. (2:1-16)
 - 3. The peace offering. (3:1-17)
 - 4. The sin offering. (4:1-5:13)
 - 5. The guilt offering. (5:14-6:7)
 - 6. Special instructions to officiating priests. (6:8-7:38)
- B. The role and responsibilities of priests. - Leviticus 8-10.
- C. Israel's walk with God - Leviticus 11-27:
 - 1. Rules of cleanliness. (11-15)
 - 2. The Day of Atonement. (16)
 - 3. Rules for personal behavior. (17-20)
 - 4. Rules for behavior of priests. (21-22)
 - 5. Rules for festivals and holy days. (23-25)
 - a. The Sabbath. (23:1-4)
 - b. The Passover. (23:5)
 - c. Week of Unleavened Bread. (23:6-8)
 - d. Pentecost (or Feast of Harvest). (23:15-21)
 - e. The Feast of Trumpets. (23:23-25)
 - f. Day of Atonement. (23:26-32)
 - g. Feast of Tabernacles. (23:33-44)
 - h. The Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee. (24:1-25:55)
- D. Promises and warnings to God's people - Leviticus 26-27.

IV. Key Themes of the book

- A. The concept of sacrifice
 - 1. The practice of sacrifice goes all the way back to Genesis 4:4 and pervades all scripture,
 - 2. Leviticus 17:11 is a key verse to understanding the concept of sacrifice. “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”
 - a. Atonement means a payment for someone else or a substitute.
 - b. A sacrifice signified a payment or substitute.
 - 3. Five types of sacrifice are outlined in Leviticus:
 - a. **The burnt offering** (1:1-17) - The most common of the sacrifices, an unblemished animal would be totally consumed by fire as a symbol of one's total devotion to the Lord.
 - b. **The grain offering** (2:1-16) - An offering of flour or grain was made to express thanksgiving to God. It was generally offered in connection with a blood sacrifice.
 - c. **The peace offering** (3:1-17) - This voluntary offering provided the Israelites an opportunity to express their desire to fellowship with the Lord. The worshipper received part of the sacrificed animal to enjoy as a festive meal.
 - d. **The sin offering** (4:1-5:13) - This offering was made for most offenses against the law. Most of the animal's

carcass was burned outside the camp.

- e. **The guilt offering** (5:14-6:7) - If an individual violated the law by taking something that belonged to the Lord (e.g. - tithe) or man (e.g. - property), he was required to bring a ram without blemish as a sacrifice. This offering was to be accomplished by proper restitution.
 4. The first three of these sacrifices (burnt-offering, grain offering, and peace offering) were voluntary. The last two (sin offering and guilt offering) were required under certain circumstances.
 5. The entire system of sacrifice pointed to the ultimate and fulfilling sacrifice of Jesus.
- B. The priesthood - Leviticus 8-10:
1. When the tabernacle was completed, Aaron and his sons were set apart as priests by Moses. (8:1-36)
 2. All priests had to be from the tribe of Levi.
 - a. Only the direct descendants of Aaron could serve as priests: other Levites assisted in related duties.
 - b. A special tithe supported them.
 - c. Their role was to offer sacrifices and teach the law to the people. (cf. Deuteronomy 33:8-10)
 3. Priests served as mediators between the people and God. They were a "type" of the intercessory work of Christ. (Hebrews 9:1-15)
 4. The story of Nadab and Abihu (10:1-8) indicates the reverence and obedience God seeks in worship.
- C. The Festivals and Feast Days of Israel (Leviticus 23):
1. **Sabbath** - Every seventh day (Sabbath) was a sacred day of rest and worship. It was also an assembly time for the people. (23:1-3)
 2. **Passover** - The most important of all the festivals, Passover reminded Israel of God's deliverance. (23:5)
 3. **Unleavened Bread** - Observed the week following Passover, the feast of unleavened bread prolonged the Passover celebration. (23:6-8)
 4. **Pentecost (or Feast of Harvest)** - Celebrated 50 days after Passover, Pentecost was a thanksgiving holiday. It coincided with the harvest. (23:15-21)
 5. **Trumpets** - This holiday marked the start of the Hebrew new year. (23:23-25)
 6. **Day of Atonement** - This was the one day each year when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice for the sin of all the people. Unlike the other feast days, this was a time of fasting and mourning. (23:26-32)
 7. **Feast of Tabernacles** - To commemorate the 40 years of wilderness wandering, the Israelites would live in tents for a week. (23:33-44)
 8. **The Holy Days** of the Hebrews were symbolic of the wonderful aspects of God's nature:
 - a. **Sabbath** – God as Creator.
 - b. **Passover** – God as deliverer.
 - c. **Pentecost** – God as Provider.
 - d. **Day of Atonement** – God as Holy and Gracious.

NUMBERS

Introduction: Numbers tells the story of the cause and duration of the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness. More specifically, it focuses on events that occurred in the beginning and end of that period. The Bible is almost silent on the intervening 38 years. Numbers is a graphic account of God's plan, power, punishment, patience and providence for His covenant people.

Name - Numbers comes to our English Bibles from the Septuagint.

1. That title reflects the two censuses God took of His people. (Numbers 1:26)
2. The Hebrew title for the book is "In The Wilderness."

Author - Moses penned Numbers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1. The detailed account, particularly involving leadership situations, points to Moses as the eye-witness author.
2. Numbers 33:2 tells us, "At the Lord's command Moses recorded

the stages in their journey."

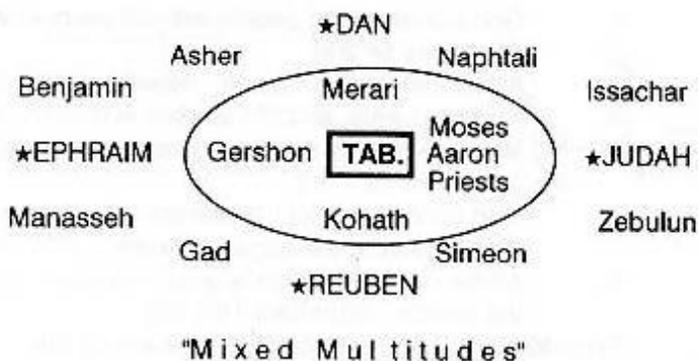
Purpose - Numbers was written to record Israel's history from their departure at Sinai to their arrival in Moab on the east side of the Jordan River.

1. In that process, it reveals the unbelief and unfaithfulness of the people.
2. It then describes God's punishments for their lack of faith.
3. It ultimately presents God's providence and protection in keeping His covenant.

I. Background of the book

- A. Numbers was likely finished at the end of the 40-year wandering - around 1406 BC.
- B. It is interesting to note the need for organization as 2-3 million would be mobilized.
1. Numbers 2 goes to some detail describing the arrangement of the camp.
 2. The camp layout looked like this:

PLAN OF THE CAMP OF ISRAEL



II. The Main Message of the book:

- A. The book reveals the faithlessness of men. (Numbers 11:1; 14:2; 16:2 6:41; 20:2; 21:4)
- B. The book reveals the faithfulness of God. (Numbers 11:31-32; 20:11 21:9; 33:50-54)

III. Outline of the book

- A. Preparing to leave Sinai. (Numbers 1-9)
1. Thirteen months after the exodus, God commanded that a Census be taken of potential soldiers. (1:1-16)
 - a. The census included men age 20 and over. (1:17-46)
 - b. The Levites were exempt from the main census. (Numbers 1:47-54). They were counted separately and given specific duties. (3:1-4:49)
 2. Before the march, the people were given specific instructions. (5:1-9:23)
 - a. Laws were given about:
 - [1.] Expelling the unclean from the camp. (5:1-4)
 - [2.] Restitution. (5:5-10)
 - [3.] Adultery. (5:11-31)
 - b. The option and description of the Nazirite vow was given. (6:1-27)
 - c. Offerings were made for the dedication of the Tabernacle. (7:1-89)
 - d. The Levites were consecrated for their work. (8:1-26)
 - e. The Passover was observed. (9:1-14)
 - f. The cloud over the Tabernacle (9:15-23) and the blowing of the trumpets (10:1-10) were explained.
- B. From Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 10-12):
1. The march toward Canaan begins. (10:11-36)
 2. The people complain about a lack of meat. (11:1-9)
 - a. Moses seeks and receives help from God. (11:10-30)
 - b. God sends quail to the camp to feed the people. (11:31-35)

3. Aaron and Miriam rebel against Moses. (12:1-16)

C. The Wandering in the Wilderness (Numbers 13-19):

1. After 10 of the 12 spies bring back a frightening report of Canaan, the people balk against God's plan. (13:1-14:19)
2. God punishes the people with 40 years of wandering. (14:20f)
3. Additional laws are given. (15:1-41)
4. Korah, a Levite, and 250 leaders in Israel openly challenge Moses' authority and were destroyed by God. (16:1-50)
5. God confirmed that the priesthood would be exclusively through Aaron's lineage. (17:1-3)
6. Additional information is given regarding provision from the priests. (18:1-32)

D. From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab (Numbers 20-36):

1. Moses sins and will not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. (20:1-13)
2. Miriam and Aaron die. (20:1-28)
3. Israel defeats Sihon, King of the Amorites (21:21-25), and Og, King of Bashan (21:23-35), and gains control of much of the east side of Jordan.
4. Fearing the Israelites, King Balak, King of Moab, hired a prophet named Balaam to pronounce a curse on Israel. Instead, God uses him to bless Israel. (23:1-24:25)
5. Camped near Moab, the Israelites began to take Moabite prostitutes and worship Baal. (25:1-5)
6. As punishment, God sent a plague that destroyed 24,000 of the Israelites. (Numbers 25:6-18)
7. The second census takes place. (26:1-51)
8. Before entering Canaan, instructions were given to the Israelites.
 - a. Joshua was selected as the new leader. (27:18-23)
 - b. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh received permission to settle on the east side of Jordan.
 - c. Moses identified six "cities of refuge." (35:1-34)

IV. Key Themes of the book

A. The census

1. Taken 13 months after the exodus, it included men age 20 and over (1:2-3, 45), excluding the tribe of Levi. (1:47-54).
2. The census totaled 603,550. (Numbers 1:46; 2:32)
 - a. That figure suggests a nation of 2 to 3 million.
 - b. Could 75 people (cf. Genesis 46:26-27) multiply to over 2 million over a 430-year period?
 - c. Skeptics scoff at the possibility of such a large number.
3. Simple calculations show it is feasible.
4. Beyond those calculations, the population total was a fulfillment of God's promises. (cf. Genesis 13:14-17; Exodus 1:7-12)

B. Faithlessness.

1. God brought his covenant people out of bondage with the pledge of a promised land.
2. He simply asked for faith in His ability to keep His promise and be their provider.
3. Three days into their journey from Sinai (10:33-36) the problems begin:
 - a. Complaining at Taberah. (11:1-3)
 - b. Complaining about a lack of meat. (11:4-35)
 - c. Jealousy and opposition to Moses by Aaron and Miriam. (12)
4. These episodes paled in comparison to the crisis of unbelief at Kadesh. (13:1-14:45)
 - a. As the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, the people wanted to send spies into the land. (Deuteronomy 1:22)
 - b. Ten of the twelve spies brought back a negative report. (13:26-29, 31-33)
 - c. The people sided with the faithless spies and wanted to return to Egypt. (14:4-10)
 - d. Thanks to Moses' intercession, God spared the nation from instant extinction (14:10-20) but condemned them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. (14:21-35)
 - e. After a night of bitter mourning, the people changed their minds and tried to take Canaan, only to be defeated. (14:39-45)
5. Hebrews 3:19 offers a summary of the Israelites' problem. "So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief."
6. The essence of a believer's life is faith (cf. II Corinthians 5:7)

C. Ingratitude and Complaining

1. Motivated by a lack of faith, the Israelites were a disgruntled, complaining lot.
2. Look on the following page at the list of complaints.
3. Israel paid a high price for her ungrateful spirit and we are warned not to do likewise. (cf. I Corinthians 10:10)

D. Foreshadowings of the work of Christ.

1. The raising of the brass serpent (Numbers 21:8-9) was a type of Jesus crucifixion. (cf. John 3:14-15)
2. Jesus likened the "bread from heaven" (manna) to himself. (cf. John 6:32-40)
3. Moses' plea for God not to obliterate the people for their sin (Numbers 14:13-19) typifies the saving, intercessory work of Christ. (Romans 5:6-8)
4. Paul tells us that Christ was active in meeting the needs in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)

SCRIPTURE	ISRAEL'S COMPLAINT	MOSES' RESPONSE	GOD'S RESPONSE
Exodus 14:11	Grumbled at the sight of Pharaoh's army	Encouraged Israel to trust God	Delivered Israel
Exodus 15:24	Grumbled about the bitter water	Cried out to God	"Healed" the water
Exodus 16:2	Grumbled about the lack of food	Rebuked Israel	Supplied manna
Exodus 17:2	Grumbled about the lack of water	Prayed to the Lord	Water from the rock
Numbers 11:1	Grumbled about God's provision of food	Anger and prayer	Judgment
Numbers 14:2	Grumbled about Moses' leadership. Can't possess Canaan	Pled with Israel, prayed to the Lord	Judgment
Numbers 16:2	Grumbled about Moses' leadership	Rebuked and prayed	Judgment
Numbers 16:41	Grumbled about Moses	Prayed	Judgment
Numbers 20:2	Grumbled about Moses and a lack of water	Rebuked Israel Struck rock	Supplied water
Numbers 21:4	Grumbled about Moses and the manna	No response	Judgment

DEUTERONOMY

Introduction: The book of Deuteronomy records for us the three farewell addresses given by Moses at the end of his career. The addresses were sequential the first one focuses on the past, the second deals with the present, and the third concerns the future.

Name - Deuteronomy means second *deuter* law *nomos*.

1. The name comes to us through the Septuagint.
2. The title was chosen because Deuteronomy does give a restatement of the law found earlier in the Pentateuch.

Author - Moses is the human agent through whom God's Spirit would provide inspiration and revelation.

1. The book makes that claim. (Deuteronomy 31:9-26)
2. Jesus attributed the work to Moses. (cf. Matthew 19:7; Mark 7:10; Luke 10:28)
3. The account of Moses' death (Deuteronomy 34:1-12) was surely added by another author -- likely Joshua.

Purpose - The main purpose of the book is to remind Israel of their special relationship with God.

1. Moses reminded the people that with their privileged position as a covenant people came a responsibility to serve God faithfully.
2. In his three messages recorded in Deuteronomy, Moses pled with the people to obey the commandments.
3. The law is given a second time because the generation that originally received the commandments on Sinai had died.

I. Background of the book

- A. Deuteronomy was written in Moses' 120th year (cf. 34:7), just as the 40 years of wandering in the desert was concluding, and Israel is about to enter Canaan.
- B. A date of 1405-1410 BC is likely.
- C. It is written while the Israelites are at their last encampment on the plains of Moab.

II. The Main Message of the book: The summarized message of the book of Deuteronomy is love, trust and obey.

- A. "And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)
- B. These concepts of love and obedience blend together to form the response God wants from His people in any generation. "If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15
- C. Israel's prosperous future in Canaan is contingent on their obedience. (Deuteronomy 6:3; 8:17-18; 11:8)

III. Outline of the book

A. Moses Reviews Israel's Past (Deuteronomy 1-4)

- 1. He reminded the people of the sin that led to the 40 years of wilderness wandering. (1:5-46)
- 2. He recounts the major events of that 40-year wandering. (2:1-3:29)
- 3. Moses exhorts them to obey the Lord. (4:1-14)
- 4. He tells them to abstain from idols. (4:15-31)
- 5. He ends this address by setting aside three "cities of refuge" east of the Jordan. (4:41-43)

B. Moses' 2nd Address - A Review of the Law for the New Generation (Deuteronomy 5-26):

- 1. Moses recites the Decalogue (5:1-21) and how he received it originally on Mt. Sinai. (5:22-33)
- 2. He stresses teaching the commands to the children and subsequent generations. (6:1-25)
- 3. He gave instructions about conquering and inhabiting the new land. (7:1-26)
- 4. Moses pleads for the Israelites to love, honor, and obey the Lord. (8-11)
- 5. Instructions for proper worship are given. (12-14)
- 6. Instructions are given about:
 - a. Dietary restrictions. (14:1-21)
 - b. Tithes. (14:22-29)
 - c. Canceling debts. (15:1-11)
 - d. Freeing servants. (15:12-18)
 - e. Animals for sacrifice. (15:19-23)
 - f. Holy days. (16:1-17)
 - g. Judges. (16:18-20)
 - h. Abstaining from idolatry. (16:21-17:7)
 - i. Law courts. (17:8-13)
 - j. Provisions for a king. (17:14-20)
 - k. Revenue for priests and Levites. (18:1-8)
 - l. Penalties for detestable practices. (18:9-22)
 - m. Cities of refuge. (19:1-14)
 - n. Witnesses. (19:15-21)
 - o. Going to war. (20)
 - p. Various personal laws and penalties. (21-25)
 - q. First fruits and tithes. (26:1-15)

C. Moses' 3rd Address - Living in the Promised Land. (27-30):

- 1. When they go into the land, Moses wants them to erect an altar on Mt. Ebal, and the Levites will give recitations there. (27)
- 2. Blessings are promised for obedience. (28:1-14)

3. Curses will accompany disobedience. (28:16-68)
4. The terms of the covenant and the choice of life or death. (29:1-30:20)

D. The Final Ministry of Moses. (Deuteronomy 31-34)

1. Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses. (31:1-8)
2. Moses predicts Israel's rebellion. (31:14-29)
3. Moses offers a prophetic song to the people. (31:30-32:43)
4. God summons Moses to Mt. Nebo. (32:48-52)
5. Before his death, Moses blesses the tribes of Israel. (33:1-29)
6. The death of Moses is recorded. (34)

IV. Key Themes of the book

A. Love and Obedience.

1. Already identified as the main message(s) of the book, it is vitally important for us to see how the former fosters the latter.
2. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. (6:4-6)
3. Unlike some have suggested, the Old Testament is not a sterile, loveless code, but a covenant based on God's love and expecting it in return.
4. In turn, the New Testament - recognized as a covenant of grace and love - expects and commands obedience. (James 1:22; Matthew 7:21)

B. The Spiritual Training of Our Children.

1. Deuteronomy 6 stresses the spiritual training of the Hebrew children.
2. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 is a key passage. "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads."
3. The stories of God's deliverance were to be passed down. (6:20-25)
4. A constant recognition of God's provisions should pervade our homes. (6:10-12)
5. Following the example of Deuteronomy 6, parents must:
 - a. Talk freely and frequently in our homes about spiritual things.
 - b. Teach and model God's commands and principles.
 - c. Make our homes centers of worship.

C. Israel as God's "chosen people" (Deuteronomy 7:6ff):

1. Deuteronomy is where the Israelites are first identified as a chosen people. (7:6)
2. They were not chosen because of size, greatness, or any merit of their own. (7:7)
3. They were chosen because of:
 - a. God's love. (7:8)
 - b. God's faithfulness to His covenant made to Abraham. (7:8)
4. Israel seemed not to understand that their selection would produce responsibility (7:11-12) rather than arrogance.
5. Fulfilling their purpose as set forth in the covenant to Abraham (to bring forth the Messiah); Israel is no longer a chosen people. The church is God's "chosen people" today – those called to righteousness through the Son of God, Christ. (cf. Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 1:4)

D. The death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34)

1. Typically viewed with sadness, the death and burial of Moses were two of the most incredible scenes in all history.
2. God personally showed Moses all the Promised Land that he would never enter.
3. Then God took him home to the real Promised Land. Uniquely, God took the body of Moses and buried it.
 - a. No one knows the site of the burial.
 - b. Jude offers an intriguing twist to the burial of Moses. "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude v. 9)

JOSHUA

Introduction: Having completed the Pentateuch, the book of Joshua begins what scholars call the "Books of Hebrew History". Under the new leadership of Joshua, Israel will cross the Jordan and finally claim the promised land.

Name - The name "Joshua" reflects the key figure of the book.

Author - Though no author is named within the book, Jewish tradition assigns the book to Joshua, himself.

1. It is clear that Joshua did write some things found in the book. (cf. Joshua 18:9:24:26)
2. The author was surely an eyewitness of the events, for details given reflect a precise knowledge of certain events. (cf. Joshua 3:14-17; 4:19-20; 5:1-12)
3. Since Joshua's death is recorded (Joshua 24:29f) along with certain information occurring later than his time (Joshua 15:13-17), it is likely that these events were added by a later author.

Purpose - The purpose of Joshua is to record the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. In so doing, it is also recording the faithfulness of God to His covenant.

I. Background of the book

A. The man Joshua:

1. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and was the son of Nun. (Numbers 13:8)
2. He was a great military leader.
 - a. Legend proposes that he received military training while in Egypt.
 - b. Moses put him in charge of the Israelite army in a key battle on the way to Sinai. (Exodus 17:8-16)
 - c. He was one of the 12 spies sent into Canaan to scout the Promised Land. (Numbers 13)
 - [1] Only Joshua and Caleb brought back a report based on faith. (Numbers 13:25-14:10)
 - [2] Because of that faith, these two were the only men above age 20 at the time of the exodus who lived to enter Canaan. (Deuteronomy 1:34-40)
 - d. He had served as Moses' special assistant through the wandering period. (Exodus 24:13; 32:17; 33:11)
3. Joshua was a great spiritual leader.
 - a. He exerted spiritual leadership in his home. "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (24:15)
 - b. He was a tremendous spiritual influence on his people. "Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel." (24:31)
4. The name Joshua means, "Jehovah is salvation."
 - a. In the Greek, his name is "Jesus."
 - b. As you might expect from his name and duties, he is a type of the Christ.

B. The book covers a period of 25-30 years between the death of Moses and the death of Joshua.

C. As they entered Canaan, God had set their "foreign policy".

1. Israel could enter into restricted treaties with nations who lived outside the boundaries of the cover of the land given to them by covenant. (Deuteronomy 20:10-15)
2. However, nations inside those boundaries were to be totally destroyed. (Deuteronomy 7:1-2; 20:16-20)

II. Main Message of the book

A. The main message of the book is Victory through faith

B. In Joshua 12, the names of 31 kings and kingdoms conquered by the Israelites are listed.

1. Amazingly, chapter 13 begins with this verse - "When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the Lord said to him, 'You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.'"
2. Joshua 13:2-7 describes the area still to be conquered.

C. These victories were accomplished by faith in a faithful God. "Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled." (Joshua 21:45)

III. Outline of the book

A. The entrance to Canaan (1:1-5:12):

1. God exhorts Joshua to be "strong and courageous" in his role as the new leader. (1:1-9)
2. Joshua responds in faith. (1:10-18)
3. In preparation for their entrance, two spies are sent to survey the land.
 - a. Rahab, a prostitute living in Jericho, hid the spies, (2:1-7)
 - b. For her help and faith, they pledged that she would be spared when the Israelites entered the land. (2:8-24)
4. At the command of God, the people crossed the Jordan on dry land and entered Canaan. (3:1-17)
5. A memorial of twelve stones was erected at Gilgal. (4:1-24)
6. While camped at Gilgal, two things were done before moving further:
 - a. All males born during the wandering period were circumcised. (5:2-9)
 - b. The Passover was observed. (5:10-12)

B. The conquest of central Canaan. (5:13-8:35)

1. Near Jericho, Joshua is assured of the Lord's presence and leadership. (5:13-15)
2. Israel conquered the great, walled city of Jericho by obediently responding in faith to God's command. (6:1-27)
3. Israel failed in its next battle against tiny Ai. (7:1-5)
 - a. The defeat was attributed to Achan's sin which was exposed and punished. (7:6-26)
 - b. Ai is then defeated. (8:1-29)
4. An altar is erected at Mt. Ebal, and the law is read to the people. (8:30-35)

C. The conquest of southern Canaan. (9:1-12:24)

1. Fearing Israel, the Gibeonites deceive them into believing they are "outsiders" and enter into a treaty. (9:1-27)
2. City after city falls before the Israelites. (10:1-43)

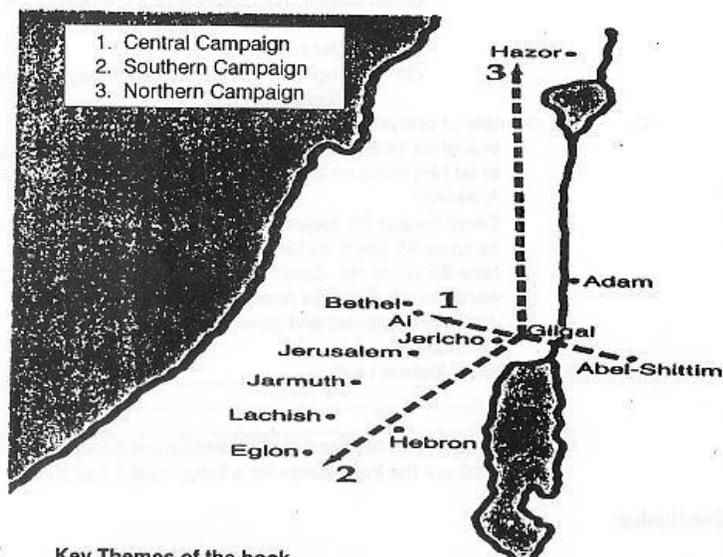
D. The conquest of northern Canaan. (11:1-12:24)

1. In an attempt to repel Israel, the remnants of the south join northern forces, and Israel faced its most formidable foe. (11:1-9)
2. Israel conquers the rest of northern Canaan. (11:10-23)
3. A summary is given of conquests on both sides of the Jordan. (12:1-24)

E. Dividing and settling the land. (13-24)

1. God commands the acquisition of additional land. (13:1-7)
2. A lengthy section of scripture details the allotment of lands to the different tribes. (13:8-21:45)
3. The eastern tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh) return home. (22:1-34)

F Joshua's Farewell addresses (Joshua 23:1-24:28) and death (24:29-33).



IV. Key Themes of the book

IV. Key Themes of the Book

A. Victorious faith – Joshua 6:

1. As Israel prepared to enter Canaan, they faced the most fortified city of the ancient world - Jericho.
2. God commanded a bizarre plan for victory. (Joshua 6:2)
3. The victory achieved because of:
 - a. God's power. (Joshua 6:2)
 - b. Israel's faith.
 - c. An obedient faith response.

B. Two "problem" passages.

1. Many have ethical questions about the utter extermination of the Canaanites. (Joshua 11:20)
 - a. History and archaeology reveal that the Canaanites were base, immoral, and idolatrous people. (cf. Deuteronomy 18:9-14)
 - b. Undoubtedly, God wanted that influence completely abolished for the sake of protecting Israel.
 - c. We underestimate God's disdain for sin. An all holy God has both the right and obligation to take vengeance on idolatry and immorality. (cf. John 2:14-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 21:8)
2. Does the story of Rahab (Joshua 2:1-7) justify lying under certain circumstances?
 - a. Rahab lied to protect the two spies sent to scout Jericho.
 - b. Some ethicists have argued that her falsehood was appropriate and justified.
 - c. In truth, Rahab was saved in spite of her lie (and in spite of her prostitution), and nowhere does scripture commend her for either.
 - d. Like us, she was saved by grace through faith.
 - e. The Bible condemns lying under any circumstance. (cf. Leviticus 19:11; Ephesians 4:25)
 - [1] The devil is the "father of all lies." (John 8:44)
 - [2] Impenitent liars face an ominous destiny. (Revelation 21:27)

C. An example of undying faith and zeal – (Joshua 14)

1. In Joshua 14:6f, Caleb makes a plea to his old friend Joshua to let him conquer a mountain fortified by Anakites (or Anakim).
2. Caleb begins his request by recounting their faithfulness as spies 45 years earlier.
3. Now 85 years old, Caleb claims an undying vigor and wants to drive out the Anakim. (14:12)
4. Joshua consented and gave Caleb Hebron as his inheritance.
5. "I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly." (14:8)
6. A Caleb-like faith and his "wholehearted devotion" to the Lord are the ingredients for a long, fruitful, and happy life.

JUDGES AND RUTH

Introduction:

These two books deserve to be studied together because they belong to the same period of history, and also because Ruth is treated as an appendix of Judges in some Hebrew listings of sacred books. Judges tells a gloomy story of social chaos, disobedience to God, oppression, deliverance, and apostasy; Ruth tells a beautiful story of devotion, love, and faithfulness in the midst of all this.

Name -The name Judges is derived from the type of leadership which God established during this period of some 200 years.

1. Judges basically were military leaders who led Israel to throw off an oppressor's yoke and then became civil leaders.
2. Ruth is named for the Moabite woman who is the book's central figure.

Author - There is no clear evidence who wrote these books, although some scholars have assumed that either Samuel or one of his disciples wrote them.

Purpose

1. The purpose of Judges is not to glorify Israel's ancestors, but rather to glorify the grace of the God of Israel.
2. The purpose of Ruth is to allow us to see the far-reaching scope of the Grace of God who welcomed even Gentile converts into His kingdom.

I. Background of the books of Judges and Ruth

- A. Judges was probably written in the early days to the Israelite monarchy (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), probably around 1000 BC. It tells the story of the period around 1385-1050 BC.
- B. Ruth was probably written about the same time, certainly not before the birth of David.
- C. When Joshua died, Israel was in Canaan and about the process of establishing full possession of it.
 1. Unconquered tribes in the land and on Canaan's borders were yet to be dealt with. (Judges 1:1-4)
 2. Israel did not obey God as He commanded them to totally destroy the Canaanites (Judges 1:19-33)
- D. God punished their disobedience and failure, using others to oppress them.
- E. The book presents seven cycles of:
 1. Apostasy.
 2. Punishment.
 3. Repentance.
 4. Deliverance.
- F. There were 14 Judges:
 1. Eight Major Judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson and two others who do not appear in the book of Judges: Eli and Samuel.
 2. Six Minor Judges: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.
- G. Ruth is likely set in one of the earlier periods of the judges.

II. The main message of the books of Judges and Ruth

- A. Israel failed in her call to follow God as her only leader.
 1. The key statement of Judges and a summary of the entire book is Judges 21:25, "In those days Israel had no king everyone did as he saw fit."
 2. Israel's repeated failures to keep the covenant prepared the way for the institution of the central monarchy.

B. The implied message is: God's chosen people need a Righteous king.

C. The book of Ruth is important to the special role in the lineage of both King David and Jesus.

III. Outline of the books of Judges and Ruth

A. Israel's partial conquests of Canaan. (Judges 1:1-2:5)

B. The work of the Judges. (Judges 2:6-16:31).

C. Two appendices of the book.

1. The record of Micah the Ephraimite and a Levite consecrated as a priest. (Judges 17:1-18:31)

2. A crime at Gibeah in Benjamin is related. (Judges 19:1-21:24)

3. Both serve to illustrate the anarchy, lawlessness, and confusion of the people during the period. (Judges 21:25)

D. The story of Ruth (Ruth 1:1-4:22)

A Hebrew family migrated to Moab, and tragedy left the mother and two Moabite daughters-in-law alone. When Naomi decided to return home to Bethlehem, Ruth determined to stay with her. Ruth met a man in Canaan named Boaz, married him, and became part of the messianic line of Jesus.

IV. Key themes of the books of Judges and Ruth

A. Sin leads to bondage and death.

1. With no guiding standard, individuals fall headlong into sin.

2. God's severe discipline was designed to cause Israel to turn back to him.

3. God's feelings about sin have not changed.

B. God's great compassion and grace are beyond measure. (Judges 2:18-19; 10:10-16)

1. If we had been in God's place, we would not have been as forgiving.

2. God demonstrates his love for us when we do not deserve it. (Romans 5:8)

C. God's power is always behind his people's victories.

1. Israel was always out-numbered, out powered and out skilled.

2. Seven times we read, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon."

D. We must teach each generation

1. Judges 2:7-10 indicates that within one generation after Joshua, Israel had forgotten God.

2. We cannot assume our children will know God unless we teach them.

E. We must exercise faith and trust in God.

1. In each judge we see flaws, some of them major weaknesses and failures.

2. But in them we also see a quality of faith and trust which we so desperately need.

F. God's redeeming love extends to all people. He is the original "equal opportunities" Savior.

1. We sometimes have the mistaken view of God as loving and saving only one race during ancient times.

2. Ruth is but one illustration in that the accessibility of God's grace was open to all individuals, Gentiles as well as the Jews.

3. Ruth's husband, Boaz, was the son of Rahab, from Jericho. (Matt. 1:5)

4. All this anticipates the worldwide scope of the work of Jesus the Messiah.

I SAMUEL

Introduction: I Samuel presents for us a new era in Israel's history and governance. The book begins by telling us of the last two judges of Israel (Eli and Samuel) and closes by telling us of the anointing of the first two kings (Saul and David).

Name - The book is named for its first central character and partial author - Samuel.

1. The books of I and II Samuel were originally one book.

2. They were divided in the Septuagint (ca. 270 BC) because the two couldn't fit on a single scroll.

Author - The authorship is uncertain.

1. The Jewish Talmud claims that Samuel wrote the first part of the book (I Samuel 1-24) and that Nathan composed the rest (cf. I Chronicles 29:29).
2. We do know that Samuel documented certain things. (I Samuel 10:25; I Chronicles 29:29)
3. It is probable that a later prophet using Samuel's records, other sources and the Holy Spirit's direction produced the book between 975 and 930 BC.

Purpose - The purpose of I Samuel is to record for us the great transition in the national life of Israel, as the nation left the theocracy and went into the monarchy. Samuel was the key character God used in that transition.

I. Background of the book

- A. The time of the judges was a chaotic period in Israel's history.
 1. There was a repeated cycle of rebellion, oppression, and deliverance.
 2. After about 330 years, Israel demanded a king.
 - a. Actually the idea of a monarchy was seriously considered at various times during the rule of the judges. (cf. Judges 8:22; 9:6)
 - b. The idea blossomed when Samuel became quite old and the elders of Israel felt it was time for a king. (I Samuel 8:1-5)
- B. Contrary to what many think, the idea of a king was within the scope of God's plan. (cf. Deuteronomy 17:14-20)
- C. God opposed the establishment of a monarchy in I Samuel 8 for two reasons:
 1. The demand was premature.
 2. The motivation and attitude leading to its establishment were wrong.

II. The Main Message of the book.

- A. The perspective of God.
 1. "But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" (I Samuel 16:7)
 2. So many events of I Samuel transpired because of an earthly perspective:
 - a. The desire to have a king. (8:1-5)
 - b. The choice for the first king. (9:1-2)
 - c. Saul's choice to spare Agag and the Amalekite animals. (15:1-33)
 - d. Samuel's initial impressions about Eliab, Jesse's son. (16:6-7)
 - e. The Israelite's fear of Goliath. (17)
- B. The Throne of David.
 1. The "throne of David" becomes not only the hallmark of Israel's national life, but a key to the establishment of the church. (Acts 2:25-31; 3:24)
 2. We will examine this motif in greater detail when we study II Samuel.

III. Outline of the book

- A. Samuel: Judge and Prophet (1-7)
 1. The book begins with the moving story of Samuel's birth. (1:1-2, 10)
 2. Samuel grew up in a home with Eli's rebellious sons. (2:11-26)
 - a. In that less than ideal environment, Samuel kept his integrity. (2:26)
 - b. An unnamed prophet foretold the destruction of Eli's household. (2:27-36)
 3. It became apparent that God would use Samuel as His prophet and leader. (3:1-4:1)
 4. When the Philistines defeated Israel and captured the Ark of the Covenant, Eli died, and Samuel became God's leader. (4:1-22)
 5. After multiple calamities, the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel. (5:1-7: 2)
 6. Samuel led the nation back to the Lord and into times of military victory. (7:3-17)

B. Saul - The first King of Israel (8:1-12: 25)

1. The people clamored for a king. (8:1-22)
2. Saul was selected and anointed by Samuel. (9:1-10, 14-17)
3. His early days were successful (11:1-15; 13:1 -14:52), and he was ordered to do battle with the Amalekites. (15:1-3)
4. Saul's disobedience on this campaign led to his rejection by God. (15:4-35)

C. The Anointing of David and the Decline of Saul. (16-31)

1. God ordered Samuel to anoint David as Israel's next king. (16:1-23)
2. David comes on the national scene by defeating the giant Goliath. (17:1-58)
3. Most of the rest of the book shares with us Saul's growing jealousy and quest to destroy David. (18:1-30:31)
4. The book closes with the sad account of Saul's suicide. (31:1-13)

IV. Key Themes of the Book

A. The rebellious sons of two godly men.

1. The sons of Eli were exceedingly wicked, perverting the priesthood and committing fornication. (2:12-25)
 - a. Scripture lays part of the responsibility for their rebellion on the shoulders of Eli. (3:13)
 - b. They were killed by the Philistines. (4:10-18)
2. Samuel, a godly man raised in the same household with Eli's sons, saw the heartbreak of his own sons' wickedness. While he is assigned no direct responsibility for their sin, what is told us raises questions:
 - a. Was he too busy to be the father he needed to be? (7:15-17)
 - b. Did he try to force them into "following his footsteps?" (cf. 8:1)
3. These two situations pose a great lesson and warning to parents of any generation.

B. David, a man after God's own heart.

1. He was a man of faith. (17)
2. He was a covenant-keeper. (18:1-3; 20:16-17; 20:42; II Samuel 1:26; 9:1-13)
3. He honored God's authority. (24:7; 26:9-11)
4. He praised God joyously. (II Samuel 6:1-76; the Psalms)

C. Saul's demise.

1. Saul had a good beginning. (11:1-15)
2. Soon he took matters in his own hands. (13:6-14)
3. His disobedience was accelerated when he spared Agag, King of the Amalekites, and their livestock. (15:1-9)
 - a. Samuel confronted Saul about his disobedience. (15:10-23)
 - b. Saul rationalized his disobedience. (15:13, 15, 20-21)
 - c. "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. (15:22)
4. Saul's faith began to wane. (17)
5. He becomes insanely jealous of other's success (I Samuel 18:8-11), even attempting murder. (I Samuel 18:11; 19:1, 15)
6. Saul becomes obsessed with self-preservation to the point of killing innocent people. (I Samuel 22:6-19)
7. He even turned to the occult. (I Samuel 28:1-25)
8. Finally, in utter defeat and humiliation, Saul takes his own life. (I Samuel 31:1-13)

II SAMUEL

Introduction: As I Samuel comes to a close, Saul & his sons die on Mt. Gilboa. In II Samuel the central character is David, and the story line deals with his coming to the throne and his exploits as king.

Name - The book (originally combined with I Samuel) bears the name of Samuel, the last judge of Israel. Samuel was the one God used to anoint Saul and David.

Author - The authorship is uncertain.

1. The Jewish Talmud claims that Samuel wrote the first part of the book (I Samuel 1-24) and that Nathan composed

the rest.

(cf. I Chronicles 29:29)

2. We do know that Samuel documented certain things. (I Samuel 10:25; I Chronicles 29:29)
3. It is probable that a later prophet using Samuel's records, other sources and the Holy Spirit's direction produced the book between 975 and 930 BC.

Purpose - The purpose of II Samuel is to record the reign of David, Israel's greatest king, and to establish his role in the covenant made to Abraham.

I. Background of the book.

A. II Samuel covers the period between the death of Saul (ca.1010 BC) to the eve of David's death (ca. 970 BC).

B. Remember that Saul had hunted David for about a decade prior to Saul's death.

1. As the book begins, David is anointed king over the tribe of Judah. (II Samuel 2:1-7)
2. However, war breaks out between the houses of Saul and David, and it would be 7 1/2 years before he would be king over all Israel.

C. The following dates may be helpful in placing the activities of I and II Samuel in history.

1. Saul's reign 1050 to 1010 BC
2. David's reign 1010 to 970 BC
3. Solomon's reign 970 to 930 BC
4. Division of the Kingdom 930 BC

II. The main messages in the Book:

A. The character of David

1. We are shown David's successes. (e.g. 5:1-7; 6:12-19; 8:1-14)
2. The book also exposes David's sins and personal weaknesses. (e.g. 11:1-27; 13:1-39; 24:1-10)
3. Unlike Saul, David always responded to his sin with a penitent heart. (e.g. 12:13; 24:10)

B. The house of David (7:4-16)

1. We will examine this message under "Key Themes" of the book.
2. "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (7:16)

III. Outline of the Book

A. David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. (II Samuel 1)

1. An Amalekite came to David claiming to have killed Saul. (1:1-13)
2. David immediately ordered that he be killed. (14-16)
3. David mourns for Saul and Jonathan. (1:17-27)

B. David anointed king over Judah followed by years of civil war. (2-4)

1. David is crowned king over his own tribe. (2:1-7)
2. Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, was made king over the northern area by Abner, commander of Saul's army. (2:8-11)
3. The two kingdoms warred for seven years. (2:12-4:12)
 - a. During this time Abner was murdered. (3:30)
 - b. Next Ishbosheth was assassinated. (4:5-6)

C. David's reign over all Israel. (II Samuel 5-24)

1. The successful early years. (5-10)
 - a. The northern tribe leaders realized that it was not wise to be a divided people, and Israel and Judah reunited. (5:1-5)
 - b. David captured Jerusalem. (5:6-16)
 - c. He led the defeat of the Philistines (5:17-25) and brought the ark to Jerusalem. (6:1-23)
 - d. While God would not allow David to build the temple. He made a covenant with him about the messianic king that would come through his "house." (7:1-29)
 - e. David's further conquests are recorded. (8:1 -10:19)
2. David's sin with Bathsheba. (11:1-12:31)
 - a. At home with time on his hands, David sinned with Bathsheba (11:1-13) and arranged for the murder of her husband. (11:14-17)

- b. The prophet Nathan told the king a parable to illustrate his sin (12:1-6) and foretold the consequences he would face. (12:7-14)
- c. The first of Nathan's predicted consequences-the death of the child born to David and Bathsheba occurred. (12:15-31)
- 3. David's troubled later reign. (II Samuel 13:1-24:25)
 - a. As Nathan predicted, the "sword didn't leave David's house".
 - b. After raping his sister (II Samuel 13:1-22), Amnon was killed by his brother Absalom. (13:23-39)
 - c. After fleeing, Absalom returns to Jerusalem. (14:1-33)
 - d. He leads a revolt against his father (15:1-12), and David has to flee. (15:13-17:29)
 - e. As David regains strength, Absalom is killed by Joab. (18:1-33)
 - f. David returned to Jerusalem and was restored to power. 19:1-20:26)
 - g. The book concludes with various events and statements from David's last years. (21:1-24:25)
 - [1] The Gibeonites are avenged. (21:1-14)
 - [2] He battles the Philistines again. (21:15-22)
 - [3] David offered a song of praise. (22:1-51)
 - [4] David's mighty men are named. (23:8-39)
 - [5] David takes a census of the fighting men. (24:1-17)
 - [6] He builds an altar to the Lord. (24:18-25)

IV. Key themes of the Book

A. The house of David (2 Samuel 7:4-16):

- 1. There is a play on the word "house."
 - a. David wants to build God a "house" (i.e. - a temple).
 - b. While God rejected his plan, He promised to build David a "house" (i.e. - a kingdom).
- 2. Some parts of the promise were fulfilled through Solomon.
 - a. He would build the Temple David dreamed of building. (7:13)
 - b. Solomon would also know punishment for sin. (7:14)
- 3. Ultimately, however, the prophecy is fulfilled through Christ. (Luke 1:31 -33, 68-70; Acts 2:29-31; 15:12-18)
 - a. This is one of the most important messianic prophecies in the OT.

"That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" "

"Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (7:4-16)

- b. It formed the basis for the "messianic hope" of Israel.
- c. "Go and tell my servant David. This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel. Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" (2

Samuel 7:5-7)

4. The Hebrew term "messiah" (Greek - *Christos*) means "anointed one."

B. David's sin with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:1 -12:31):

1. The Bible is completely honest about its characters and heroes.
2. When he should have been elsewhere (11:1), David lusted after Bathsheba and committed fornication with her. (11:4)
3. That sin led to a number of wrong choices, sinful behavior, and negative consequences.
 - a. Bathsheba discovered her pregnancy and sent word to David. (11:5)
 - b. David attempted a cover-up. (11:6-11)
 - c. When that failed, he conspired to murder Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. (11:12-17)
 - d. The prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin (12:1-9) and foretold the consequences of it. (12:10-14)
 - [1] The sword would never depart from his house. (12:10)
 - [2] Out of his own household, calamity would be brought on David. (12:11; cf. 16:11, 21-22)
 - [3] Some of David's wives would be taken from him and given to one close to him. (12:11; cf. 16:22)
 - [4] The child born to Bathsheba would die. (12:14, 18-19)
4. The primary differences between David's heart and Saul's heart were David's willingness to humbly and totally repent. (12:13; Psalm 51)
5. The lessons for us are numerous:
 - a. No one is immune to temptation. (I Corinthians 10:12)
 - b. One sin often leads to another, then another, etc.
 - c. The ramifications of sin are often beyond the imagination. (cf. Hosea 8:7)
 - d. The forgiveness of God is always available and free.
 - e. However, the forgiven person will still face any consequences for the sin.

C. The story of Mephibosheth.

1. Years before David was king; he made a covenant with Jonathan. (I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16)
2. Jonathan specifically asked David to extend the covenant to his descendants. (I Samuel 20:42)
3. Approximately 20 years later, David begins to ask about any descendants from the house of Saul. (II Samuel 9:1)
 - a. Ziba, one of Saul's servants, told the king of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth.
 - b. Dropped by a nurse when he was five years old, he was crippled in both feet. (II Samuel 4:4)
 - c. He was now living in seclusion at Lo Debar. (II Samuel 9:4)
4. David sends for him, and a fearful Mephibosheth bows in the king's presence. (II Samuel 9:8)
5. Much to his surprise. King David bestowed on Mephibosheth all the land and goods that had belonged to Saul's family and invited him to eat at the king's table. (II Samuel 9:10)
6. What David did for Mephibosheth is a type of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

I AND II KINGS

Introduction: These two books are about all the kings of Israel and Judah except the first two. The great prophets are also introduced, some of whom are named and some of whom are not. Much of the material will be paralleled in I & II Chronicles.

Name

1. Originally these two books were counted as one.
2. Since they deal with the reigns of the kings, they are appropriately titled.

Author - Authorship is uncertain, but most scholars believe it was written by Jeremiah and one or more of his contemporaries.

Purpose

1. Both books show that the welfare of the nation ultimately depended on the people's *faithfulness* to God.
2. To show how each king responded to God, either *fulfilling* or *rejecting* God's covenant.

I. Background of the Book

A. Centuries of Israel's history are covered by I & II Kings.

1. They move from the close of David's reign (970 BC) through the golden age of Solomon, the rift between Israel and Judah (at Solomon's death ca. 930 BC) to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians (722 BC) and the destruction of Jerusalem (587 BC).
2. The account begins with a stable, United Kingdom under a strong king.
 - a. However, at Solomon's death (ca. 930 BC) the nation divide into two kingdoms.
 - [1] The Northern Kingdom was known as **Israel**. Sometimes it was called by the name of its leading tribe, Ephraim.
 - (a) Israel had nine dynasties and 20 kings.
 - (b) Israel did not have a single righteous king.
 - [2] The Southern Kingdom, known as **Judah**, had two tribes: Judah and Benjamin.
 - (a) Judah had only one dynasty (David's) and 20 kings.
 - (b) Eight kings of Judah were recognized for varying degrees of righteousness.
3. The account ends with total collapse and mass deportation to Babylon.

B. Major international powers at play during this historical period were Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Phoenicia.

C. The book can be dated with reasonable accuracy, sometime between 562 and 536 BC.

D. The Kings of Judah and Israel.

1. The books are constructed so as to allow for the telling of the stories of two nations at contemporary times.
2. The prophets are also doing their work during this period.
3. In the following lists, the kings and their dates of rule are given. Some of the dates overlap due to co-regencies. The eight good kings are indicated by having their names in all capital letters. The dates assigned are largely based on those given by E.R. Theile in his two books, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* and *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, these are close approximations and are, of course, BC.

United Kingdom

Saul	1050 -1010
David	1010 - 970
Solomon	970 - 930

Judah	Israel
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<u>King</u>	Dates of rule	<u>King</u>	Dates of rule
Rehoboam	930-913	Jeroboam I	930-909
Abijam	913-910	Nadab	909-908
ASA	910-869	Baasha	908-886
JEHOSAPHAT	872-848	Elah	886-885
Jehoram	853-841	Zimri	885
Ahaziah	841	Tibni	885-880
Athaliah	841-835	Omri	885-874
JOASH	835-796	Ahab	874-853
AMAZIAH	796-767	Ahaziah	853-852
AZARIAH (UZZIAH)	792-740	Jehoram (Joram)	852-841
JOTHAM	750-732	Jehu	841-814
Ahaz	735-715	Jehoahaz	814-798
HEZEKIAH	715-686	Jehoash	798-782
Manasseh	697-642	Jeroboam II	793-753
Amon	642-640	Zechariah	753
JOSIAH	640-609	Shallum	752
Jehoahaz	609	Menahem	752-742
Jehoiakim	609-598	Pekah	752-732

Jehoiachin	598-597	Pekahiah	742-740
Zedekiah	597-586	Hoshea	731-721

(Jerusalem destroyed 586)
(Jehoiachin freed 562)

(Fall of Samaria 721)

II. The Main Message of the Book

- A. The books attempt to show that the fate of Israel depended on their observance of the Lord's covenant with them.
- B. The reign of each king is assessed not according to his political or historical significance but according to his spiritual life.

III. Outline of the Book

- A. The 40-year reign of King Solomon. (I Kings 1-11)
1. Solomon reigned because his authority and wisdom came from God. (1)
 2. Solomon built the temple. (5-6)
 3. Solomon did two things that ultimately led to the overthrow of his kingdom:
 - a. He made alliances with the world. (3:1-2)
 - b. He allowed the mixing of idolatry with the worship of God. (3:3)
 4. Solomon's *heart* turned away from God. (11:1-6)
- B. The first 80 years of the divided kingdoms. (I Kings 12-22)
1. After Solomon's death the nation divided.
 - a. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, foolishly precipitated a revolt among his subjects after he took his father's place.
 - b. The nation divided, Jeroboam becoming king of the Northern Kingdom, and Rehoboam becoming king of the Southern kingdom.
 - [1] The northern kingdom, "Israel" had 10 tribes.
 - (a) It had about three times more land and twice as many people.
 - (b) Its capital city was Samaria.
 - [2] The southern kingdom, known as "Judah" had 2 tribes: Judah and Benjamin.
 - (a) Its capital city was Jerusalem.
 - (b) It also had Solomon's Temple.
 2. King Jeroboam led Israel in worship of golden calves. (12)
 3. Egypt invaded and defeated King Rehoboam of Judah. (14)
 4. God sent Elijah to show that willful sin brings dreadful results. (17-22)
- C. The remaining years of the Northern Kingdom. (II Kings 1-17)
1. Elijah died and passed his mantle to Elisha. (18-25)
 2. Kings of Israel and Judah.
 3. Israel was exiled to Assyria. (17)
 - a. The Northern Kingdom simply ceased to exist as a nation.
 - b. An explanation of the origin of the Samaritans is given. (17:24-41)
- D. The remaining years of the Southern Kingdom. (II Kings 18-25)
1. When Israel fell to Assyria, Judah was being ruled by good King Hezekiah.
 - a. Under him, God delivered Judah from the Assyrian invaders under Sennacherib.
 - b. Isaiah was a contemporary of Hezekiah and figured in several events of his life.
 2. Hezekiah was succeeded by his evil son, Manasseh, whose idolatry and wickedness seduced the entire nation.
 3. Manasseh was followed briefly by his son, Amon, who continued to compound evil.
 4. Then came Judah's last righteous king, Josiah, who led a religious revival in the land.
 5. However, in 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon began to dominate Judah.
 6. In 597 BC the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and carried King Jehoiachin captive to Babylon,
 - a. This was when Daniel, his three friends, and many other Jews were taken to Babylon as captives.
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar left Judah under the rule of Zedekiah.
 - c. But the very next year Zedekiah's reign ended, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple was ransacked and torn

down.

IV. Key themes of the Book

- A. God dwells among His people. This was symbolized by His presence in the Temple.
- B. God's Word confronts our sins. (I Kings 16:30-33; 18:17-18; 19:1-2:21:20)
 - 1. Prophets of God boldly challenged both kings and common people to follow the right ways of the Lord. (I Kings 18:17-18) Their message was "Thus said the Lord."
 - 2. Forgiveness comes when there is repentance.
 - 3. Neglecting God's word leads to downfall.
 - 4. God is patient, but His patience finally wears out and His judgment is handed down.
- C. Lordship demands total loyalty. (I Kings 18:36-40; Matthew 10:32-39)
- D. Even one person can have a great influence for either evil or good.
 - 1. An example of one whose influence was bad is Jezebel
 - 2. An example of one whose influence was good is Josiah.

I - II CHRONICLES

Introduction: As you read through I & II Chronicles, you likely experienced *deja vu*. Well over half of the material in Chronicles is a duplication of information found in Samuel and Kings. Why is this data repeated? Chronicles offers a different perspective than Samuel or Kings (see "Main Message" section). It was written to complement the other two.

Name - Chronicles

- 1. In the Hebrew Bible, the book was called "the Words of the Days" or "Events of the Period."
- 2. The Septuagint referred to the book as "Of Things Omitted".
- 3. The title "Chronicles" came to our English Bibles from a name change made by the 4th century historian Jerome.

Author - Tradition says that Ezra wrote these books.

- 1. He was certainly qualified to do so. (Ezra 7:10-11)
- 2. The Talmud supports this tradition.
- 3. While uncertain, the authorship of Ezra is a reasonable possibility.
- 4. The author of Chronicles compiled these books from as many as ten different sources. (I Chronicles 9:1; II Chronicles 12:15)

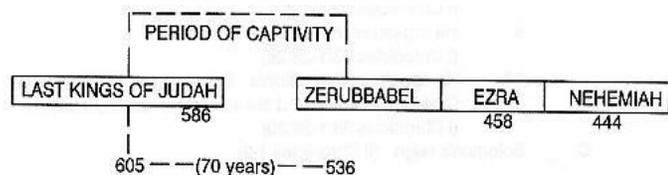
Purpose -I & II Chronicles were written to strengthen the remnant of the nation that made it through Babylonian captivity.

- 1. That remnant needed to be reminded that the Lord was still with them because they were a covenant people.
- 2. The book also offered warnings against future apostasy and/or idolatry.

I. Background of the book.

- A. In the ancient Hebrew Bible, I & II Chronicles, along with Ezra, were likely one volume.
- B. The Babylonian captivity.
 - 1. The captivity of Judah officially lasted from 605-536 BC (a period of 70 years).
 - 2. The reason for a 70-year exile is related in II Chronicles 36:21.
- C. The return.
 - 1. In 536 BC Cyrus proclaimed that all the Jews could return to their homeland. (II Chronicles 36:22-23)
 - 2. Ezra returned to Jerusalem in the seventh year of the King Artaxerxes I who ruled Persia from 465 to 423 BC)
 - 3. The Temple had been rebuilt between 520 and 515 BC, but the people were spiritually apathetic.
 - 4. Under the leadership of Nehemiah (ca. 445 BC) there was a spiritual climate conducive to penning a book like Chronicles;

D. The following chart helps with the time line:



II. The Main Message of the book.

A. The main message of the book(s) was to remind the people of their covenant relationship with God and encourage them to act accordingly.

1. The exiles had come home from Babylon.
2. Though the Temple had been rebuilt, it had been neglected by the people.
3. Revival in the land would not and could not occur until proper worship was restored there.

B. Chronicles, then, is a history of the nation from a priestly perspective.

1. By contrast, the books of Samuel and Kings offered history from the political perspective.
2. The following chart gives a helpful comparison between the books:

SAMUEL-KINGS	CHRONICLES
-Viewed both North & South	-Viewed only the South
-Emphasis on the throne	-Emphasis on the Temple
-Civil/political history	-Sacred history
-Emphasis on the prophet	-Emphasis on the priest
-Wars prominent	-Wars less prominent
-Indictment of the 2 nations	-Remnant encouraged

III. Outline of the book.

A. Genealogies. (I Chronicles 1-9)

1. From Adam to Noah. (I Chronicles 1:1-4)
2. From Noah's sons to Jacob and Esau. (I Chronicles 1:5-54)
3. From Judah to David's descendants. (I Chronicles 2:1-4; 23)
4. The lineage of Jacob's other sons is given, with particular attention to Levi.
5. A listing of those who resettled in Jerusalem following Babylonian exile is given. (I Chronicles 9:1-44)

B. David's reign. (I Chronicles 10-29)

1. The stage for David's reign is set by details of King Saul's death. (10:1-14)
2. David is made king over all Israel and captures Jerusalem. (11:1-9)
3. David's loyal servants are named. (11:10-12:40)
4. David brings the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. (13:1 -16:43)
5. David will not be allowed to build the Temple (17:1-2), but God establishes a special covenant with him. (17:3-27)
6. David strengthens Israel's forces. (18:1-20:8)
7. He takes an unauthorized census. (21:1-30)
8. David makes preparation for the construction of the Temple. (22:1-19)
9. He organizes the priests and Levites. (23:1-26:28)
10. He appoints other officials. (26:29-27:34)
11. David's final words and the account of his death are given. (28:1-29:30)

C. Solomon's reign. (II Chronicles 1-9)

1. Solomon is appointed king over Israel and receives a vision at Gibeon. (1:1-17)
2. Under his leadership, the Temple is built. (2:1-5:1)
3. The Ark of the Covenant is brought to the Temple. (5:2-14)
 - a. The ark is dedicated to the Lord. (6:1-42)

- b. The temple is dedicated to the Lord. (7:1-10)
- 4. Solomon's major victories and achievements are recorded. (8:1-9:31)

D. The kings of Judah. (II Chronicles 10-36)

1. After the kingdom divides under Rehoboam (Solomon's son), the northern kingdom is ignored, and a history of the kings of Judah is given.
 - a. Rehoboam. (10:1-12:16)
 - b. Abijah. (13:1-22)
 - c. Asa. (14:1-16:14)
 - d. Jehoshaphat. (17:1-20:37)
 - e. Jehoram. (21:1-20)
 - f. Ahaziah. (22:1-9)
 - g. Athaliah. (22:10-12)
 - h. Joash. (23:1-24:27)
 - i. Amaziah. (25:1-28)
 - j. Azariah. (26:1-23)
 - k. Jotham. (27:1-9)
 - l. Ahaz. (28:1-27)
 - m. Hezekiah. (29:1-32:33)
 - n. Manasseh. (33:1-20)
 - o. Amon. (33:21-25)
 - p. Josiah. (34:1-35:27)
 - q. Jehoahaz. (36:1-4)
 - r. Jehoiakim, (36:5-8)
 - s. Jehoiachin. (36:9-10)
 - t. Zedekiah. (36:11-21)
2. Greater space and attention is given to the good kings (i.e.-Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah) with little attention given to those characterized by evil.

IV. Key Themes of the book

A. Common characteristics of good spiritual leaders.

1. They sought the Lord.
 - a. Asa. (II Chronicles 14:11)
 - b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 17:4,6a; 18:6)
 - c. Hezekiah. (II Chronicles 30:6-9)
 - d. Josiah. (II Chronicles 34:3)
2. They turned from vile and detestable practices.
 - a. Asa. (II Chronicles 14:3-5)
 - b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 17:6b)
 - c. Hezekiah. (II Chronicles 29:6-10)
 - d. Josiah. (II Chronicles 34:4-7)
3. They desired to worship in spirit and truth.
 - a. Asa. (II Chronicles 15:11-12)
 - b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 20:18-21)
 - c. Hezekiah. (II Chronicles 29:3-5, 15-36)
 - d. Josiah. (II Chronicles 34:8-35:19)
4. They led the people to engage in prayer and a study of the Word.
 - a. Asa. (II Chronicles 14:4)
 - b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 20:5-12)
 - c. Josiah. (II Chronicles 34:29-31)
5. When threatened by adversaries, they relied upon the Lord.
 - a. Asa. (II Chronicles 14:11-12)
 - b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 20:5-12)
 - c. Hezekiah. (II Chronicles 32:20-23)
 - d. Josiah. (II Chronicles 34:19-21)
6. Each had an "Achilles heel."

- a. Asa. (II Chronicles 16:7-10)
- b. Jehoshaphat. (II Chronicles 20:35-37)
- c. Hezekiah. (II Chronicles 32:24-25)
- d. Josiah. (II Chronicles 35:20-25)

B. The role of worship.

- 1. The word worship comes to us from the concept of "worth ship" (i.e. our God is worthy of our praise and adoration.)
- 2. It is to be reflected in all we do. (Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:17)
- 3. There are, however, collective worship times when God's people assemble for the purpose of glorifying God and building each other's faith. (Hebrews 10:25)
- 4. When the quality or regularity of that assembly time is ignored, spiritual apathy is always the result.

C. Jews and Samaritans.

- 1. Most Bible students know of the enmity that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, (cf. John 4:9)
- 2. The origin of the Samaritans can be traced to the period when Chronicles was composed.
- 3. Assyria conquered Samaria in 721 BC under Sargon. (cf. II Kings 17:24-40)
 - a. He deported thousands of Israelites and repopulated the land with Gentiles.
 - b. Intermarriage between the remaining Jews and the imported Gentiles produced a racially, culturally, and religiously mixed people.
 - c. When the Jews returned from Babylon, there was a strained relationship between the two groups. (cf. Ezra 4:1-3)
 - d. Eventually the Samaritans built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim.
- 4. Like the Jews, the Samaritans considered themselves the true heirs of Abraham.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Introduction: The books of Ezra and Nehemiah provide our primary source of information about the 100 years following the Babylonian captivity. They tell us of the repopulation of Palestine by the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem.

Name - Each book is named for its central character.

- 1. At one time the two books were treated as one and called Ezra.
- 2. There is further evidence that both were once part of Chronicles.

Author - The books were likely written by their namesakes.

- 1. In both books the central characters speak frequently in the first person. (cf. Ezra 8:15f; Nehemiah 1:1f)
- 2. Both authors used various sources in writing their books. (Ezra 1:2-4; 4:8f; 6:3f)

Purpose

- 1. The book of Ezra was written to record the faithfulness of God in reestablishing the Jews in the land.
- 2. The book of Nehemiah was written to show the work of God through a devoted leader - Nehemiah.

I. Background of the books.

A. The Babylonian captivity.

- 1. Babylon conquered Judah and took the first captives out of the land in 606 BC. (cf. Daniel 1:1-7)
- 2. In 597 BC and 586, two other major deportations took place.
- 3. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the captivity would last 70 years. (Jeremiah 25:12)

B. The return.

- 1. In 539 BC, Babylon fell to Darius, the Mede, and the Persian reign began. (cf. Daniel 5:30)
- 2. Ezra 1:1-4 speaks of "Cyrus, King of Persia" who issued a proclamation allowing the Jews return home and rebuild their Temple.
 - a. This Cyrus was apparently Cyrus II, Cyrus the Great, who ruled the Achaemenid Persian Empire from 539 to 530 BC.

- b. The prophet Isaiah predicted Cyrus' precise role in the rebuilding of the temple 150 to 200 years before it occurred.
- 3. Just as the Israelites had gone into Babylon in three stages (606, 597, and 586 BC); their return was in three stages.
 - a. Zerubbabel led the first group home in 536 BC. (Note: The Temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 515 BC, during the time of Esther.)
 - b. Ezra led the second group of captives home in 458 BC and a great revival ensued.
 - c. Nehemiah led the last group of exiles home in 445 BC and rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem.

C. The restoration of Judah. The following chart offers a chronology of major characters and events of the restoration of Judah:

PERSIAN KING	DATES	BIBLICAL CHARACTE	SCRIPTURE	EVENT
Cyrus	539-530	Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, Zechariah	Ezra 1-4	First return Temple begun then stopped
Cambyses	530-521	—————	—————	No work on Temple
Darius 1	521-486	Haggai, Zechariah	Ezra 4-6	Temple work completed
Xerxes - Ahasuerus	486-465	Ester, Mordecai	Esther 1-10	Story of Jews' preservation
Artaxerxes	465-423	Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi	Ezra 7-10 Nehemiah	Second return under Ezra Third return Nehemiah
END OF	OLD	TESTAMENT	HISTORY	Ministry of Malachi

D. The period covered by these two books ranges from 536 BC (beginning of Cyrus' reign) to 433 BC (Nehemiah's second governorship).

- E. It is during this period that the term "Jew" replaced "Hebrew" or "Israelite" as the common term for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- 1. The northern kingdom disappeared after the Assyrian captivity.
 - 2. The surviving nation was comprised primarily by the house of Judah.
 - 3. The word Jew originally signified "one from Judah".

II. Main Message of the book. The main message of the two books is that God restores, rebuilds and revives through devoted leaders.⁵

- A. Ezra was a Priest and a scribe. (Ezra 7:10)
- 1. The book of Ezra focuses on the restoration of the Temple and reestablishing it as the center of Judah's culture.
 - 2. Ezra 7:27-28 summarizes the book. "Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me."
- B. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to Artaxerxes I of Persia.
- 1. While in exile he grieved over the desolation of Jerusalem's wall, and he desired to rebuild it.
 - 2. With Artaxerxes permission, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra.
 - 3. Nehemiah's devotion to the cause is best summarized in 6:3a. "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"

III. Outline of the books.

A. The return under Zerubbabel. (Ezra 1-6)

1. After conquering Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple. (Ezra)
2. A detailed census of the 50,000 Zerubbabel would lead back is given. (Ezra 2)
3. The Altar and Temple are rebuilt. (Ezra 3:1-13)
4. Opposition to the building arose. (Ezra 4:1-24)
5. Challenged and motivated by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the people resumed work on the Temple. (Ezra 5:1-17)
6. King Darius issued a decree for the rebuilding of the Temple. (Ezra 6:1-12)
7. After four years of hard work, the Temple was completed and dedicated. (Ezra 6:13-18)
8. The Passover was observed. (Ezra 6:19-22)

B. The return under Ezra. (Ezra 7-10)

1. About 80 years after the first return under Zerubbabel, Ezra the scribe returned with about 1700 people. (Ezra 7:1-10)
 - a. King Artaxerxes issued a decree to accompany them. (Ezra 7:13-27)
 - b. A list of the heads of families is given. (Ezra 8:1-14)
2. Upon arrival, Ezra was disturbed at finding that intermarriage with the people of the land had compromised their spiritual devotion. (Ezra 9:1-4)
 - a. He offered prayer for the people. (Ezra 9:5-15)
 - b. The people repented and confessed their sin. (Ezra 10:1-17)
 - c. A list of those who inter-married foreign wives was given. (Ezra 10:18-44)

C. The return under Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 1-13)

1. About 445 BC word came to Nehemiah of the dilapidation of Jerusalem's wall. (Nehemiah 1:1-11)
2. With permission from Artaxerxes, he returned to the holy city determined to rebuild the wall. (Nehemiah 2:1-20)
3. Well-planned and methodical, the work began. (Nehemiah 3:1-32)
4. Trouble began.
 - a. Unfriendly neighbors heckled them. (Nehemiah 4:1-23)
 - b. There is an outcry from the Jews. (Nehemiah 5:1-19)
 - c. There is even a plot against Nehemiah's life. (6:1-14)
5. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the wall is completed in less than two months. (Nehemiah 6:15 - 7:1-4)
6. The returning exiles are named and numbered. (7:5-73)
7. Ezra read and explained the Law of Moses. (Nehemiah 8:1-18)
8. The people confessed their sins and rededicated themselves to the Lord. (Nehemiah 9:1 -10:39)
9. Lots are cast, and one tenth of the people are chosen to live in Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 11:1-36)
10. A list of priests and Levites is given. (Nehemiah 12:1-26)
11. The wall is dedicated to the Lord. (Nehemiah 12:27-47)
12. When Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes, much of his influence left also. (Nehemiah 13:1-6)
13. Coming back to Jerusalem, Nehemiah zealously dealt with the offenders. (Nehemiah 13:7-11, 23-25)
14. The people were encouraged to support the priests (Nehemiah 13:10-14) and to obey the Sabbath laws. (13:10-14)

IV. The themes of the Book

A. An intolerance for compromise.

1. Upon returning to Jerusalem, Ezra was disturbed that the Hebrews had intermarried with the Canaanite peoples and participated in idolatrous practices. (Ezra 9:1-4)
2. Nehemiah faced the same problem later. (Nehemiah 13:23-27)
3. Both leaders spoke and acted decisively. (Ezra 10:10-12; Nehemiah 13:25-26)
4. Our God is absolutely unsympathetic to our alliance with anything that leads us away from Him.

B. Doing something great for God.

1. The process begins with recognizing a need. (Nehemiah 1:3)
2. The recognition of need is followed by much prayer. (Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:4b)
3. Servants of God are recruited, and work is delegated. (Nehemiah 3:1-32)

4. Problems will arise. (Nehemiah 5:1-7a)
5. Opposition will come. (Nehemiah 2:19, 4:7-8:6:1-14)
 - a. Battle it with prayer and prudent precaution. (Nehemiah 4:9)
 - b. Trust in God to thwart the opposition. (Nehemiah 4:14)
6. Keep your focus. (Nehemiah 4:6; 6:15)
7. Praise God. (Nehemiah 8:2-6)

C. The impact of the captivity.

1. Three significant institutions came from the captivity:
 - a. The synagogue - a place of local worship.
 - b. The scribe - a student/teacher of the law.
 - c. The *diaspora* - those Jews who stayed scattered among nations.
2. The captivity and return led to orthodox Judaism.

ESTHER

Introduction: The book of Esther tells the story of a plot to exterminate the entire Jewish nation in the days of the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes), and how it was thwarted.

Name - The book is named for the Jewish orphan girl who became Queen of Persia. Esther is a Persian word which means star.

Author - No author is named in the book. Jewish tradition ascribes authorship to Esther's uncle, Mordecai, one of the book's central characters. Other scholars believe it was written by unidentified scribes who followed Ezra.

Purpose

1. To demonstrate the overruling providence of God.
2. To show that God honored His election of Israel as His covenant people.
3. To illustrate what can happen in a person's life when God is the director.

I. Background of the book.

A. When Cyrus permitted the Jews in exile to return to their homeland, many of them stayed in their new places.

1. Mordecai, Esther, and thousands of others remained in the territory of the Persians outside Palestine.
2. This book demonstrates God's presence with those people as well as with the returnees to Judah.

B. We have a good deal of information about King Ahasuerus' reign from non-biblical sources.

1. He is better known to history by his Greek name, Xerxes King of Persia from 486 to 465 BC.
2. In the gap between his third (Esther 1:3) and seventh (Esther 2:16) years, he undertook a disastrous invasion of Greece.

C. Date - It must have been written by a Jew who lived in Persia between 450-400 BC.

1. Archaeology has shown that the author had first-hand knowledge of Persian society and architecture during the days of the Persian Empire.
2. Xerxes reigned over the Persian Empire from 486-465 BC and is usually identified as Ahasuerus.
3. The English Bible places it after Ezra and Nehemiah, because it shares a Persian background with them.

D. Unusual facts about the book.

1. It is the only book of Scripture which does not mention the name of God.
2. It is the only Old Testament book which has not been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran.
3. It was the last book to be accepted into the Jewish Scriptures.

E. II Chronicles 36:20-23 provides a background for the book of Esther.

II. Main messages of the book

- A. The book explains the origin of the Jewish Feast of Purim (February/March).
- B. The larger theme of the book is the providence of the Almighty God

III. Outline of the book.

- A. The feast of Ahasuerus and the divorce of Vashti. (1:1-22)
- B. The choice of Esther as Queen. (2:1-23)
- C. Haman's plot to destroy Mordecai and the Jews. (3:1-15)
- D. Mordecai's persuasion of Esther to intervene. (4:1-17)
- E. Esther's successful petition to the King. (5:1-7; 10)
- F. The downfall of Haman and the deliverance of the Jews. (8:1-9; 16)
- G. The feast of Purim. (9:17-32)
- H. Conclusion: The prominence of Mordecai the Jew. (10:1-3)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

- A. Trials, no matter how severe, cannot destroy the faith of a true believer.
 - 1. To shrink from trial is natural.
 - 2. Trials are meant to strengthen our faith. (I Peter 4:12; James 1:2-4).
- B. God has a plan for your life just as he had for Esther.
 - 1. Who knows but that God may have called you for just such a time as this?
 - a. He may want to use you in some great way.
 - b. More likely He wants to use you in the natural events of your life.
 - c. God looks for our submission to His will regardless of circumstances.
 - d. God cannot use us to fulfill His plan for us unless we are willing to heed His call.
 - 2. This ties to the doctrine of the providence of God.
- C. Pride and revenge lead to death. (Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; 29:23).
- D. Man's plans can never undo God's purpose:
 - 1. Haman's shrewd plan seemed a sure success.
 - a. The law of the Medes and Persians was irrevocable.
 - b. But Haman overlooked one thing - The Almighty God.
 - 2. Never overlook the Almighty.
- E. One person who is dedicated to God has great power and influence.
- F. Our responsibility is to obey. The results are up to God.
- G. Racial prejudice is absolutely wrong.

Conclusion:

- A. As Esther shows so clearly, all of history is really His-Story, and all people must see themselves as creatures responsible to a Holy God.
- B. A summary chart of the main events of the Children of Israel is shown on the following page.
- C. As we proceed to the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, we shall attempt to place them within this historical framework.
- D. Esther shows so clearly, all of history is really **History [His-Story]**, and all people must see themselves as creatures responsible to a Holy God.

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

<u>Biblical Events</u>		<u>World History</u>
Call of Abraham	2100 BC	Hyksos comes to power in Egypt
Birth of Joseph	1915 BC	
Jacob's family moves to Egypt	1876 BC	
Death of Joseph	1805 BC	
	1580 BC	Hyksos expelled from Egypt
Birth of Moses	1530 BC	
	1504 BC	Thutmose III (Pharaoh of Oppression)
	1450 BC	Amenhotep II (Pharaoh of the Exodus)
The exodus; Ten Commandments	1447 BC	
Moses' death; entry of Canaan under Joshua	1407 BC	
Death of Joshua; period of the judges begins	1385 BC	
	1361 BC	Tutankhamen ("King Tut") becomes Pharaoh
		(Cycles of apostasy, oppression and deliverance during time of Israel's judges)
Saul becomes king	1050 BC	
Saul's death; David becomes king of Israel	1010 BC	
David's death; Solomon comes to the throne	970 BC	
Solomon begins the temple	967 BC	
Solomon's death; division of the kingdom	930 BC	
Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria	721 BC	
	701 BC	Sennacherib's invasion of Judah
	612 BC	Destruction of Nineveh
First deportation of captives from Judah	606 BC	
Second deportation	597 BC	
Third deportation; Solomon's temple destroyed	586 BC	
Jehoiachin freed in Babylon	562 BC	
	539 BC	Babylon falls; Persian period begins
Cyrus allows first captives to leave under Zerubbabel	536 BC	
Work begins on second temple	535 BC	
Temple completed	515 BC	
	486 BC	Ahasuerus becomes King of Persia
Esther becomes Ahasuerus' queen	480 BC	
	465 BC	Artaxerxes I becomes King
Ezra leads captives home	458 BC	
Nehemiah leads captives home	445 BC	
Nehemiah visits Artaxerxes	433 BC	

JOB

Introduction: The average reader would not recognize these five books of poetry (Job -Song of Solomon) as such because Hebrew poetry is not of sound and sight like our English poetry. They are of thought. While unusual to us, poetry in any language or culture has a special power and impact on a sensitive heart.

The book of Job, along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, are also referred to as "wisdom literature". Reflective in tone, wisdom literature deals with the deep questions of life (e.g. - existence, purpose, happiness, etc.). Job deals with questions in practical life, one of which may be the greatest and most perplexing questions of the human experience - the problem of suffering.⁶

Name - The book is named for its principal character.

Author - The author is unknown.

Purpose - The purpose of the book is to address the problem of the suffering of righteous people.

1. The "problem" lies in the following logic:
 - a. Our God is infinitely good, loving, and powerful. 4^
 - b. Why do those made in His image suffer?
2. The book does not give a full intellectual explanation, but spiritual counsel.

I. Background of the book.

- A. Job was a historical character. (cf. Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11)
- B. He likely lived in the days of the patriarchs. (i.e. - after the days of the flood and before the time of Moses)
 - 1. The length of his life supports that view. (42:16)
 - 2. Job is seen functioning as a priest for his family, a typical role in the patriarchal days. (1:5)
 - 3. The Mosaic Law and/or revelations from the prophets are never referred to in all the theological discussions of Job and his friends.
 - 4. The series of events outlined in the book likely occurred around 2000 BC.
- C. The writing of the book in its current form likely did not occur until about the time of Solomon (ca. 950 BC) when interest in wisdom literature was at a peak.

II. Main Message of the book.

- A. As stated in the "Purpose" section, the book is concerned with the problem of human suffering.
 - 1. It is perhaps the most challenging question that confronts believers.
 - 2. Job's wife and "friends" posed the shallow narrow perspective that one's suffering is always a direct result of his/her sin.
 - a. This concept is not only shallow but unbiblical. (cf. John 9:1f)
 - b. Also, it offers no help or solace to the one suffering.
- B. The response offered by the book of Job is practical rather than theoretical.
 - 1. It doesn't deal so much with the "Why" of suffering, but more with the "How" to cope with it.
 - 2. The primary premise set forth is to trust in the absolute sovereignty of God. (Job 38:1-42:6)
 - 3. This same message is proclaimed in several New Testament passages. (cf. Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

III Outline of the book.

- A. The Prologue. (Job 1:1-2:13)
 - 1. Job is introduced as an upright and righteous man (1:8) and also a man of great wealth. (1:13)
 - 2. Satan questions the sincerity of Job's faith (1:6-11) and is allowed by God to put him to the test. (1:13-2:8)
 - a. Job lost his oxen and servants. (1:13-16)
 - b. He lost all his camels. (1:17)
 - c. His ten children all died when a windstorm collapsed the house where they were feasting. (1:18-21)
 - d. Job's health was even taken from him. (2:1-8)
 - 3. Job's friends come to sympathize with him. (2:11-13)
- B. Discussions of Job's condition. (Job 3:1-40)
 - 1. After Job laments his condition (3:1-26) three rounds of speeches are given.
 - a. Each round has Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar debating the reason for Job's suffering.
 - b. The first round (4:1-14:22) the second round (15:1-21:34), and the third round (22:1 - 31:40) of speeches are poetic in form.
 - 2. The general conclusion reached in the *friends'* speeches is that such extraordinary turmoil must be due to great sin in Job's life.
- C. Elihu's speeches. (Job 32:1-37:24)
 - 1. Elihu is a younger man who has been listening to these speeches and is disappointed in what he's heard. (32:1-5)
 - 2. He delivers four speeches of his own. (Job 32:6 - 33:33; 34:1-37; 35:1-16; 36:1 -37:24)
 - a. In these he comes closer to the truth than the others.
 - b. He rebuked Job for justifying himself before God.
 - c. He rebuked the three friends for talking much but saying little.
 - d. Elihu pointed out that suffering can serve for instruction as much as punishment.
- D. God's response to Job. (Job 38:1-42:6)
 - 1. In two magnificent addresses God challenged Job to explain the wonders of his creation.
 - 2. Job quickly learned that he could never understand a fraction of what God knew, and he responded in submission and

surrender.

3. God did not explain to Job why he suffered; rather He simply wanted Job to trust Him and bow before Him.

E. Epilogue. (Job 42:7-17)

1. God rebukes Job's friends. (42:7-10)
2. Job's health is restored, his wealth is restored twofold, and he is blessed with ten children. (42:11-17)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The problem of suffering.

1. How can an omnipotent, all good and loving God allow evil, pain, and suffering in this world?
2. While not offering a total explanation, the book touches on some reasons for its presence in the world.
 - a. Suffering tests character. (Job 1:6-12; cf. James 1:2-4)
 - b. Suffering can result from one's own sin. (Job 4:7-9; cf. John 5:14)
 - c. Suffering refines its object. (Job 23:10; cf. Malachi 3:2-3)
 - d. Some suffering can be the result of God's discipline. (Job 33:19-30; Hebrews 12:4-11)
3. Each of these is valid in certain situations.
 - a. No single one of these is a universal explanation for suffering.
 - b. The book of Job makes it clear that it is beyond human understanding to always pinpoint suffering's cause. (Job 38:1ff)
 - c. It is particularly important not to view all suffering as punishment from God. (cf. John 9:11)

B. The "patience" of Job.

1. The expression "the patience of Job" has come to us from the KJV rendering of James 5:11.
2. If you read the book of Job, you found him to be anything but patient (as we normally define the word).
 - a. Job moaned and whined about his condition. (3:1-26; 6:1-13)
 - b. He lashed out at the unsympathetic, shallow perspective of those around him. (6:14-30)
 - c. Job even complained about God to God. (30:20-23)
3. The original word rendered "Patience" in the KJV is better translated "steadfastness" (RSV), "perseverance" (NIV) and "stood firm" (NEB).
4. Job is an example of a steadfast man who courageously clings to God even when he doesn't understand. "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." (1:22)

C. The sovereignty of God.

1. Perhaps the most inspiring part of the book is God's magnificent address to Job. (Job 38-41)
2. Powerful and poetic, it reminds us of the awesome majesty, sovereignty, and greatness of God.

PSALMS

Introduction: Some of the most universally loved of all scripture can be found in the Psalms. Reflecting the full range of human emotions, the Psalms have helped people find their way through varying experiences of life for centuries. They serve as expressions of human feeling in sorrow or joy, in depression or jubilation, in darkness or light.

Name - Psalms

1. The word "psalm" literally means praise.
2. The Hebrew title for this collection is "Songs of Praise."

Authors - According to superscriptions given to various psalms, the authorship of several of them can be traced.

1. Seventy-three are known to be composed by David.
2. Solomon wrote two. (72; 127)
3. Heman penned one. (88)
4. Ethan composed another. (89)
5. One was written by Moses. (90)
6. Asaph, one of David's court musicians, wrote twelve. (50, 73-83)
7. Ten psalms were authored by the "sons of Korah." (42-49; 84; 85; 87)
8. The others are anonymous.

Purpose - The psalms were collected and preserved primarily to form a song book or hymnal of praise and worship.

1. The book is made up of poems designed for singing.
2. It came to be used as a hymnal for temple and synagogue worship.
3. The psalms were used by the early church (cf. Ephesians 5:19) and are the source of lyrics used in some songs we sing today.
4. In addition to their use as songs, the Psalms have provided devotional reflection, comfort, encouragement, and conviction to God's people for centuries.

I. Background to the book.

- A. With the identification of certain authors we know the psalms were written over a thousand years. (1500-500 BC)
1. It is clear that most were composed during the time of the united monarchy. (I Samuel -I Kings)
 2. The vast majority were written during the hundred-year period from 1030-930 BC.
- B. The book is divided into five separate groupings.
1. Psalms 1-41.
 2. Psalms 41-72.
 3. Psalms 73-89.
 4. Psalms 90-106.
 5. Psalms 107-150.
- C. We do not know who collected and arranged the psalms in their current order.
- D. The superscriptions (or headings) of several of the psalms not only indicate authorship, but several other things were added by the King James translators.
1. Circumstances surrounding their composition. (34; 51; 102)
 2. The intended function or use of the psalm. (4; 30; 92)
 3. A tune or melody to accompany the psalm. (45; 56; 57; 69; 75)
- E. Musical notations (e.g., "selah"; "gittith"; "maskit") of uncertain meaning are also provided.
- F. The most important literary feature of the Psalms is parallelism
1. Hebrew poetry balances thought rather than sound.
 2. Using parallelism, the poet makes a statement on one line and *parallels* it with a complementary statement on the next line.
 3. Some of the basic types of parallelism found in the Psalms include:
 - a. Synonymous parallelism - In this form, the thought stated in the first lines reinforced by the second line. (e.g. 10:1;

- 18:2; 19:1; 114)
- b. Synthetic parallelism - In this parallel form, the second lines completes the thought of the first. (e.g., 8:2; 12-1; 33:1)
 - c. Climatic parallelism - Part of the first line is repeated and a new thought is added in the second line. (e.g. 29:1-2; 32:1-2; 77:1)
 - d. Antithetical parallelism - The second line offers a contrasting thought that emphasizes the first line. (e.g., 1:6; 18:27; 34:10)

G. In Hebrew, some of the psalms form acrostics. (e.g. 9, 10, 25, 34; 37; 111 and 112)

II. Main Message of the book.

A. The main message of the psalms is the expression of adoration and dependence on the love, mercy, and power of our great God!

B. Three key elements expressed in the Psalms are praise, petition and penitence.

III. Outline of the book.

A. Though the psalms are subdivided into five groupings (cf. I .B.), it is virtually impossible to outline the psalms by style or content.

1. Prayers, petitions, praise, prophecies, etc. are mixed indiscriminately among the five groupings of the book.
2. Some psalms combine more than one theme in a single poem.

B. Scholars vary in their methods of classifying the psalms. Here is one sample:

1. Messianic psalms - These prophetically speak of the person and work of the Messiah. (e.g. 2, 8, 22, 69, 110)
2. Lament psalms - In these psalms, there is a cry to God for help in time of trouble. (e.g., 7, 26, and 60)
3. Testimonial psalms - The essential feature of these psalms is the declaration by the writer of what God has done for him. (e.g., 30; 34)
4. Pilgrim psalms - Also known as "psalms of ascent", these psalms have to do with pilgrimages to the holy city of Jerusalem. These songs were apparently sung as the Israelites ascended to Jerusalem for annual feasts. (e.g., 120-134)
5. Imprecatory psalms - These are psalms that ask for judgment on wicked men. (58, 109)
6. Penitential psalms - Mostly written by David, these psalms reveal the heart of a penitent individual sorrowing over his sin. (32, 51)
7. Wisdom psalms - These psalms give counsel to godly people living in an ungodly world. (e.g., 37, 73)
8. Historical psalms - In the historical psalms, the writer looks back on God's dealing with the nation of Israel. (e.g., 78, 105, 106)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The presentation of God in the Psalms.

1. More than any other book of the Old Testament, the Psalms share with us the major aspects of God's personality and nature.
 - a. It is readily apparent that the psalmists saw God as personal and caring, as well as all-powerful and just.
 - b. They constantly praised Him as Creator, Sustainer, Sovereign, and Judge.
2. Some of the particular characteristics of God are stressed:
 - a. **His infinity.** (cf. Psalms 139)
 - [1] He is omniscient [unlimited knowledge]. (v. 1-6)
 - [2] He is omnipresent [present in all places]. (v.7-12)
 - [3] He is omnipotent. [infinite power] (v. 13-18)
 - [4] He is all holy and righteous. (v. 19-24)
 - b. **His goodness.** (Psalms 25:8-10; 33:5; 34:8; 52:1,9; 73:1; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1)
 - c. **His power.** (Psalms 21:13; 46:1-7; 62:11; 65:6, 7; 77:14-18)
 - d. **His righteousness.** (Psalms 7:9; 48:10; 50:6; 71:15,19; 89:16; 97:2; 111:3; 1119:142-144)
 - e. **His faithfulness.** (Psalms 18:30;25:10; 36:5; 40:10; 89:1-34; 92:1, 2, 15; 111:5-9)
 - f. **His love.** (Psalms 42:8; 47:4; 63:3; 78:68; 89:33)
 - g. **His mercy.** (Psalms 18:50; 32:1-5; 57:10; 62:12; 65:3; 69:16; 78:38-39; 85:2-3); 103:3-17)

B. The Messianic Psalms.

1. Several of the psalms have been interpreted in the New Testament as speaking of the Christ.

- a. Psalms 2; cf. Acts 4:25-26; 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5
 - b. Psalms 16; cf. Acts 2:24-31; 13:35-37
 - c. Psalms 22; cf. Matthew 27:35-46; John 19:23-25
 - d. Psalms 45; cf. Hebrews 1:8-9
 - e. Psalms 89; Acts 2:30
 - f. Psalms 110; Matthew 22:43-45; Acts 2:33-35; 5:6-10:6:20; 7:24
2. The way in which these psalms are referenced in the New Testament makes it clear that references to the Davidic throne are a foreshadowing of Christ.
 3. Jesus claimed that the psalms spoke of him. "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)
- C. A dependence on God. - Psalms 23:
1. If the Psalms make anything clear, it is that our entire livelihood and future is built on God.
 2. He provides:
 - a. Our guidance. (23:1)
 - b. Our protection. (23:4-5)
 - c. Our nourishment. (23:2)
 - d. Our courage. (23:4b)
 - e. Our discipline. (23:4b)
 - f. Our blessings. (23:6a)
 - g. Our sense of worth. (23:5b)
 - h. Our eternal destiny. (23:6b)

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON

Introduction: These books are included together because they are largely the works of Solomon. Rabbinic tradition says that the three books were written during three seasons of Solomon's life - Song of Solomon when he was in youthful vigor, Proverbs in mid-life, and Ecclesiastes when he was a bitter old man. While we have no idea how truthful this legend is, it is true that the books carry separate, distinct messages.

Names

1. Proverbs - A proverb is a brief saying used to communicate a truth.
 - a. The root of the word "proverb" carries the idea of "govern" or "rule."
 - b. Proverbs are wise, concise statements used to govern our lives.
2. Ecclesiastes - The name comes from the Greek rendering of the Hebrew title "*Qoheleth*", i.e., "The Preacher."
3. Song of Solomon
 - a. This title comes to our English Bibles because it is a poem (song) composed by Solomon.
 - b. The Hebrew title of the book is "Song of Songs", meaning "the best of songs."

Author - It is generally agreed that:

1. Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and most of the Proverbs. (Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1; Ecclesiastes 1:1-12; Song of Solomon 1:1)
2. The final two chapters of Proverbs were written by Agur and King Lemuel, about whom we know very little.

Purpose

1. Proverbs was written to provide solid counsel for living life well.
2. Ecclesiastes records man's struggles to find meaning and fulfillment in life.
3. Song of Solomon vividly details the beauty of physical love as God intended it.

I. Background of the books.

- A. Solomon, the author of most of this material, was the third King of Israel ruling from 970 to 930 BC.
1. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. (cf. II Samuel 12:24)
 2. His name means peaceable.

- B. Solomon's rise to power is chronicled in I Kings 1:1- 2:46.
- C. Given a choice of a divine gift as Israel's new king, Solomon humbly asks for wisdom. (I Kings 3:5-9)
 - 1. Because it was the most appropriate request, the Lord gave him wisdom and wealth and fame. (I Kings 3:10-14)
 - 2. A classic example of his wisdom is the solution he offered over the disputed child. (cf. I Kings 3:16-28)
- D. Early in his career, Solomon is recognized as the perhaps the wisest man who ever lived.
 - 1. He composed 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. (I Kings 4:32)
 - 2. He is the premier author of Israel's wisdom literature. (I Kings 3:1; 11:1-6) and was led into idolatry.
- E. Later in his reign, Solomon accomplished many great things (e.g. construction of the temple), but these achievements came at a great cost.
 - 1. To complete some of his ambitious building projects, Solomon used forced labor and lost the goodwill of the people. (cf. I Kings 4:6b)
 - 2. He took foreign wives for political purposes (I Kings 3:1; 11:1-6) and was led into idolatry.
- F. These three books share with us the benefits of his experiences.
 - 1. Proverbs and Song of Solomon share with us the wisdom received directly from God.
 - 2. Ecclesiastes shares with us the wisdom he reacquired the hard way.

II. Message(s) of the books.

- A. The main message of the three books is that life has real worth and meaning only when you walk with God.
 - 1. In the Proverbs, a key phrase is "the fear of the Lord."
 - 2. In Ecclesiastes, everything "under the sun" is "meaningless" and "a chasing after the wind" apart from God.
 - 3. In Song of Solomon, the beauty of physical intimacy is extolled when enjoyed God's way.
- B. Theme verses:
 - 1. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." (Proverbs 1:7)
 - 2. "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
 - 3. "Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away." (Song of Solomon 8:7a)

III. Outline of the books.

- A. Proverbs.
 - 1. Solomon offers selected proverbs on wisdom. (1-9)
 - 2. Next comes a collection of Proverbs dealing with a wide range of subjects (10-29), including:
 - a. Use and abuse of the tongue.
 - b. Benefits and blessings of diligence and work.
 - c. Good friends.
 - d. Child training.
 - e. Wealth.
 - f. God's guidance.
 - g. etc.
 - 3. Agur authors various proverbs in chapter 30.
 - 4. Lemuel authors the proverbs of chapter 31, including a beautiful acrostic poem offering praise of a good wife. (31:10-31)
- B. Ecclesiastes.
 - 1. The prologue. (1:1-11)
 - 2. Solomon discusses the various pursuits he engaged in for fulfillment. (1:12-6:12)
 - 3. In the next section his folly is still evident, but some pieces of wisdom begin to emerge. (7:1 -12:8)
 - 4. The conclusion of the book points to right relationship and obedience to God. (12:9-14)
- C. Song of Solomon
 - 1. Using first person narrative, the poem begins with a bride praising and longing for her husband. (1:1-3:11)

2. In the next section, the husband praises his bride. (4:1 - 5:1)
3. For unstated reasons, the husband is away, and she yearns for him to return. (5:2 - 6:9)
4. When the two lovers are reunited, the joy of their love is extolled. (6:10-8:14)

IV. Key themes of the books.

A. The major theme of Proverbs is the value of true wisdom. (1:20-23) Some key components of true wisdom are:

1. Wisdom is always grounded in respect, faith, and trust in God. (1:7; 9:10; 3:5-8)
 - a. Wisdom isn't synonymous with knowledge.
 - b. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge and skills, to bring God glory.
2. Wisdom is displayed in:
 - a. Proper use of the tongue. (4:23)
 - [1] Keep your words to a minimum. (10:14-19; 17:28)
 - [2] Keep them honest. (12:19-22; 19:22)
 - [3] Keep them brief. (17:27)
 - [4] Don't slander. (10:18; 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20)
 - b. Personal integrity. (10:9; 13:6; 15:26; 28:18)
 - c. Kindness. (11:16-17; 12:25)
 - d. Humility. (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:5; 18; 19; 22:4)
 - e. Patience. (12:16; 14:16-17; 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 22:24, 25)
 - f. Marital fidelity. (5:1-14. 21-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27)
 - g. Generosity. (3:27-28; 11:24-26; 18:16; 19:17:21:13)
 - h. Industriousness. (6:6-8; 10:26; 12:11, 24, 27; 20:4, 13)
3. Wisdom is found by:
 - a. A seeking heart. (Proverbs 2:1-4; cf. 1 Peter 2:2)
 - b. Revelation from God. (Proverbs 2:6)
 - c. A submissive life. (cf. Psalm 119:98-100)

B. The major theme of Ecclesiastes - the world cannot supply happiness.

1. Sadly, after requesting and receiving wisdom, Solomon squandered it.
2. Ecclesiastes traces his quests for meaning and happiness. He sought these virtues through:
 - a. Wisdom and knowledge. (1:12-18)
 - b. Pleasure. (2:1)
 - c. Laughter. (2:2)
 - d. Alcohol. (2:3)
 - e. Great building projects. (2:4-6)
 - f. Accumulation of riches and assets. (2:7-11; 5:10-11)
 - g. Hard work. (3:22-23)
3. Solomon concludes that all of these were "meaningless, a chasing after the wind."
4. By the end of the book, Solomon has relearned the source of meaning and happiness. (12:1-13)

C. The major theme of the Song of Solomon is the beauty of sexuality when enjoyed within the parameters of God's will.

1. A notion that sex is a "necessary evil" has wrongly been passed down through the ages.
2. The Bible presents a very positive view of sexuality.
 - a. God created humans with sexual needs and desires. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; I Corinthians 7:3-5)
 - b. He has made it clear that sexual expression is good and right in and only in the marriage setting. (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Numbers 5:12-13, 29; Proverbs 6:29-32; Matthew 5:27; Mark 10:19)
 - c. Song of Solomon encourages an exclusive (Song of Solomon 4:9) and unbreakable (8:6-7) relationship between two people within the bond of marriage.
3. This positive view of both marriage and sexuality must be taught in our homes and our Bible classes.

ISAIAH

Introduction: With the book of Isaiah; we usher in a whole new section of scripture - the Prophets. Our English word "prophet" comes from the Greek word *prophētēs* (one who speaks for another and is used to translate the Hebrew word

nabi (one who communicates the divine will). A prophet in Israel was regarded as a person through whom God would speak, (cf. Isaiah 45:11-13; Jeremiah 1:9; Amos 1:3-5). In the period of the kings, the prophets were not rulers or officials in government; they were bold-spirited, godly men who challenged kings and the people to follow the ways of the Lord. (cf. I Kings 18:17-18)

The prophets prior to 850 BC are referred to as the "non-writing" prophets. Although certain of their writings are parts of the Bible (e.g. Moses, Samuel), they did not leave behind books of their collective prophecies.

The prophets after 850 BC are generally called the "writing" prophets. There are seventeen books in the Bible composed by God's Spirit through these men. Five of these seventeen books were written by the Major Prophets, and twelve by the Minor Prophets. (Note: The distinction between a Major and Minor Prophet is based on the length of the books) Isaiah isn't the first prophetic book written (see chronological chart of the prophets), but it is the first we come to in our Bibles.

Name - The book is named for its author.

Arthur

1. The author of the book is Isaiah:
 - a. His name means "the Lord saves."
 - b. He lived and ministered in Jerusalem where he was the court preacher.
 - c. Isaiah was evidently well-educated, skilled in oration and writing, and known in the royal court.
 - d. Tradition holds that he was sawed in half during Manasseh's reign.
2. Liberal scholars question if Isaiah wrote chapters 40-66:
 - a. The book does change themes between chapters 39 and 40.
 - b. The primary reason for the challenge to the total authorship of Isaiah is a reluctance to validate predictive prophecy.
 - c. The New Testament treats the book as a unit. (Matthew 3:3; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; 15:7; John 12:38-41)

Purpose – The book of Isaiah did three things:

1. Isaiah rebuked Judah's leadership for seeking political security rather than trusting the Lord.
2. It predicted the Babylonian captivity and Judah's return to their homeland.
3. Isaiah looked beyond immediate events and foretold of the coming, suffering and reign of the Messiah.

I. Background of the book.

- A. Isaiah had a long ministry which began in the year King Uzziah died (740 BC) and continued into the reign of Manasseh (696-642 BC).
1. His ministry extended through the reign of four kings of Judah.
 2. His work covered a span of at least fifty years.
- B. Isaiah ministered during a critical time in the nation's history.
1. He began his work while there were still two kingdoms.
 2. He saw the fall of Israel (721 BC) and warned Judah of the same fate.
 3. Isaiah was a contemporary of Micah in the South (Judah) and Hosea in the North (Israel).
 4. He was a great help and support to the godly King Hezekiah.

II. The Main Message of the book.

- A. The main message of the book was one of a stern rebuke and a plea for repentance.
1. Social injustice was commonplace. (cf. Isaiah 5:8)
 2. The spiritual life of Judah was suffering. Priests and prophets were corrupt. (Isaiah 56:10-12)
- B. Isaiah 1 is the overview of the whole book.
1. The prophet pleads for repentance and a transformed life.
 2. "Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:16-17)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. Prophecies of judgment against the nations. (Isaiah 1-35)
1. Judah and Jerusalem are arraigned for their sins. (1:1-31)
 2. The devastation Jerusalem will suffer is contrasted to the beauty of "Yahweh's Jerusalem" (i.e. - the reign of the Messiah). (2:1-5:30)
 3. Isaiah receives his call and commission from God. (6:1-13)
 4. The "book of Immanuel" follows, offering prophecies of the Messiah's coming against the background of the Syno-Ephraimitic War. (7:1 -12:6)
 5. A series of prophecies of judgment are given against:
 - a. Babylon. (13:1-14:23)
 - b. Assyria. (14:24-27)
 - c. Philistia. (14:28-32)
 - d. Moab. (15:1-16:14)
 - e. Damascus. (17:1-14)
 - f. Cush and Egypt. (18:1-20:6)
 - g. Babylon. (21:1-10)
 - h. Edom. (21:11-12)
 - i. Arabia. (21:13-17)
 - j. Jerusalem. (22:1-25)
 - k. Tyre. (23:1-18)
 6. General prophecies about judgment against the earth on "the day of the Lord" are given. (24:1-27:13)
 7. Warnings are given to:
 - a. The Northern Kingdom. (28:1-13)
 - b. The Southern Kingdom. (28:14-31:9)
 8. A promise of blessing and joy is offered to those who seek the Lord in righteousness. (32:1-35:10)
- B. The historical bridge (Isaiah 36-39):
1. These four chapters contain a historical parenthesis that discusses several events from the life of King Hezekiah. (36-39)
 - a. Sennacherib threatened to invade Jerusalem, and King Hezekiah calls for Isaiah. (36:1-37:5)
 - b. The prophet promised deliverance, and an angel destroyed the Assyrian army. (37:6-38)
 - c. During an illness, Hezekiah prayed fervently, and God extended his life 15 years. (38:1-22)
 - d. However, upon his recovery, Hezekiah foolishly boasted of the nation's wealth, and Isaiah predicted that Babylon would one day ransack Judah. (39:1-8)
 2. These chapters also serve to bridge the early part of the book, which relates to the domination of the Assyrians, to the latter section and its prophecy of the Babylonian conquest.
- C. Prophecies of the future (Isaiah 40-66):
1. Against the background of the Babylonian exile just predicted, God's gracious deliverance is foretold. (40:1-48:22)
 2. Beyond restoration to their homeland, ultimate deliverance would come through the "Servant of the Lord." (49:1-53:12)
 3. His work would be accompanied by glory. (54:1-57:12)
 4. The book closes with pleas for repentance (58:1-59:15) and with the understanding that Judah's ultimate hope is found only through the coming Messiah. (59:16-66:24)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Prophecy

1. Many deny Isaiah's authorship of the entire book because of the predictive prophecies in the last section (chapters 40-66).
 - a. For example, Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 specifically name Cyrus as the one God would use to rebuild the temple 150 years before it would take place!
 - b. Many specific messianic prophecies appear in this section as well.
2. It should be noted, however, that the first section of the book also contains predictive prophecies.
 - a. The futures of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, etc. are fore told.
 - b. Messianic prophecies are also included in the first section.
3. The real problem here is the assumption that no writer could know the future.
 - a. Such a premise negates the divine origin of the Word.

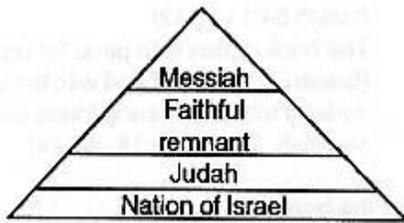
b. The presence of predictive prophecy is an evidence of inspiration. (cf. Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

B. The Holiness of God.

1. In its root form (*qds* - holy) carries the idea of separate or set apart.
2. Isaiah's expression, "the Holy One of Israel" is found 25 times in the book. (In the rest of the Old Testament it appears only six times.)
3. In one of the great scenes of the Bible, Isaiah is allowed to see the throne of the Lord. (Isaiah 6:1-13)
 - a. The seraphs called out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty."
(Isaiah 6:3)
 - b. Isaiah's response is a shame and fear spawned by his personal iniquity.
 - c. God allowed and used Isaiah's experience to call Israel to be "set apart" from the attitudes and behavior of pagan nations.
4. The holiness of God does not negate His saving and redeeming spirit.
 - a. Remember the name Isaiah means "God will save."
 - b. Many times in the book Isaiah says, "your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." (cf. Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 54:5)

C. The Servant of the Lord.

1. Beginning in Isaiah 40 we find the recurring figure of the "Servant of the Lord."
2. Sometimes the servant is clearly the nation of Israel (Isaiah 49:3), and at other times it isn't. (Isaiah 49:5-6)
3. Some scholars see the servant as a progression typified in this pyramid:



4. Isaiah 53 clearly offers a picture of the servant as being Jesus Christ. (cf. Acts 8:32-34; I Peter 2:22-25)

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

Introduction: The prophecies of Jeremiah were given to Judah just prior to and immediately following the fall of Jerusalem. The book picks up about 60 years after the close of Isaiah's ministry.

Names

1. Jeremiah is named for the prophet who wrote it.
2. The book of Lamentations gets its name because it is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies.

Author

1. Both books were written by Jeremiah.
2. Originally, they were recorded on one scroll.
3. The books were likely put in their final form by Baruch, a faithful scribe under Jeremiah's charge. (cf. Jeremiah 36:27-32)

Purpose

1. Jeremiah's prophecies were given to the rulers and people of Judah.
 - a. His message was stern and the judgment he pronounced was irreversible.
 - b. Most of the people despised and rejected his message.
2. Lamentations vividly displays the great emotional and physical pain Jeremiah and his people experienced from captivity.

I. Background of the books.

A. We know more about Jeremiah than any other Old Testament prophet.

1. He was the son of the priest Hilkiah. (Jeremiah 1:1)
2. As a boy, he was called to prophetic work. (Jeremiah 1:6)
3. Jeremiah lived in the priestly city of Anathoth, located just a few miles north of Jerusalem.
4. He was instructed not to marry. (Jeremiah 16:1-2)
5. With an unpopular message, Jeremiah was beaten, imprisoned, and ill-treated for proclaiming God's message.

B. Jeremiah's ministry lasted about 40 years in Judah.

1. His ministry spanned the reigns of five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. (cf. II Kings 22-25)
2. He was a contemporary of five other prophets: Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. [refer to the Chronological Chart of the Prophets on page 84]
3. Beyond his ministry in Judah, Jeremiah later ministered to a remnant in Egypt.

C. In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, God ordered that Jeremiah document the messages he had received to that point. (36:1-4)

1. The original scroll was destroyed by Jehoiakim about a year later. (36:9-23)
2. God ordered Jeremiah to write the material again. (36:27-32)
3. The second scroll was supplemented with still later prophecies and was put in its final form sometime after the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC).

II. The Main Message of the books.

A. The main message of the book of Jeremiah is a rebuke for unfaithfulness and a plea for repentance.

1. God foretold their impending judgment at the hands of Babylon.
2. He also predicted the return to their homeland.

B. The main message of the book of Lamentations is an expression of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

C. Combined, the books carry the message of divine judgment.

III. Outline of the books.

A. Prophecies prior to the fall of Jerusalem.

1. Jeremiah is called to be a prophet. (1:1-19)
2. His first prophecy proclaims a divine judgment on Judah's apostasy. (2:1-3:5)
3. His second oracle warns the people not to fall into the same fate as the northern kingdom. (3:6-6:30)
4. Jeremiah's third prophecy warns against trusting in the temple and religious facades to protect them from the consequences of their unfaithfulness.
5. A fourth prophecy rebukes the people for their covenant breaking. (7:1 -10:25)
6. A fifth prophecy proclaims punishment on the land. (14:1-17:27)
7. Specific symbols are used to dramatize the message of judgment. (18:1-19:15)
8. Jeremiah is arrested (Jeremiah 20:1-6) and laments his fate. (20:7-18)
9. The next large section of material is not in chronological order. Under the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, Jeremiah warned of impending captivity and endured persecution for his message. (21:1 -39:18)

B. Prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 40:1-51:64)

1. After the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC), Jeremiah prophesied to God's people in:
 - a. Judah. (40:1-42:22)
 - b. Egypt. (43:1-44:30)
 - c. Babylon. (45:1-51:64)
2. The focus of these prophecies is an assurance to defeated Jews that God will also judge the wicked nations around them.
3. These prophecies also point to the Messiah.

C. Historical appendix.

The last chapter of Jeremiah is virtually identical with II Kings 24-25. (Jeremiah 52:1-34)

D. Lamentations over fallen Jerusalem. (Lamentations 1-5)

1. Jeremiah explains the fate of Jerusalem as judgment from heaven. (1:1- 2:22)
2. He begs the Lord for mercy. (3:1-66)
3. He laments over Jerusalem's lost glory. (4:1-22)
4. The book closes with a prayer for deliverance. (5:1-22)

IV. Key themes of the books.

A. The call from idolatry:

1. During the time of Jeremiah, Judah had sunk to depraved depths of idol worship.
 - a. During Josiah's reign, the worship of idols declined. (cf. II Kings 23:4ff)
 - b. At his death, the despicable practice returned in force.
2. Jeremiah declared that these pagan symbols were impotent and powerless delusions. (Jeremiah 10:1-16)
3. Despite that fact, the Jews were "neck deep" in idolatry.
 - a. Idols had even been erected in the Temple.
 - b. Children were even sacrificed to Molech. (Jeremiah 32:35)
4. By contrast, Jeremiah reveals Jehovah as Creator and Savior. (Jeremiah 27:5; 31:1-3)

B. An obedient walk vs. a religious facade.

1. Amazingly, despite Judah's idolatry, the people remained "religious."
2. Their religion was a façade, ritual without meaning, rather than an obedient walk from a devoted heart.
3. Jeremiah stressed the following principles:
 - a. Knowledge without obedience is useless. (Jeremiah 2:8; 23:9-17)
 - b. Sacrifices and temple service are fruitless apart from consecrated lives. (Jeremiah 7:4-11)
 - c. Circumcision of the heart was as necessary as circumcision of the flesh. (Jeremiah 4:4; 9:26)
4. The rest of the Bible affirms these principles.

“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.” (II Timothy 3:2-5)

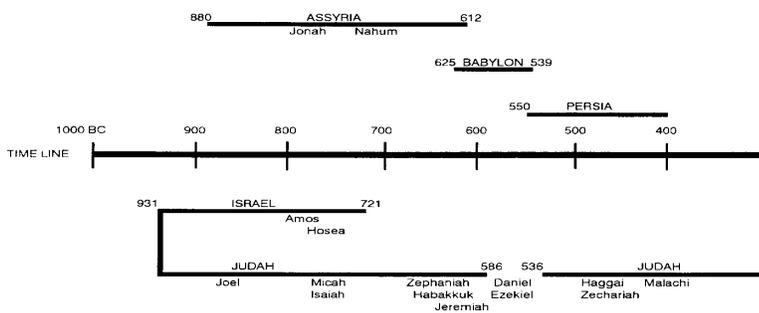
“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:14-19)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matthew 7:15-18)

C. The New Covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

1. The Mosaic Covenant of Old Testament was never intended to be God's finished revelation. (cf. Galatians 3:24-25; Romans 7:4-6; Hebrews 9:15-17)
2. Hebrews 8 cites Jeremiah 31 as being fulfilled by the Covenant of Christ.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF THE PROPHETS



EZEKIEL

Introduction: The book of Ezekiel is the beginning of a new phase in Israelite prophecy, and its form and characteristics differ in style from the books of prophecy we've studied thus far. Ezekiel relies heavily upon apocalyptic images whose meanings have been lost through the centuries. Even its original readers would read apocalyptic pieces for the vivid impressions more than specific details. This genre was commonly used during times of political turmoil and persecution.

Name - The book is named for the prophet who wrote it.

Author - Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel was a member of a priestly family. (Ezekiel 1:3)
2. He was carried away from Jerusalem in the second wave of Babylonian captivity (597BC) when he was 25 years old. (Ezekiel 1:2)
3. While in exile in Tel Abib, Ezekiel was called to be a prophet at the age of 30. (Ezekiel 1:1)

Purpose - Ezekiel has two purposes:

1. The book tells the "second wave" captives residing in Babylon that further and final judgment against Judah and Jerusalem is still forthcoming.
2. Like most of the inspired prophetic books, Ezekiel points to the glory and hope of the future, made possible through Christ.

I. Background of the book.

- A. To understand the book of Ezekiel it is helpful to be reminded of the stages of Babylonian captivity.
1. The first siege by Babylon took place in 606 BC. Daniel and others were taken captive in this group.
 2. The second deportation occurred in 597 BC. Ezekiel was in this group and prophesied to the 10,000 captives-taken—during this conquest.
 3. In the third siege (586 BC) Jerusalem is sacked, the Temple destroyed, and most of the population taken captive.

4. Through all of the above, Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem.
- B. The book employs the first person singular throughout.
- C. Ezekiel's prophetic work began in the fifth year of his exile (ca. 592 BC) and extended to at least the 27th year of the exile (ca. 570 BC). (1:2; 29:17)
- D. The apocalyptic style of the writing was used to vividly relate tumultuous times of great upheaval. It was loaded with imagery and symbolism familiar to early readers but largely lost on us today.

II. Message of the book. The message is the faithfulness of God.

- A. He is faithful in bringing consequence for sin. (1-32)
- B. He is faithful in keeping his covenant of blessing. (33-48)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. Prophecies prior to the fall of Jerusalem. (1:1-24:27)
 1. Ezekiel is called to serve as a "watchman to the house of Israel." (1:1-3:27)
 2. Through the use of symbols, the destruction of Jerusalem is forecast. (4:1-5:17)
 3. Ezekiel offers two specific oracles about the impending event. (6:1-7:27)
 4. In the sixth year of his captivity, Ezekiel receives a vision of the idolatry in the Temple and the destruction it will incur because of it. (8:1-10:22)
 - a. In that same vision, Ezekiel saw judgment come on the nation's leaders. (11:1-15)
 - b. He also foresees Judah's return to their homeland. (11:16-25)
 5. The destruction will occur because of Jerusalem's rebellion (12:1-28), false prophets (13:1-23), and idolatry (14:1-23).
 6. Allegories and metaphors depicting the punishment are offered. (15:1-18:32)
 7. Ezekiel laments over the princes of Israel. (19:1-14)
 8. Additional allegories and illustrations are used to symbolize Jerusalem's destruction. (20:1-24:27)
- B. Prophecies against other nations. (Ezekiel 25:1-32:32, 35:1-15) Prophecies are specifically given about:
 1. Ammon. (25:1-7)
 2. Moab. (25:8-11)
 3. Edom. (25:12-14)
 4. Philistia. (25:15-17)
 5. Tyre. (26:1-28:19)
 6. Sidon. (28:20-26)
 7. Egypt. (29:1-32:32)
 8. Edom. (35:1-15)
- C. Prophecies of the future. (Ezekiel 33:1-48:35)
 1. Ezekiel is called to be a "watchman." (33:1-20)
 2. He predicts Judah's return to their homeland. (33:21-34; 31; 36:1-38)
 3. The first prophecy of the Christ comes through Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. (37:1-28)
 4. A prophecy against enemies of the church, "Gog" and "Magog," is given. (38:1-39:29)
 5. A "new Israel" is portrayed in divine splendor and under heaven's protection. (40:1-48:35)

IV. Key themes of the book.

- A. Prophecies fulfilled:
 1. Certainly Ezekiel's prophecies against Judah came to pass as did the specific destinies of the other nations prophesied about.
 2. A clear and classic example is the destiny of Tyre, the major city of Phoenicia. (Ezekiel 26-28)
 - a. The Lord said of Tyre, "I will bring many nations against you." (Ezekiel 26:3)
 - b. He said, "They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers." (Ezekiel 26:4a)
 - c. Further, "I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock." (Ezekiel 26:4b)
 - d. Ezekiel also prophesied, "... they will breakdown your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber, and rubble into the sea." (Ezekiel 26:12b)

- e. The Lord continued, "I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fish nets." (Ezekiel 26:14a)
 - f. Finally, "You will never be rebuilt, for I, the Lord, have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord."
3. Shortly after this prophecy, King Nebuchadnezzar conducted a 13-year siege (ca. 587-574 BC) against Tyre.
 - a. He destroyed the mainland city.
 - b. The people fled to an island one-half mile away.
 4. The city recovered and rebuilt until 332 BC when Alexander the Great came against it.
 - a. Once again, the people fled to the island.
 - b. Alexander had his army tear down the city (on the mainland) and laid the stones, timber, and soil into the sea, building a land bridge to the island.
 5. The city was sacked again by one of Alexander's generals, Antigonus, in 314 BC.
 6. Today, nothing remains of the ancient city of Tyre.
 - a. Where it stood is a solid rock.
 - b. To this day, fishermen spread their nets there.
 7. Clearly the source of Ezekiel's knowledge of these events was God.
- B. The final 11 chapters (Ezekiel 38-48):
1. The last eleven chapters of Ezekiel are primary fodder used by dispensationalists.
 - a. Chapters 38 and 39 have been made to represent some world power and a great conflict ushering the end of time.
 - b. Chapters 40-48 are taken literally (not as the apocalyptic imagery intended) and supposedly calls for a physically rebuilt temple, the reinstatement of animal sacrifices, a priesthood, Old Testament festivals, etc.
 2. The inaccuracy of this interpretation should be readily evident.
 - a. It grossly underestimates the nature of Christ's finished atoning work. (cf. Hebrews 10:10-14)
 - b. It misuses the style or type of literature used in chapters 38-48.
 3. The chapters in question surely refer to the coming of the Christ and the covenant He will establish.
 - a. Ezekiel 37 closes with, "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant and I will put my sanctuary among them forever." (v. 26)
 - b. Chapters 38 and 39 used the names of Jewish enemies as symbols of the persecution and enemies Satan would hurl against the church.
 - c. Chapters 40-48 portray the beauty of worship and relationship through Jesus Christ.
 - [1] The "river from the temple" (Ezekiel 47) surely refers to the "stream of living water" Jesus offered. (John 7:38)
 - [2] The prince who serves as the gatekeeper (Ezekiel 44:1-3) is surely the one who has opened heaven's gate for us.
 - [3] The presence of the Lord promised in Ezekiel 48:35 is almost certainly a reference to His Spirit living in us.
 - d. In short, Ezekiel 38-48 is not a blueprint for future world events; it apocalyptically portrays the fruition of the covenant made with Israel (i.e. - the church).
- C. Personal accountability.
1. In our study of the prophets, we have seen several examples of collective responsibility.
 - a. A whole nation is punished for the severity and prevalence of sin within it. (e.g. - Judah)
 - b. We've seen examples of innocent people taken captive because of the sins of a group. (e.g. - Daniel, Ezekiel)
 2. But Ezekiel also gives us the example of personal accountability. (cf. Ezekiel 3:16-21; 9:4; 18:1-32)
 - a. It should be noted here that there is a difference between consequence and guilt.
 - [1] At times the innocent may bear some of the consequences from the actions of the guilty.
 - [2] However, guilt or innocence is always the result of personal choice.
 - b. Ezekiel 18 is a great chapter reflecting on the theme of personal accountability. (cf. Ezekiel 18:4b, 17b-18:30)
 3. This vital principle needs to be taught in every generation.
 - a. Jesus had to rebuke the idea of collective righteousness. (cf. John 8:39ff; Matthew 3:7-10)
 - b. We need to be reminded that **my own ultimate destiny comes through my personal choice.**
- D. The Valley of Dry Bones. (Ezekiel 37)
1. In what was surely one of the more frightening parts of his vision, Ezekiel saw old, dry bones come to life.
 2. This is obviously a prophecy of the Spirit of life that Jesus would breathe into the new Israel (i.e. - His church).

DANIEL

Introduction: The book of Daniel is a fascinating work. Part of it is composed of puzzling apocalyptic imagery, while other parts share with us some of the most inspiring stories in all scripture.

The book was written in two languages. Daniel 2:24b-7:28 is composed in Aramaic [or Syrian or Chaldee] and the rest of the book is in Hebrew. That fact reflects Daniel's personal history (see "Background" section) and the impact the captivity would have on the Jewish culture.

Name - the book is named for the prophet who wrote it.

Author - Daniel

1. Daniel was born into a wealthy and noble family in Judah.
2. In 606 BC he was among the thousands taken captive in the first wave of Babylonian conquest. (1:1-7)
3. Daniel distinguished himself in government service.
 - a. He was specially trained for leadership in Nebuchadnezzar's court. (1:3-6)
 - b. King Darius appointed Daniel as one of his three chief administrators (6:3), and planned to set him over his whole kingdom (6:4).
4. Throughout his captivity and promotions, he remained a deeply spiritual man, faithful to his God and his convictions. (cf. 1:8-16; 6:1)
 - a. He proclaimed the message of God faithfully. (5:24-8)
 - b. He was given the ability to interpret dreams and visions.
 - [1] Those of others. (2-5)
 - [2] His own. (7-12)
 - c. Despite his great faith and special ability, he never claimed credit for himself. (2:27-30)
5. Though liberal scholars have questioned Daniel's authorship of the book, there is little doubt about that fact.
 - a. The book itself presents Daniel as the author. (cf. Daniel 7:2; 8:1; 9:2; 12:4)
 - b. The historicity of Daniel is found in his contemporary Ezekiel, who speaks of him several times.
 - c. The testimony of Jesus is that this book was written by "Daniel, the Prophet." (Matthew 24:15)
 - d. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided further archaeological evidence of Daniel's authorship.

Purpose

1. The initial purpose of the book was to allow captive Judah to know its immediate and long-term future.
 - a. It told the captives that the political kingdoms of the earth would come and go.
 - b. The book called for them to be faithful to God.
2. In addition to the above, the purpose for readers of all generations is to show God's providential hand bringing about His will.

I. Background of the book.

- A. Remember that Daniel was taken in the first wave of Babylonian captivity (606 BC).
- B. He lived during the zenith of Babylon's power and witnessed its fall to the Medes and Persians.
- C. The book covers the period from 606 BC (1:1) to 536 BC (10:1).

II. Main message of the book.

- A. The main message of the book is the sovereignty of God.
 1. Through the powers of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, God would bring to bear His purposes.
 2. The same could be said today of the U.S., Russia, China, etc.
- B. With regard to individuals, God does not control the decisions of human beings (cf. Joshua 24:15; John 3:16), but He uses our choices to bring about His desired ends.

III. Outline of the book.

- A. The story of Daniel and others.

1. Daniel and three other captives from Judah are trained for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court. (1:1-7)
 - a. They wouldn't defile themselves with the King's food. (1:8-16)
 - b. Through their fast, God sustained and blessed them for their integrity. (1:17-21)
2. When Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream, only Daniel could interpret it. (2:1-45)
3. He was then given a prominent position in the King's court. (2:46-9)
4. Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image for worship (3:1-7), but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow before it. (3:8-12)
5. The three were cast into a fiery furnace but were delivered by God. (3:13-30)
6. Nebuchadnezzar had another dream that Daniel interpreted. (4:1-27)
 - a. Its message was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar became temporarily insane because of his pride. (4:28-33)
 - b. He recovered and praised God. (4:34-37)
7. Under Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Belshazzar, Daniel interpreted mysterious writing which appeared on the wall. (5:1-28)
8. The prophecy was fulfilled that very evening when Darius the Mede conquered Babylon and Belshazzar was killed. (5:29-31)
9. Daniel was given an honored position in Darius' court. (6:1-3)
10. Jealous peers plotted against him (6:4-9), but when Daniel was thrown into the den of lions, God shut their mouths. (14:10-28)

B. Daniel's Visions and Prophecies. (Daniel 7:1 -12:13)

1. The second half of the book goes from a personal record of Daniel's life to revelations he received about the kingdom of God. These included the:
 - a. Vision of four great beasts. (7:1-28)
 - b. Vision of the ram and shaggy goat. (8:1-27)
 - c. Vision of the 70 weeks. (9:1-27)
 - d. Vision of events during the Maccabean era. (10:1-12:3)
2. Daniel was then told to seal the book. (12:4-5)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The earthly kingdoms and the Kingdom of God.

1. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about an image made of four different materials.
 - a. This image had a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay.
 - b. Daniel interpreted the meaning as four earthly kingdoms:
 - [1] Gold was Babylon.
 - [2] Silver was Medo-Persia.
 - [3] Brass was Greece.
 - [4] Iron was Rome.
 - c. In the days of the fourth kingdom, a stone, not cut by human hands, would roll down and destroy the image.
 - d. That stone obviously pointed to the establishment of God's church. (cf. Acts 2)
2. In Daniel 7, the prophet shares a vision of four beasts.
 - a. I believe they stand for the same four empires.
 - b. In Daniel 7:13-14, the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of the Christ appear to be described.
 - c. It seems likely the atrocities committed by the fourth beast refer to the Roman persecution of the early church, (cf. 7:19-27)
3. In Daniel 8, there is a vision of a ram and a shaggy goat.
 - a. These are prophetic images of the second and third kingdoms. (i.e. Medo-Persia and Greece)
 - b. The "prominent hour" of the shaggy goat is probably a reference to Alexander the Great. (cf. Daniel 8:9-14)
 - c. The "small hour" could well be a symbol of Antiochus Epiphanies. (8:9-14)

B. The "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9.

1. The interpretations offered for this passage are varied.
2. Two major ones are worth consideration:
 - a. Some claim the seventy weeks (or seventy sevens) are a number of years (i.e. 490 years).
 - [1] If you begin with the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra in 458 BC (cf. Ezra 7:6-7; 9:9) and come forward 69 x 7 years (i.e. 483 years), you arrive at a date of 26 AD - the year Jesus began his public ministry. (cf. 9:25)

- [2] The seventieth week would then be a completion of His work. (cf. 1 9:26-27)
- b. More likely, the seventy weeks of years is entirely symbolic of the whole period necessary for the messianic work to come to fruition and be fulfilled. (cf. 9:24)

C. Faith with integrity.

1. The Bible is filled with examples of heroes and heroines who kept their faith and the integrity of their walk with God through difficult circumstances.
 - a. Joseph. (Genesis 38-50)
 - b. Esther.
 - c. John the baptizer. (Matthew 14:1-2)
 - d. All of Hebrews 11.
2. Daniel brings two classic examples of the same principle:
 - a. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace.
 - b. Daniel and the lion's den.
3. Because both of the situations ended with the heroes not being harmed, we sometimes draw the wrong message from their stories.
 - a. The message is not that God will always keep his people away from harm. (cf. Hebrews 11:35-38)
 - b. The message is wrapped up in the response the three captive Kings gave to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:16-17.
 - c. The correct message to their stories is to walk by faith.

INTRODUCTION – MINOR PROPHETS

Following is a series of in-depth studies are *not* designed to present an in-depth exegesis of the biblical text, but rather to provide the student with extensive background information which can help facilitate a better understanding of these devoted men and their times.

The Prophetic Office

"Under the law there were at least five classes of speakers -- Moses, the lawgiver; the wise men, who gave counsel; priests, who taught the law; prophets, through whom God spoke His word; and psalmists, who were the singers or poets in Israel" (Homer Hailey).

"By way of general definition, a prophecy is an oral or written disclosure in words through a human mouthpiece transmitting the revelation of God and setting forth His will to man" (Gleason Archer, Jr.).

God told Moses that his brother Aaron would be his "prophet" (Ex. 7:1). God then explains the nature of this work in Exodus 4:14-16 the prophet is a "mouthpiece." The Lord further discusses a prophet and his work in Deut. 18:18-22, and tells us how we may determine who is a genuine prophet and who is a false prophet.

Fore-telling the future was only a small part of prophecy; the major work of the prophet was to reveal God's will to His people what God expected of them in the present. "As a spokesman for God he was more a *forth*-teller than a *fore*-teller" (Hailey).

Biblical Titles of These Individuals

Prophet --- (Hebrew: *nabi* one who has been called). "The prophet was not to be regarded as a self-appointed professional whose purpose was to convince others of his own opinions, but rather he was one called by God to proclaim as a herald from the court of heaven the message to be transmitted from God to man" (Archer).

Seer --- (Hebrew: *hozeh* or *ro'eh*). "As a seer (one who "sees") he would avoid evolving ideas or opinions of his own mind and would confine himself to that which God had actually shown him" (Archer). This appears to have been the earliest term by which these men were called (see: I Sam. 9:9).

Man of God --- (I Sam. 9:6; I Kings 17:18). "This title implied that the prophet must be a man who belonged first and foremost to God, was wholly devoted to His cause, and enjoyed His personal fellowship. Therefore, he could be trusted to transmit God's Word, because he spoke only as God enlightened him and guided him to speak" (Archer).

Servant of Jehovah --- (I Chron. 6:49; I Kings 18:36).

Messenger of Jehovah --- (Is. 42:19).

Watchman --- (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7).

Responsibilities of the Prophetic Office

"The responsibility of the OT prophets was not principally to predict the future in the modern sense of the word *prophecy*, but rather to tell forth the Will of God which He had communicated by revelation" (Gleason Archer).

"The prophet had the responsibility of encouraging God's people to trust only in Jehovah's mercy and delivering power, rather than in their own merits or strength, or in the might of human allies" (Archer).

"The prophet was responsible to remind his people that safety and blessedness were conditioned upon their faithful adherence to the covenant, and that this adherence involved not only doctrinal conviction but a sincere submission of their will to obey God with their whole heart and to lead a godly life. Apart from such submission, no amount of sacrifice or ritualistic worship could satisfy the Lord. In other words, a saving faith involves a sanctified walk" (Archer).

"The prophet was to encourage Israel in respect to the future. This assurance of the future, of the ultimate triumph of the true faith, was well calculated to encourage the sincere believers within Israel to keep faith with God and keep on trusting Him in the face of all contrary appearances and hostile circumstances" (Archer).

"Hebrew prophecy was to seal the authoritativeness of God's message by the objective verification of fulfilled prophecy" (Archer).

"There are two classes of preachers --- the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who have to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say and who have to say it. *Such are the prophets.*" ---- **Albert Knudson**

AMOS

Personal Background

The meaning of the name *Amos* (which is from the Hebrew verb *amas* = "to lift a burden, to carry") is "burden-bearer." He was a native of the southern kingdom of Judah, from the town of *Tekoa* -- about six miles south of Bethlehem, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and eighteen miles west of the Dead Sea. *Tekoa* was the center for a large sheep farming district.

Amos describes himself as one who had three different occupations:

Shepherd (Amos 1:1) --- This is the Hebrew word *noqed*, which was a word used to describe a man who tended a particular small, rugged, speckled variety of sheep (called *naqod*) which required less food and could live well in the desert, and which produced a wool of superior quality and of great value.

Herdsmen (Amos 7:14) --- This is the Hebrew word *boqer*, which refers to one who raises or tends cattle.

Cultivator of Sycamore Figs (Amos 7:14) --- This was the wild fig (*siq-mim* in Hebrew) which exuded a ball of sap when nipped at the right season, and which hardened into a sort of edible fruit which the lower classes were able to afford. This tree was found at a lower altitude than *Tekoa*, so Amos undoubtedly had to do some traveling (perhaps down to the Dead Sea region) to tend these trees.

"These occupations made it necessary for Amos to do a large amount of traveling to the wool and cattle markets of Israel and Judah. In this way, he learned firsthand the military, social, and economic conditions and practices of rich and poor alike" (John T. Willis).

Amos was *not* a "professional" prophet, but a common man utilized by the Lord to deliver His Word to His people. "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet ... but the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.' And now hear the Word of the Lord!" (Amos 7:14-16). He had no special training; he was not a graduate of the *School of the Prophets* (variously referred to as "bands" -- I Samuel 10:5, 10, and "companies" -- I Samuel 19:20, and "sons of the prophets" -- I Kings 20:35); nor was he descended from or related to any prophets. He was not even a citizen of Israel (the northern kingdom), but rather of Judah (the southern kingdom). Nevertheless, God sent him to Israel to proclaim the Word to the people of the northern kingdom. He was not a man of wealth, yet was sent

to warn the wealthy; not a man of luxury, or one who was lazy, yet sent to those who were both. *All of this was designed to separate the MAN from the MESSAGE.* There was to be nothing about this man which would attract a personal following. It was the *message* God desired the people to focus upon, not the *messenger!*

Amos did most, if not all, of his prophetic work (the totality of which probably did not last over a year or so --- Amos 1:1) in the city of *Bethel* (Amos 7:10), where he was denounced by Amaziah the priest and forbidden to preach further in Israel.

"Someone has described Amos as 'the first Great Reformer.' He was not of the school of the prophets, who by this time were disposed to cry what the people wanted ... There was not in Amos the sympathy, warm love, and feeling of the statesman or citizen, but a cold sense of justice and right. He was the stern prophet of justice and righteousness. Hosea's spirit was summed up in the word *lovingkindness*; Amos' is summed up in the one word *justice*" (Homer Hailey).

"The dark days in which he lived called for a man of sturdy moral fiber and fearlessness. Such was Amos. His character, molded in the harsh terrain of the wilderness of Tekoa, enabled him to stand before the priest and the people, proclaiming the word God had given him" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*). "At the call of God, he left his home in Judea as a mere layman to proclaim a hostile message in the proud capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Without any status as a recognized prophet, he braved the prejudice of the Ephraimite public to carry out faithfully his commission from God. A man of rugged convictions and iron will, he could not be deflected from his purpose even by the highest functionary of the Samaritan hierarchy" (Gleason L. Archer, Jr.).

Date

Amos 1:1 gives us a fairly accurate picture of when this prophecy occurred. It was during the days of King Uzziah (792-740 BC), and King Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753 BC). His mission to Bethel was also more precisely dated as occurring "two years before the earthquake." This was a very severe earthquake in the reign of Uzziah which was remembered for centuries afterward --- "You will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah" (Zechariah 14:5). As a result of this information, most scholars date his prophetic work somewhere between 760 and 755 BC.

Historical Background

This was a time when the fortunes of the northern kingdom (Israel) had reached one of their highest points of prosperity and peace. Jeroboam was able to extend his borders almost to those of the old Davidic kingdom. There was also peace with the southern kingdom (Judah). "After a long period of conflict during which Judah was in many respects subservient to Israel, there was now a spirit of co-operation and mutual enterprise resulting in a flow of trade and commerce between the two kingdoms" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

It was a time of great economic well-being and national strength. The increase in wealth also led to extensive building programs. The simple brick of earlier days gave way to buildings of hewn stone and ivory decorations. They had "winter houses" and "summer houses" (Amos 3:15). They had "houses of ivory" (Amos 3:15), and "houses of well-hewn stone" (Amos 5:11). They reclined on "beds of ivory" (Amos 6:4); sprawled on couches; ate and drank to their fill; anointed themselves with the finest oils; were surrounded by music (Amos 6:4-7). In short, they were "*at ease in Zion*" (Amos 6:1).

"Concurrently with the increased wealth there was an associated rise in those social evils which characterized the prosperity of Solomon's reign; the rich became very rich and the poor became even poorer" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*). "As their economic well-being and national strength continued to foster their security, an internal decay was eating at their vitals" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

There was a complete lack of social concern in the land. The rich would stop at nothing to increase their profits, including economic exploitation of the poor. Even the legal system was corrupted, and the poor had no recourse even in the courts. "The rich enjoyed an indolent and indulgent existence, urged on by the rapacity of their wives who demanded more and more luxuries" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

"Back of all moral, social, and political corruption there lies a basic cause: *Religious decay and apostasy*" (Homer Hailey). The people were *religious*, but they were far from being *spiritual*. Their religion consisted of external acts --- they were putting on a show for God, but He was not fooled. "They prided themselves in their expensive 'church

buildings.' They boasted of the numerous sacrifices which they offered, and of the fact that they offered them *exactly* as the Law prescribed ('legalism'). They gloried in their perfect attendance record at the worship services. They were well pleased with their efforts to sing praises to the Lord. But, by way of contrast, Amos rejected the idea that *quantity, numbers, and external show* was really religion!" (Willis). Some have criticized Amos for being a preacher of a "social gospel." However, "God made it clear that the *heart* of religion was to love God with all the heart, and to love one's neighbor as himself. Without these two elements, any number of external acts is meaningless to God" (Willis).

"The prophets had degenerated into time-servers, blinded with the complacency of the nation. Religion certainly flourished in the nation but it was a religion that was completely divorced from reality. There was a great deal of activism and outward show with crowds thronging the shrines at the times of the great festivals. Ritual was elaborate, but there was no true life and no evidence that real spiritual values had any place, and Yahweh was patronized with a presumption bordering upon arrogance" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

"Extravagant religious ceremonies and rites were manifested on every hand. Tithes were offered every three days; free-will offerings were abundant and the amounts advertised (Amos 4:4-5). Religious fervor was high, but true spiritual devotion to God was utterly lacking" (Homer Hailey). "It was a religion which was empty in content, though full of ritual. Amos insisted that God had no time for ritualistic religion without heart" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

The Message of Amos

The book of Amos falls into three major divisions:

Chapters 1-2 --- A series of oracles against "outside" nations, ending with similar oracles against Judah and Israel.

Chapters 3-6 --- Condemning various sins which were prevalent in Israel.

Chapters 7-9 --- Some information concerning the call of Amos, and five visions which reflect some of the basic themes of his message.

The Oracles Against the Nations:

Damascus --- 1:3-5

Gaza --- 1:6-8

Tyre --- 1:9-10

Edom --- 1:11-12

Ammon --- 1:13-15

Moab --- 2:1-3

Judah --- 2:4-5

Israel --- 2:6-16

"The significant thing about this series, which in general denounces atrocities of war, is that Amos announces that God is concerned with sin wherever it occurs. He is the international God of Justice, punishing sin wherever it occurs" (Jack P. Lewis).

In the *Five Visions of Amos* we find the main themes which God wanted this man to emphasize. They are basically visions of doom!

The Locusts (Amos 7:1-3) --- Locusts in Palestine were uncontrollable and considered "an act of God." Amos saw in them the threat of God's punishment and by pleading for the land was able to convince God to relent.

The Great Fire devouring the land (Amos 7:4-6) --- Some see this as a famine or drought. Again, the prophet pleads with the Lord, and He relents.

The Plumb Line (Amos 7:7-9) --- The doom of the house of Jeroboam is announced. Amos pleads no further.

The Basket of Summer Fruit (Amos 8:1-3) --- Prophets frequently convey their message by puns not intended to be humorous. From the similarity of *summer (qayits)* and *end (qets)* in Hebrew, the Lord teaches Amos that the end is at hand. "The end has come for My people Israel" (Amos 8:2).

The Lord Standing Beside the Altar (Amos 9:1f) --- The command is given to smite the Sanctuary and to destroy the sinful people of the land. "The point of this last vision is that when God finally sends the Assyrians to overthrow Israel, that there will be no way for sinners to escape punishment, no matter how hard they try" (John T. Willis).

HABAKKUK

Personal Background

The name *Habakkuk* is an unusual one of uncertain meaning. Some feel it comes from the Hebrew word *Habaq* which means "to embrace" --- thus, his name would signify an "ardent embrace." "At the end of his book this name becomes appropriate because Habakkuk chooses to cling firmly to (embrace) God regardless of what happens to his nation --- 3:16-19" (*Expanded Open Bible*). Jerome preferred the idea of embracing so as to wrestle, "because he wrestled with God." Martin Luther seemed to favor this idea, saying, "It is certainly not unfitting, for in this little book we see a man, in deadly earnest, wrestling with the mighty problem of theodicy (the divine justice) in a topsy-turvy world."

Others have suggested that his name was derived from an Assyrian flower --- *Hambaquu* --- but there is no way to verify this. According to a popular Jewish tradition he was the son of the Shunammite woman, since Elisha told her, "At this season next year you shall *embrace (habaq)* a son" (II Kings 4:16). A second tradition identifies him with the "watchman" of Isaiah 21:6. Further legendary material may be gleaned from the pages of the Apocryphal book *Bel and The Dragon* (vs. 33-42), where an angel carries this prophet by his hair to Babylon to feed Daniel in the lions' den.

Bel and The Dragon 33-42

Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and crumbled bread into the bowl, and he was on the way to his field, carrying it to the reapers, when an angel of the Lord said, 'Habakkuk, carry the meal you have with you to Babylon, for Daniel, who is in the lion-pit.' Habakkuk said, 'My Lord, I have never been to Babylon. I do not know where the lion-pit is.' Then the angel took the prophet by the crown of his head, and carrying him by his hair, he swept him to Babylon with the blast of his breath and put him down above the pit. Habakkuk called out, 'Daniel, Daniel, take the meal that God has sent you!' Daniel said, 'O God, thou dost indeed remember me; thou dost never forsake those who love thee.' Then he got up and ate; and God's angel returned Habakkuk at once to his home. On the seventh day the king went to mourn for Daniel, but when he arrived at the pit and looked in, there sat Daniel! Then the king cried aloud, 'Great art thou, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no God but thou alone.' So, the king drew Daniel up; and the men who had planned to destroy him he flung into the pit, and then and there they were eaten up before his eyes.

Other than his name, little is known about this prophet. He apparently lived as one of God's called prophets (Habakkuk 1:1) and was not engaged in some secular profession as was Amos (Amos 7:14-15). Some have deduced that the final statement of the book --- "For the choir director, on *my* stringed instruments" (3:19) --- may indicate that he was also a Levite and a member of the Temple choir, or that he was in some other way connected with the Temple worship in Jerusalem. We may also assume with confidence that he was a prophet of the southern kingdom of Judah, and that he very likely lived in Jerusalem.

Date

The only explicit time reference in this prophecy is 1:6, where the Lord says, "I am raising up the Chaldeans" (Babylonians). Actually, the Chaldeans were "a tribe of Semites from southern Babylonia, who, under the leadership of Nabopolassar, became rulers of the Neo-Babylonian empire" (Jack Lewis).

This implies a time *prior* to their rise to power (which came after the critical battle of Carchemish in 605 BC). Before this time the Babylonians were not really a world force to be reckoned with. This is why the Lord tells Habakkuk, "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days you would not believe if you were told" (Habakkuk 1:5).

Habakkuk 1:2-4 (speaking of internal conditions in Judah) points to a time after the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC). However, during the reign of King Jehoiakim (609-597 BC), especially during the early years of his reign, the conditions do fit. He was a godless king who led the nation down the path to destruction --- II Kings 23:34 - 24:5; Jeremiah 22:18.

"It seems best, therefore, to assign the preaching of Habakkuk to a date shortly before 606 BC, but after the beginning of Babylon's westward move for world conquest" (Gleason Archer). "The probable date for this book is about 607 BC"

(*Expanded Open Bible*).

Historical Background

Upon the death of the good King Josiah at Megiddo (609 BC) --- II Kings 23:29 --- his son, Jehoahaz, was made king. He was only 23 years old, and according to II Kings 23:32 "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." He reigned for only 3 months, and then Pharaoh Neco of Egypt deposed him and put his brother, Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim), upon the throne (II Kings 23:33-37). He was 25 years old when he took the throne and he also did evil in the sight of God.

"Within a period of approximately 20 years the Chaldeans swept over Judah in successive waves, and ultimately destroyed the country and took its inhabitants away into captivity in 586 BC" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*). Internally, the people of God were caught up in religious decay and moral bewilderment.

"Looking about him Habakkuk sees a vivid demonstration of prevailing evils. He enumerates those who are proud and secure in their own ways (this list taken from: Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*):

The unrighteous aggressors --- 2:6-8

Those who justify their evil ways --- 2:9-11

Those who shed blood for personal gain --- 2:12-14

Those who deceive their neighbors --- 2:15-17

Those who trust in idols --- 2:18-19

The above series of five woes is in the form of a *masal* (a taunt song), and they are basically against: greed and aggression ... self-assertion, exploitation and extortion ... violence ... immorality and inhumanity ... idolatry.

The Purpose of Habakkuk

"The book of Habakkuk differs from other books of prophecy in one special aspect. Instead of taking Jehovah's message directly to the people, he takes the complaint of the people to Jehovah, representing them in the complaint" (Homer Hailey). Habakkuk is a man of God; a man of faith; who is perplexed by what is happening around him. He doesn't understand *why* God is doing what He is doing. It seems inconsistent with what has been previously revealed.

Therefore, the prophet goes to God and asks some difficult questions, and he receives some answers which greatly puzzle him. Nevertheless, through it all, whether he understands or not, his faith in God never wavers!! "His spirit is deeply troubled How could God permit so much suffering and death? How could God punish His own people, even though they had sinned, by a nation that was even more wicked?" (Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*). "How can a righteous God use the wicked Chaldeans to punish His people, which, in spite of their apostasy, is still more righteous than they?" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

"Violence and law-breaking abounded, and the wicked seemed at least superficially to triumph. According to all that Habakkuk knew about God's holiness and covenant (cf. Deut. 26-33, on which Habakkuk seemed dependent), Yahweh should have arisen to correct the situation, particularly in response to believing prayer for change by such as Habakkuk. Such correction had not been forthcoming, and the prayers of the righteous and the struggle for justice in the land seemed in vain, with the result that God's program of redemptive history was threatened" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7).

"Why is evil and suffering rampant in our world? Goodness and justice seem to fail! How is it, God, that you are so against wrong but you go on tolerating wrong? God, is what you are doing fair? Is this honestly the moral, ethical thing to do?" (D. Stuart Briscoe). "Habakkuk is a freethinking prophet who is not afraid to wrestle with issues that test his faith" (*Expanded Open Bible*). Such spiritual struggles are not new! "Jeremiah, too, questions and expostulates with God as he struggles with the intractable problem of the prosperity of the wicked --- Jeremiah 12:1-4; 13:17; 15:10-18; 20:7-18" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

The book of Job also discusses the question of why the individual righteous man or woman suffers. This is further discussed in Psalm 37, 49 and 73. In the non-canonical literature it is discussed in such places as --- IV Ezra 3:29-36 and II Baruch 11:1-7. "How can one justify the facts of life with the doctrine of an all-powerful but just God who is active in history? Events do not seem to bear out the doctrine that sin brings retribution. God seems inactive!" (Jack Lewis). This was the problem with which Habakkuk wrestled!

Habakkuk, however, "was an honest seeker of the truth who went directly to God for the answer" (Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*). "While he is a man who has doubts and dares to express them, he does not make the mistake of ruling God out of the picture! Even though he is full of doubt he brings his distress and his doubts about God to God Himself!" (D. Stuart Briscoe). "Where men attempt to think through the age-old problem of evil and seek to relate the grim facts of history to a God of justice and power who holds all in His control, they find themselves drawn to Habakkuk" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

The final conclusion of Habakkuk is that we must allow God to be God, and allow Him to do things His way and in His own good time. Our job is to trust Him and to live by faith! "The righteous will live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4) --- the **key verse** of this entire book!! Although things do not always turn out as we would like, yet we will rejoice in the Lord anyway! (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

"In spite of appearances to the contrary, God is still on the throne as the Lord of history and the Ruler of the nations. God may be slow to wrath, but all iniquity will be punished eventually. He is the worthiest object of faith, and the righteous man will trust in Him at all times" (*Expanded Open Bible*). "Apart from Isaiah (Is. 7:9; 28:16), no other prophet stressed the significance of faith and prayerful trust in such a way as did Habakkuk. The central theme of Habakkuk's prophecy, viz. that the righteous shall live by his faith (2:4), is taken up in the NT, and applied in significant contexts: Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38-39" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

"The prophet closes his poems with one of the greatest declarations of faith to be found in biblical literature. The prophet who has raised such searching questions in the early part of the book declares that come the worst of it, he will hold steadfastly to the Lord" (Jack P. Lewis). "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him" (Job 13:15).

"The growth of faith from perplexity and doubt to the height of absolute trust is one of the beautiful aspects of the book. Its lesson is for all time!" (Homer Hailey).

HAGGAI

Personal Background

The name *Haggai* means "festival, feast, festive." Some suggest it may be a shortened form of *Haggiah* which means "festival of Jehovah." This has led many to conjecture that he may have been born on one of the major festival or feast days of the Jews (Passover, for example). Although he is referred to as a "prophet" (Haggai 1:1; Ezra 5:1; 6:14), little else is known of this man. His father's name is never mentioned. It is assumed that he was born in Babylon during the time of the captivity.

It is very likely Haggai returned to Jerusalem with the first group of 50,000 persons led by Zerubbabel in 536 BC. It is also possible he did some writing of psalms during this time. The Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT, which was made around 250 BC) credits him as being the author/co-author of several psalms (Psalms 138, 146-149).

"In the Midrash and Talmud, legend makes Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi to be the founders of the 'Great Synagogue' (Aboth R. Nathan 1; Baba Bathra 15a), a body that is alleged to have played a great role in post-exilic times in preserving Scripture and handing on the traditional precepts and lore. It is further believed by the rabbis that after these three prophets died the Holy Spirit departed from Israel" (Jack P. Lewis).

"It is legitimate to suppose that Haggai was still a child when he returned to Judea with his parents in 536 BC" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah and also of Confucius (557-479 BC). Haggai was the first prophet in Jerusalem after the return from Babylonian captivity. The prophecy of Haggai is second only to that of Obadiah in brevity among OT books.

Date

The prophet dates his own work very precisely. Haggai 1:1 dates it in the "second year of Darius the king." This is Darius I, son of Hystaspes (522-486 BC). Thus, the prophecy is dated in the year 520 BC.

This book consists of four brief oracles, each of which is precisely dated within this year. They were delivered "between August and the last of December in the year 520 BC" (Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*). Thus, the four oracles of this prophecy all occur within a four month period.

Haggai was the first to prophesy to the people who had returned, although Zechariah soon followed. Haggai's ministry was very brief, but Zechariah's lasted much longer. "Some have the honor to lead, others to last, in the work of God" (Matthew Henry).

Historical Background

In the year 586 BC the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians and the city of Jerusalem was reduced to ruins, along with the Temple. The people were led away into captivity (those who weren't killed), although a few were allowed to remain behind to live in the ruins. During the next several decades these few who remained in their homeland began to intermarry with the men and women of the foreign nations around them (including some of the Assyrians who had fled the destruction of their own nation). This merging of peoples led to the group known as the *Samaritans*, who, when the Jews returned to their land after the captivity, would become one of their major opponents.

During the period of the captivity, the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, who were also taken captive, provided spiritual hope and guidance to the exiles. In the year 562 BC King Nebuchadnezzar died and Babylon then had a series of weak rulers. There was no one really strong enough to hold the empire together. In 549 BC Cyrus (who had become king of the Persians about ten years earlier) defeated the Median king and united the Medes and Persians.

In 539 BC (on October 13) Cyrus overthrew the city of Babylon and appointed a "phantom king" over the city. This king is known in the Bible as Darius the Mede, who is probably Gubaru (or Gabryas) of secular history (this is *not* the same Darius as the one mentioned in Haggai).

Cyrus was a very benevolent ruler and had a policy of allowing enslaved peoples to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples and reinstitute their religious practices. In 538 BC Cyrus issued a decree which allowed the Jews to return to their homeland (II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Over 150 years *before* this event, Isaiah had prophesied that God would use Cyrus to bring about this restoration (Isaiah 44:24 - 45:7).

This return of the Jews to their homeland took place in several stages. Not all the Jews in captivity wanted to return. Many had been born in Babylon and had, over the years, built up prosperous commercial enterprises. Also, "the prospect of a return to a desolate and impoverished land, and rebuilding the ruins of the past, had little practical appeal to those Jews who had managed to take advantage of the generous and rather naive Babylonians. Only those Jews who had caught a vision of service to God and man in the light of the promised covenant were seriously interested in the challenge" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). The various stages of this return were:

536 BC --- About 50,000 return under Zerubbabel. Joshua, the priest, served as the religious leader of the returned people. Haggai returned with this groupEzra 2.

457 BC --- A second group led by Ezra, consisting of about 2058 persons, returns. Several reforms are instituted, including the problem of inter-marriage with the nationsEzra 8-10.

445 BC --- A third group, led by Nehemiah, returns. Nehemiah serves as the governor of Jerusalem. The walls are rebuiltNehemiah 2.

Upon the return of the first group (536 BC) work began on the Temple. The altar of sacrifice was restored and the foundation for the new Temple was laid. However, at this point the people ceased their work. The city and houses and wall were all in ruins, the land had been neglected for 50 years and food was scarce. The Jews who had remained in the land and intermarried with the nations offered to help rebuild, but their offer was declined --- this led to hard feelings and opposition. As a result, the people became discouraged. They turned their full attention upon surviving. Then, once they had met the basic necessities of life, they began looking toward the luxuries, and in the process became apathetic toward the rebuilding of the Temple.

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses (529-522 BC). After this king came Darius I (522-486 BC). Two years into his reign (520 BC), and 16 years after work had ceased on the Temple, God raised up the prophet Haggai "to combat apathy and depression by giving inspired leadership" for the reconstruction of the Temple (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*).

The Message of Haggai

Haggai "was a man of one paramount idea --- build the Temple!" (Homer Hailey). His desire was to see the Temple reconstructed and their worship of God reinstated. The people had become discouraged and, as a result, forgetful of God. Their priorities were all wrong; they were thinking of themselves and not of God; building their own houses, but not His! Haggai was sent as a motivator and edifier --- Get your priorities right! Put God first, and He'll take care of your other needs (Matthew 6:33).

The message of Haggai was extremely well-received and effective. "Within three weeks and a few days after his first address to the people they began work on the Temple again" (Hailey). One of the reasons for his success was his dependence on the Word of the Lord! Twenty-six times (in a book of only 38 verses!) he appeals to God as the authority and source of his message. Such expressions as "saith Jehovah," "declares the Lord of hosts," and the like are very common. "This appeal to the Divine origin of what he said stirred the people, moved their hearts, and got results" (Hailey). "No prophet ever appeared at a more critical juncture in the history of a people, and it may be added, no prophet was more successful" (Marcus Dods).

The Temple was completed in 516 BC, twenty years after it was started and seventy years after it was destroyed in 586 BC (Ezra 6:15). This new Temple was desecrated in the time of Antiochus Epiphanies (168 BC), but later cleaned up. It was added on to by Herod the Great. It was essentially this same Temple that Jesus and the apostles entered time and again during their ministries.

Haggai teaches us that faithfulness and material blessings are directly connected; that "when a good work is awaiting its accomplishment, the time to do it is *now*" (Farrar); that "discouragement, however profound, is not an adequate reason for neglecting duties, even when they seem to be encompassed with difficulty. Be strong and work' is a glorious motto for human life" (Farrar); that "the basis of all successful preaching is 'saith Jehovah.' It got results then, and such preaching will get results today!" (Homer Hailey).

HOSEA

Personal Background

The name *Hosea* comes from the Hebrew language. It means *salvation*. Although not specifically stated, it is believed Hosea was a native of Samaria (he refers to the ruler of Samaria as "*our* king" --- Hosea 7:5). His family seems to be of significant social standing for the name of his father to be mentioned (Hosea 1:1).

As to his occupation, nothing is known for certain. It seems clear that he occupied "some position or place of distinction." Many scholars feel he may have been a priest.

Date

Based upon his reference to the kings (Hosea 1:1), most scholars date his prophetic ministry during the years 753 - 715 BC. The book bearing his name is a combination of many sermons and actions delivered over a period of several decades.

Historical Background

Religious --- Hosea summed up the religious activities of Israel in one word: *Whoredom*. As a harlot, she had prostituted herself before the false gods. The people lacked knowledge (Hosea 4:6; 5:4), and were ignorant of God's Law (Hosea 8:12). Idols had been set up and women were serving in the temples as cult prostitutes.

Moral --- "Their conduct was the very opposite to that which God desired and demanded. The people were guilty of swearing, breaking faith, murder, stealing, committing adultery, deceit, lying, drunkenness, dishonesty in business, and other crimes equally abominable before Jehovah. The picture painted in the Book of Hosea is truly that of a nation in decay" (Homer Hailey).

Political --- It was a period of political upheaval in Israel. Upon the death of Jeroboam, several kings came to the throne but were quickly assassinated; some reigning only a few weeks. Tiglath-Pileser (king of Assyria) came against Israel and exacted heavy tribute from them. Finally, in 722 BC, the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, with many of the people being carried off into captivity. "These were trying years of political conniving and intrigue, of anarchy and rebellion, of treachery and murder. God was completely left out of the picture and out of the people's thinking. The prophet's task was to turn the thinking of the people back to God, but they were too deeply steeped in their idolatry to heed his warning. They had passed the point of no return; they refused to hear" (Homer Hailey).

Their faithlessness was manifested in two major ways:

- **Rebellion against all constituted authority.**
- **Dependence upon human defenses and foreign alliances, rather than upon the power of Jehovah.**

The cause for this widespread immorality and faithlessness toward God was two-fold:

- **Corruption of the priests, with whom the false prophets were in league.**
- **Corruption of worship.**

The Message of Hosea

God, His nature and character. There is but ONE God! He is omnipotent ...He is righteous ...He is love! He is pictured as both a loving husband, and a loving father. One of the favorite expressions of this prophet is: *Lovingkindness*.

The covenant between God & Israel. Hosea views Israel as the "chosen ones" of God; God had entered into a union with them. The intimacy of this relationship is described under two figures --- a marriage relationship, and a father/son relationship. Hosea emphasizes that a covenant always involves *mutual* obligations.

Doom of the nation is inevitable. Because of the faithlessness of the nation, Hosea prepares the people for impending punishment. The *Righteous* Husband demands that the unfaithful wife be put away from Him, but the *Loving* Husband looks hopefully to a time of restored relationship!

JOEL

Personal Background

The name *Joel* (Hebrew = *Yo'el*) means "Yahweh is God." He was the son of a man named *Pethuel* (or *Bethuel* in the Septuagint) which means "the open-heartedness or sincerity of God." Whether Joel received his name at birth, or was given this name later as a result of his ministry, is unknown.

Joel lived and prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah. He very likely was a resident of the city of Jerusalem. He makes frequent reference to Judah & Jerusalem (2:32; 3:1, 17-18, 20), to their citizens (3:6, 8, 19), to Zion (2:1, 15, 32; 3:17, 21) and its children (2:23). He also shows great familiarity with the Temple and its ministry (1:9, 13-14, 16; 2:14, 17; 3:18). He was also intimately acquainted with the geography and history of the land (1:2; 3:2-8, 12, 14, 18).

Some scholars have suggested his familiarity with the Temple service may indicate he was a priest, or the son of a priest. Others speculate "his castigation of the priests suggests he was *not* a member of their caste." Little is known about this man, except for what can be gleaned from the book itself. Although 13 other persons in the OT writings bear the name *Joel*, he cannot be identified with any of them.

"Joel was a man of vitality and spiritual maturity. A keen discernor of the times, he delivered God's message to the people of Judah in a vivid and impassioned style, with a precision and originality of thought that served as a veritable quarry out of which many subsequent prophetic building stones were to be hewn" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

Date

There is great disagreement among scholars as to the dating of this book. Theories range from the 9th century to the 4th century BC. Some have even sought to date it as late as the Maccabean Period (during the so-called *Intertestamental Period*). The problem -- no date is given in the heading of the book, nor is there any explicit reference within the body of the work itself. The major theories are:

- **Post-exilic** --- The captivities of God's people have ended. The exiles have returned to their homeland. The Temple has been rebuilt. This view calls for a date in the mid-4th century BC.
- **Pre-exilic** --- Three general positions have been advanced by those who assign a pre-exilic date to Joel. They are:
 - **Early Pre-exilic** --- A 9th century date. It is felt the situations depicted within the book point best to the time of the boy-king Joash (835-796 BC), who began his rule through the regency of the high priest Jehoiada.

- **Middle Pre-exilic** --- An early 8th century date. An extensive defense of this view is given in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 231-233.
- **Late Pre-exilic** --- A 7th century date. This view seeks to find a link with the prophet Jeremiah, and to harmonize the literary forms and religious outlooks of the two prophets.

The most likely and logical of these theories is the **Early Pre-exilic**, which would date the prophecy of Joel from about 835 BC on. For an excellent defense of this view see --- *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* by Gleason L. Archer, Jr., p. 304-307.

Occasion

The land has been devastated by a locust plague. Drought, famine and fires follow in the wake of the locust plague. This is far more than just a **natural** disaster -- it is also a **national** disaster! Almost every aspect of community life has been affected. The economy of the land has been all but ruined. The whole nation has ground to a halt. Even the religious life of the community is threatened through the shortage of offerings.

Joel sees a link between this natural/national disaster and a time of coming judgment from the Lord God --- the **Day of the Lord**. Not only was this locust plague an actual judgment from God, but it warned of an even greater impending judgment against the people of God --- when the enemy would not be armies of locust, but armies of men!

This concept of further judgment also led Joel to reveal God's intention for the **last days** --- the ultimate coming of God in judgment at the end of time.

Use of Joel in the New Testament

"While this is one of the briefest books in the OT, it is at the same time one of the most profound. Both in its grasp of the relationship between historical events and the suprahistorical expectation of the day of the Lord, and also in its impact on early Christian theology, its influence has hardly been proportionate to its size" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

In Acts 2:16f the apostle Peter states that the things the people were witnessing on the day of Pentecost had been spoken of by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29).

In Romans 10:11-13 Paul refers back to Joel 2:26b and 2:32.

In Mark 4:29 Jesus makes use of Joel 3:13.

There seems to be some dependence on Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:39.

There are several references back to Joel in the Book of Revelation --- Rev. 6:12 (Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15)Rev. 6:17 (Joel 2:11)Rev. 9:7-9 (Joel 1:6; 2:4-5)Rev. 14:15, 18 (Joel 3:13).

Message

The book falls into two distinct sections:

1. Joel speaks 1:2 - 2:17
2. Jehovah speaks 2:18 - 3:21

Joel refers to the natural/national disaster of the locust and tells the people this is to be a warning to them so that they might repent. This disaster heralded the **Day of the Lord** which could only be averted by genuine repentance. If they repented, this day of judgment would come upon their enemies rather than upon themselves.

"The book is an appeal from Jehovah to the people to seek Him through repentance. Out of this repentance there would come material blessings followed by an outpouring of spiritual blessings" (Homer Hailey). Joel has often been called the **Prophet of Pentecost** because of his reference to spiritual blessings.

Other major messages of the book of Joel are:

- God is sovereignly guiding the affairs of earth's history toward His preconceived final goal --- 1:15; 2:1-4, 18, 20, 25-27, 28-32; 3:1-21.
- He is a God of grace and mercy --- 2:13, 18.

- A God of lovingkindness and compassion --- 2:13.
- A God of justice --- 3:1-8, 12-13.

Mere externalism in worship to God is insufficient --- 2:12-13.

When sin becomes the dominant condition of God's people, they must be judged. God may use natural disasters, or political means, to accomplish the chastisement of His people. For those who repent there will be the blessings of a restored fellowship.

"Integral to all Joel's prophecy is his teaching about the Day of the Lord. By the skillful use of this term, which gives cohesion to his entire message, Joel demonstrated that God is sovereignly operative in all that comes to pass, directing all things to their appointed end" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

God had abundantly blessed Judah, but the people had taken God and His blessings for granted. Their faith had degenerated into an empty formalism and their lives into moral decadence. "Under divine inspiration Joel told the people that the locust plague was a warning of a greater judgment that was imminent unless they repented and returned to full fellowship with God. If they did, God would abundantly pardon them, restore the health of the land, and give them again the elements needed to offer the sacrifices. The ceremonial system was designed to express a heart relationship with God. By their sin they had forfeited any right to religious ceremony" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

JONAH

Personal Background

The name *Jonah* (Hebrew: *Yonah*) means "dove." He was the son of Amittai, of the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13), and from the city of Gath-hepher which is in the region of Galilee. It is believed by some of the Jewish Rabbins that Jonah is to be identified with the dead son of a widow from Zarephath who was raised to life by Elijah (I Kings 17), however there is no basis at all for such an assumption. In II Kings 14:25 Jonah is mentioned as being a prophet of God during the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753 BC). Jonah foretold of the wide extent of this king's conquests and the expansion of Israel's territory under his leadership.

As a result of the above very popular prophecy, which was fulfilled in a relatively short time, "Jonah must have enjoyed great popular respect as a true prophet ... this may explain his reluctance to accept a less popular commission and cause him to lose substantial face" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

Technically, the book of Jonah is anonymous; however Jewish tradition holds that the author is Jonah himself. In more recent years it has come to be believed that "the book is *about* Jonah rather than *by* him." "It is chiefly a book *about* a prophet instead of being a collection of oracles *of* the prophet. Only eight words are needed to report Jonah's preaching -- Jonah 3:4" (Jack P. Lewis).

Jonah is the only "minor prophet" ever to be mentioned by Jesus Christ. He is also the only OT figure that Jesus Himself likens unto Himself (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). Although some contend this book is a fable and that Jonah never actually lived, the biblical evidence is to the contrary. II Kings 14:25 speaks of him as an actual historical figure. So does Jesus Christ. Josephus (an early Jewish historian) also regarded him as historical rather than fictional (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 9, Chapter 10, Sections 1-2). Also, when Paul wrote that Jesus "was buried, and that He was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*" (I Corinthians 15:4), he may well have been alluding, at least in part, to Jonah's experience.

The intertestamental writers (*The Apocrypha*) also regarded Jonah as an actual historical figure. He is listed among "The Twelve Prophets" in Sirach 49:10. Tobit 14:4 refers to "God's word which was spoken by Jonah against Nineveh" (although the *Codex Sinaiticus* reads "Nahum" at this location rather than "Jonah"). In III Maccabees 6:8 the deliverance of Jonah is one in a series of God's great acts of mercy of the past that forms a part of the prayer of Eleazar.

The Greeks have long expressed their deep veneration for the prophet Jonah. In the 6th century AD they dedicated a church to him --- (compare this action with what Peter sought to do in Luke 9:33).

Date & Occasion

From II Kings 14:25 we know that Jonah lived during the time of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC). He was sent to Nineveh --- the capital city of Assyria --- to deliver a warning from God that unless they repented they would be destroyed. There are several historical clues which seem to point to a date for this prophecy somewhere in the late 750's BC --- perhaps around 758 BC:

During the reign of Adad-nirari III (811-783 BC) there was a swing toward monotheism. However, at his death the nation entered a period of national weakness and even greater moral decay. "During this time, Assyria was engaged in a life and death struggle with the mountain tribes of Urartu, and its associates of Mannai and Madai in the north, who had been able to push their frontier to within less than a hundred miles of Nineveh" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7).

In 756 BC a plague struck the nation, followed by a second plague in 759 BC. In 763 BC there was an eclipse of the sun. These were "events of the type regarded by ancients as evidence of divine judgment, and could have prepared the people to receive Jonah's message" (*The Ryrie Study Bible*). "No doubt this depressed state of Assyria contributed much to the readiness of the people to hear Jonah as he began to preach to them" (Homer Hailey).

There is some historical evidence that during the reign of Ashurdan III (771-754 BC) a religious awakening occurred. This may have been the result of Jonah's preaching. In 745 BC Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC) came to the throne and Assyria again became a major power. Under his leadership the Assyrians became "the rod of God's anger" (Isaiah 10:5) against His rebellious people Israel. Israel finally fell to the Assyrians with the capture of Samaria in 722 BC (through the efforts of Tiglath-Pileser's successors --- Shalmaneser V and Sargon II).

Through the preaching of Jonah, and the repentance of the people of Nineveh, the city was spared at this time. However, history tells us their repentance was fairly short-lived. Soon they had fallen back into their sinful way of life. The prophet *Nahum* was then sent to these same people. However, they failed to repent (as they had with Jonah), and thus were destroyed in 612 BC.

Interpretation of the Book of Jonah

Perhaps the greatest difficulty connected with this book is the matter of determining the method of interpretation. Until the 18th and 19th centuries, Jonah was regarded almost exclusively as historical fact. However, in the 20th century many other theories have been put forth as to how this book should best be interpreted. The following are the *major* theories of interpretation proposed:

ALLEGORICAL --- "An allegory is a story consisting of a series of incidents which are analogous to a parallel series of happenings that they are intended to illustrate." Thus: Jonah = Israel ...Jonah's flight = Israel's failure to fulfill its spiritual mission to the nations ...The "great fish" = Babylon, which swallows up Israel in the captivity ...Spitting out Jonah = the restoration of Israel to their homeland ... Etc. ...Etc. (Jeremiah 51:31 speaks of Babylon "swallowing" Israel "like a monster," and it "filled his stomach." Then, in vs. 44, God says He will "bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up.") --- Some regard this as biblical proof of their theory that Jonah is merely an allegory.

PARABOLIC --- "A parable is a short, pithy story with a didactic aim." The moral of this story --- God's love for the nations. Jonah typifies "the narrow-minded, exclusivistic Jew with no love for the nations beyond its borders."

MYTHICAL --- This point of view assumes that the whole story is nothing but a myth or legend which arose around some incident in the history of Israel.

HISTORICAL --- This view holds that the narrative describes events which actually took place. This is the most likely view. Those who object to this view do so primarily on the basis of the miraculous element in the account (the "great fish" incident, for example). "Jesus placed His sanction on the story as historical fact ... therefore, the historical interpretation is the only interpretation worthy of acceptance to all who believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Homer Hailey). "The effort to say that Jesus was only a man of his day and accepted certain views prevalent among those about him carries implications that we are not ready to accept" (Jack P. Lewis).

The fact that this account should be regarded as historical, however, does *not* mean there are no parabolic or allegorical or spiritual lessons to be derived from it. "This does *not* rule out the presence of *typical* lessons illustrated by the *historical* incidents" (*The Ryrie Study Bible*).

The Miracles of the Book of Jonah

The fact that there are obvious miracles recorded in this book has caused some --- who *doubt* or *deny* the miraculous power of God --- to label this work as fiction. There are several miracles recorded here, but "so much has been made of the 'fish story' that one is tempted to forget all else about the book of Jonah" (Jack P. Lewis). The various miracles recorded in the book of Jonah are:

- **God raising up a storm --- 1:4**
- **God calming the storm --- 1:15**
- **God's commissioning of a great fish to swallow Jonah -- 1:17**
- **Jonah surviving three days & three nights inside the fish -- 1:17**
- **God commanding the fish to vomit Jonah out on dry land -- 2:10**
- **A city the size of Nineveh experiencing such a wide-spread repentance -- 3:5-9**
- **The Lord raising up a plant, a worm, and a scorching east wind --- 4:6-8**

Dag Gadol is the Hebrew phrase which literally means "great fish." The Jews had no special word for "whale" (the word used in the KJV). Since the word *dag* may refer to a fish of any species, including the whale (which technically is not a fish at all), "it is reasonable to adhere to the traditional interpretation at this point, since no true fish --- as opposed to a marine mammal --- is known to possess a stomach as capacious as a whale's" (Gleason L. Archer, Jr.).

"The ability or inability to accept a miracle depends on whether or not one spells his God with a capital 'G'" --- Homer Hailey

The Major Messages of Jonah

The overall message of the book is basically twofold:

1. God's love and concern is for *all* people, and *anyone* who is willing to repent and turn to God can find salvation (Acts 26:19-20; II Peter 3:9).
2. God is a *universal* God. There is but *ONE* God, and He alone is to be the God of *all* people. Jonah preached to a monotheistic people, but the god they worshipped was *Nebo*. He warned them they must repent and turn to Jehovah, and worship and serve Him only.

Some of the other great lessons of the book of Jonah are:

- "God's judgments, even when declared in prophecy, can be averted by genuine repentance." This is a "crucial theological truth relating human repentance to escaping from anticipated judgment" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*). "Jeremiah 18:7-8 --- "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it."
- National sin demands national repentance ! Just as this principle applied to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, so also does it apply to the nations of today!
- This book is a stern rebuke of a narrow exclusiveness that characterized the Israelites. Jonah, whose attitude was typical of his people, had no desire to see the Assyrians saved --- they were the enemy! He fled rather than preach such a distasteful message to this distasteful people. And even after finally preaching it, he sat outside the city waiting to see if God would change His mind and still destroy them. When he realized God was indeed going to show mercy to these people, he prayed to die rather than have to witness such a thing! (Jonah 4:1-3).
- When we today hold to such an attitude --- "We are the only ones God favors" ... "We would rather die than see *those* people saved!" ... "We're not about to preach the gospel to *that* bunch" --- then we have repeated the sin of Jonah. Further, we have failed to perceive the universal love of God. Jonah symbolizes a narrow, sectarian spirit!
- One cannot run away from God (Psalm 139:7-12). "Jonah learned, and through his valuable experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it than to run away from it" (J.W. McGarvey). "When one sets out to baffle God, there is bound to be a storm" (George L. Robinson).

- "The infinite concern of God for life is shown in contrast to the concern of man for the material" (Homer Hailey). "The withering of the prophet's gourd, with the regrets it excited, strikes home in all ages, as it must have done in Jonah's day, the contrast between the infinite love of God and the selfish coldness of man. The growth of a night can be pitied when it touches ourselves; but unspeakably higher claims too often awaken no tenderness where we are not personally concerned" (Cunningham Geikie).
- In Jonah one sees "the forerunner of the universal gospel message" and messenger (Hailey). Also, we see the principle that "the most unpromising mission fields are often the most responsive" (*The Ryrie Study Bible*). "From the human standpoint Assyria was the last place an Israelite would choose for a missionary venture, so Jonah took a trip in the opposite direction" (Samuel J. Schultz).
- "There is no remonstrance and no mention of Jonah's former call and flight (Jonah 3:1-2). The Lord passes this over in gracious silence" (Homer Hailey). The Lord is willing to forgive and forget!

MALACHI

Personal Background

The word *Malachi* is generally translated "*my messenger*." "It may reasonably be regarded as an abbreviation of *Malakhiyah* which means 'messenger of Jehovah'" (George L. Robinson). "There has been considerable scholarly debate" over the centuries "as to whether or not 'Malachi' is a genuine proper name or a common noun" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). If it is the latter, this book is by an anonymous writer referred to as "My messenger" or the "Messenger of Jehovah."

The LXX (Septuagint) regards the word as a noun rather than a proper name. The *Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel* (an Aramaic paraphrase of the prophetic books dating from the 4th or 5th century AD, but containing many earlier traditions) has: "My messenger who is Ezra the scribe." Jerome (340-420 AD) and John Calvin (1509-1564 AD) both agreed with this view that the actual name of the author was Ezra. The *Talmud* (Megillah 15a) credits Mordecai with writing this book. Others feel it may originally have been a part of the book of Zechariah, which was cut off and made into another book "to make the Minor Prophets amount to the sacred number 12" (Eissfeldt). Matthew Henry points out that some in his day "conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven and not a man."

Note --- "Though Josephus mentioned all the major characters of this period, he failed to include a man named *Malachi* among them the name is absent in all the rest of the Bible ...and even where he is quoted in the NT, his name does not appear --- Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*). "The whole matter is ultimately uncertain, and perhaps unimportant; but it is possible that this otherwise unknown name, *Malachi*, was in fact the prophet's actual name" (*The New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

Jewish tradition says he was a member of the "Great Synagogue," that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. Nothing further is known of this man of God.

Date

It is impossible to date this work precisely, however by an examination of the material within the book itself one can determine the general time of this prophecy. The Persian term for *governor* (*pehah*) is used in Malachi 1:8 (see: Neh. 5:14; Haggai 1:1, 14; 2:21), thus indicating this was written during the Persian domination of Israel (539-333 BC).

One can narrow it down more by examining the internal conditions existing in Palestine at this time. The Temple has been rebuilt and sacrifices are being offered in it. The priests are corrupt. The tithes and offerings are neglected. There is intermarriage with pagans and divorce is rampant. There is a spirit of skepticism. Financial abuses abound. Judah is under a governor, and Edom has been destroyed. It is agreed by most scholars that these are the same problems as those faced by Nehemiah. "It is therefore likely that the prophet and Nehemiah were active at about the same time and it would be well to study Nehemiah as a background for Malachi" (Jack P. Lewis). "A fair estimate as to date would be about 435 BC" (Gleason Archer).

Historical Background

- **In 536 BC** the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews officially ended when Cyrus allowed the people of Israel to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel some 50,000 Jews returned. Encouraged by the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, the people rebuilt the Temple between 520-516 BC.
- **In 458 BC** Ezra returned with a second group of exiles. The Persian King during this time was Artaxerxes I (465-425 BC). It was he who permitted Nehemiah to return in 445 BC to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah's first term as Governor was 445-433 BC. He then returned to Persia for a time, after which he served a second term as Governor from 430-425 BC.

It was during this time that "Malachi took the helm of spiritual affairs in Jerusalem" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*). "For a full picture of the conditions in Judea during this period one should read Ezra 7-10 and the complete book of Nehemiah. The conditions of the people as revealed in Nehemiah and the bold and courageous attack of Malachi against the problems which the latter sets forth in his book point clearly to the contemporary dates of the two" (Homer Hailey).

Purpose and Occasion

About 100 years had passed since the people of Israel had returned to their homeland from the Babylonian captivity. The Temple had been rebuilt; the walls were rebuilt; the sacrificial system had been reinstated. Most of their goals, which had been set for them upon their return, had been achieved. They were safe from the nations around them. And they were bored!! Their initial enthusiasm, due to the challenges they faced, had worn off. Their worship had become mechanical, ritualistic, and unspiritual. They went through the motions, but their heart was not involved. Their relationships were falling apart --- both with God and with one another. Yet, they can't seem to fathom why God is dissatisfied with them!

It is into this arena of deteriorating relationships, enthusiasm, and spirituality that Malachi is thrust, as the last "messenger of the Lord" before a 400-year period of prophetic silence! "His aim was to restore the Jews to a fresh relationship with God by indicating the precise causes of contemporary spiritual declension and setting out the steps by which the life of the community could be renewed. Like Haggai before him, his dominant concern was for the recognition of spiritual priorities on the part of the restored community"

(*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). "Judah's sins against both God and man were overt and numerous" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

Some of the sins which occasioned Malachi's angry indictment were:

Priestly laxity --- Mal. 1:6 - 2:9 (Neh. 13:4-9). He "denounced the priestly hierarchy for its inability to furnish that kind of moral and religious leadership which would have enabled the returned community to avoid much of the current distress. The priests had been indifferent and even contemptuous in discharging their duties" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*).

Financial abuses & neglect of tithes --- Mal. 3:5-10 (Neh. 13:10-13).

Worship was in a state of decay --- The refuse of the flocks and herds was being brought to the Temple for sacrifices unto God --- Mal. 1:8.

Intermarriage with pagans & divorce of their wives to marry pagan women --- The people were not honoring their covenants. Their relationships, both with God and with each other, were failing --- Mal. 2:10-16 (Neh. 10:30; 13:23-28; Ezra 9-10).

"The people of Israel have become disillusioned and doubtful. They begin to question God's providence as their faith imperceptibly degenerates into cynicism. Internally, they wonder whether it is worth serving God after all. Externally, these attitudes surface in mechanical observances, empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings, and crass indifference to God's moral and ceremonial law. Their priests are corrupt and their practices wicked, but they are so spiritually insensitive that they wonder why they are not being blessed by God. As their perception of God grows dim, the resulting materialism and externalism become settled characteristics that later grip the religious parties of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (*The Expanded Open Bible*).

The Style of the Book

"The book of Malachi is written in a style unique in the prophets" (Jack P. Lewis). It is a new style of address known as the *Didactic -- Dialectic* method of speaking (also known as the *Disputation* method). Later this use of "assertion -- objection -- rebuttal" became quite popular, and was the usual format for the rabbis and scribes. This method of making a point is found throughout the Gospels and Epistles of the NT canon.

"In this type of teaching an *assertion* or charge is made, a fancied *objection* is raised by the hearers, and a *refutation* to the objection is presented by the speaker. In the style of Malachi we have the beginning of a method of teaching that later became universal in the Jewish schools and in the synagogue" (Homer Hailey). Malachi 1:2 is a good example of the format which is typical of this author's style.

Malachi is written much like a running debate with those who call into question the Lord's goodness and justice. "The style of Malachi, then, is that of the spoken word. The book is very much like the letter of James in the NT, and resembles a collection of loosely connected oracles rather than a carefully organized literary work" (*The New Layman's Bible Commentary*).

Several important themes are seen in the book of Malachi. Among these are the following:

The book of remembrance --- Mal. 3:16, in which the deeds of the righteous are recorded. The development of this concept is seen in the later writings of God's people.

The idea that true repentance is the first step toward a proper spiritual relationship with God is stressed.

Malachi emphasizes the coming of a forerunner who is to herald the coming of the Lord. Jesus and others regarded this prophecy as foreshadowing the work of John the Baptist --- Mark 9:11-13.

MICAH

Personal Background

The name *Micah* is a shortened form of *Micaiah* which means "Who is like unto the Lord?" The longer form of this name appears (In the Hebrew text) in Jeremiah 26:18. In Micah 7:18 a word play is made on his name. "*Who is a God like Thee*, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?"

Micah was from the town of *Moresbeth* (Micah 1:1), which was near Gath (Micah 1:14), which was about 25 miles SW of Jerusalem. This was a productive agricultural area on the border of Judah and Philistia. Through this area the armies and commercial caravans frequently passed, as it was the main road to the Maritime Plain and to Egypt. "Because of this the young prophet had opportunities to learn of big events taking place in his time" (Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*).

Nothing is known of his family or home life. However, like Amos (whose hometown of Tekoa was just 17 miles away), Micah was a man of the country. "From his book one can surmise that Micah lived close to both the people and the soil and possessed a keen sympathy for both. Moresbeth was sufficiently detached from Jerusalem to produce men of courage and independence of thought" (Homer Hailey). "His father's name is not given, and we conclude that his family was of humble origin" (Gleason Archer).

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos and Hosea. Some have even speculated that he might have been a student of the prophet Isaiah --- there are certainly several similarities in their two prophetic books (Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are almost identical). "Micah, however, was a rustic prophet with a rural ministry while city-bred Isaiah devoted his prophetic efforts to the population and court of Jerusalem" (Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*). "Hence he was not in as close touch with international politics as was his contemporary, Isaiah. His ministry was especially preoccupied with the sufferings of the common people and of the peasants in the agricultural areas who were exploited by rich and unscrupulous landed nobility" (Archer). "Micah was the prophet of the poor and downtrodden" ...who displays "the courageous and fearless spirit of one who is indignant over the corruption and heartlessness of inhuman rulers and time-serving religionists" (Hailey).

Date

Micah 1:1 places his prophecies over a lengthy period of time --- during the reigns of King Jotham (750-731 BC), King Ahaz (736-715 BC), and King Hezekiah (715-686 BC) ...all of whom were kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. "From Jeremiah 26:18-19 we learn that his earnest warnings during the reign of Hezekiah were taken seriously, and made an important contribution to the revival which took place under government sponsorship" (Archer).

Although the active ministry of Micah may well have covered a period of some 50 years, "it seems likely that the bulk of his recorded prophetic oracles were uttered in the period 725-710 BC" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). Other sources revise this figure to 735-710 BC to allow for work during the reign of King Jotham.

It is pretty obvious that this book is a collection of prophecies which were delivered over a period of several decades. "It is a series of messages called oracles given at different times, in different circumstances, in all probability spanning a considerable length of time. It is important to recognize this if we are going to make any sense out of what Micah is saying" (Stuart Briscoe).

Historical Background

The biblical texts for the history of this period are --- II Kings 15-20; II Chronicles 27-32; Isaiah 36-39. Micah speaks to both the northern and southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah), "although he deals primarily with Judah."

The northern kingdom of Israel was soon to fall to Assyria. This occurred in 722 BC, probably within a decade of his warning that destruction was coming (Micah 1:6). The southern kingdom of Judah would become an "Assyrian vassal state" for many years, and would be forced to pay a heavy tribute to Assyria.

King Hezekiah finally abandoned this pro-Assyrian policy (II Kings 18:7, 19-20), and Sennacherib invaded Judah (701 BC), but the Lord overthrew them and drove them back. Hezekiah then introduced some broad religious reforms.

It was during this time that Micah worked. He also predicted the fall of Judah to Babylon, and their subsequent restoration (Micah 4:10). This would not occur for quite some time, however (around 125 years later), so was not taken too seriously by the people.

A great deal of Micah's message may well fall within the time of King Ahaz. "The corrupt and idolatrous conditions reflected throughout the book may be related to the low ebb of morality and religious interest during the days of Ahaz" (Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*). "Socially and morally Judah presented a dark picture" at this time (Hailey). The wealthy coveted the land of the people around them (Micah 2:1-2). They robbed the poor (Micah 2:8f). Corrupt business ethics were practiced (Micah 6:11). There were numerous false prophets (Micah 2:11) who prophesied for reward (Micah 3:11). The priests also taught for a price (Micah 3:11). Rulers and judges could be bribed (Micah 7:3).

The people were religious, but it was an empty ceremonialism. "Religion had become a matter of form; ceremonial observances were thought to meet all religious requirements. There was widespread misapprehension that as long as the external acts of worship were scrupulously performed the people were entitled to the divine favor and protection" (Homer Hailey). "The people have replaced heartfelt worship with empty ritual, thinking that this is all God demands. They have divorced God's standards of justice from their daily dealings in order to cover their unscrupulous practices" (*The Expanded Open Bible*).

Purpose of Micah

"Stemming from the poorer, working class, Micah was acutely aware of the injustices and avarice of the rich. While he was interested in the political affairs of his nation, it was only as they were connected with the religious and moral situation that Micah spoke to them" (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia*). Micah wants the people to realize that true faith in God results in personal holiness and social justice! He "emphasizes the integral relationship between true spirituality and social ethics" (*Expanded Open Bible*). "Worship and morality cannot be divorced from each other. They are two sides of the same coin" (Jack P. Lewis).

"Keenly he realizes that no multitude of sacrifices can adequately be substituted for righteousness in practice" (Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*). "These people have been professing much and performing little. God has been observing the contradiction between creed and conduct,' says the prophet, 'and He will not tolerate it anymore'" (D. Stuart Briscoe). What does the Lord require of you?! Micah 6:8 answers the question --- "To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." "How will the world know that I am walking humbly with my God? They will know by the way I

treat people. Those who walk humbly with their God have a passionate concern for justice being done in society, and a deep concern to treat people lovingly and mercifully" (D. Stuart Briscoe).

Micah is the first prophet to specifically threaten Judah with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Micah 3:12). He also threatens them with the failure of prophecy (Micah 3:6-7) --- there would be no word from God; no guidance! Micah is also the first to point to Bethlehem as the city from which the Messiah would come (Micah 5:2). The chief priests and scribes referred back to this prophecy when Herod asked where the Messiah would be born (Matthew 2:4-7). This passage also came up in a dispute among the multitude over from where the Messiah would originate (John 7:40-44). Also, Micah 2:12-13; 4:1-8; 5:4-5 "offer some of the best OT descriptions of the righteous reign of Christ over the whole world" (*Expanded Open Bible*). And, Jesus quoted Micah 7:6 when He spoke to the Twelve about discipleship (Matthew 10:36).

The Puns of Micah

"The latter part of the 1st chapter (1:10-16) reveals the prophet's skill as a communicator. He uses a play on words, showing that he is as clever a punster as he is a strikingly gifted poet!" (Briscoe). Efforts to render these into English may be seen in the translations of Moffat and Phillips. It is "the longest series of sustained puns in the OT, in which Micah describes the advance of the Assyrian army through his section of country" (Jack P. Lewis).

For example --- *Gath* (1:10) sounds like the Hebrew word for *tell*, so it's as if he were saying, "Tell it not in Tell City." Also, in 1:10 he writes, "In Beth-le-aphrah (house of dust) roll yourself in the dust." *Zaanan* (1:11) means "going out," so he is saying, "Those of you in 'Go Out City' will not go out." Etc.

"Imagine an American preacher saying, 'Living in Pittsburgh is the pits,' or 'Los Angeles is not a city of angels,' or 'Wisconsin should only be pronounced Wiscon-*sin*.' That would get the people's attention. Micah was having a problem getting his message across to the people so he chose this dramatic vehicle to reach them" (Briscoe).

NAHUM

Personal Background

The name of this prophet --- *Nahum* --- means "comfort, consolation." It is a shortened form of *Nehemiah* which means "the comfort of Yahweh." This prophet is only mentioned once in the entire Bible (Nahum 1:1). His name "is in a sense symbolical of the message of the book, which was intended to *comfort* and *console* the oppressed and afflicted people of Judah" (Eiselen).

He is identified as "Nahum the Elkoshite." Some assume this refers to the name of his father (*Elkoshai*) and that he was actually born in Bethabor (which is beyond Jordan). The Chaldee Scriptures call him "Nahum of Beth-koshi." Most likely, though, this name refers to the place of his birth. The identification of this town is much disputed, however. There are four major theories:

A 16th century tradition identifies Elkosh with Al-Qush in Iraq, north of the site of Nineveh on the Tigris River. Nestorius (Patriarch of Constantinople --- 428-431 AD) mentioned an alleged "tomb of Nahum" at this site.

Jerome (340-420 AD), who produced the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, believed it was in Galilee at a place called "Elkesi" near Ramah.

Most conservative scholars believe that Elkosh was a city in southern Judah (later called "Elcesei") which was midway between Jerusalem and Gaza. "This would make Nahum a prophet of the southern kingdom and may explain his interest in the triumph of Judah --- Nahum 1:15; 2:2" (*The Open Bible* -- Expanded Version).

Many have speculated the city of "Capernaum" (Hebrew -- *Kepar-Nahum*), which means "village of Nahum," may have been the site of Elkosh, and that the city was renamed in honor of the prophet who came from there. Capernaum, however, was in Galilee, and some feel that John 7:52 refutes this view --- "Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

Other views as to the location of this city are --- It was in Judah near Eleutheropolis, according to *Pseudo-Epiphanius*. Benjamin of Tudela (12th century AD) claimed to have seen Nahum's tomb south of Babylon. Ultimately, one must admit that the actual location of Elkosh is unknown, although it seems very likely, based upon internal evidence from the book

of Nahum itself, that this prophet was a resident of Judah.

Date

Scholars are able to date the prophecy of Nahum fairly accurately based upon three major considerations:

In Nahum 3:8-10 the prophet speaks of the fall of the city of Thebes (*No-amon*) which was in upper Egypt. It is viewed as an event which had already occurred. Thebes fell to the Assyrians in 661 BC. Thus, this prophecy must have been written after this time.

Ten years after its fall, Thebes had begun to rise from its ruins, to rebuild, and to regain its former glory. If Nahum had waited too long after the fall of Thebes to use its destruction as a warning to Nineveh, the force of this warning would have been lost. Nineveh might well assume --- If Thebes can recover that quickly, then so can we!

The fall of Nineveh is viewed as a future occurrence. The city fell in 612 BC when the Medes and the Babylonians finally destroyed it. Thus, the prophecy must have been written prior to this event.

Nahum speaks of Nineveh as being "strong and full of her old imperial arrogance" (Blaklock). This would place the prophecy in the time of Ashurbanipal (668-625 BC); it was under his successors that the nation declined and fell.

Nahum also mentions no king in his introduction. This has led some to the conclusion there was no king over God's people at that time worthy of mention --- this could well have been King Manasseh (686-642 BC).

All of these factors, and others which could be discussed as well, seem to point to a time around 655 BC. This would be just a little over four decades from the fall of this mighty nation.

Historical Background

The brutal imperialism of Assyria had been a curse to the lands of the Middle East for a couple of centuries. From the very beginning they had a policy of "westward conquest and world domination." They were noted as being one of the most aggressive, brutal, cruel and wicked nations on earth. "Assyria was a nation largely geared for aggressive war and its atrocities were proverbial. Nineveh saw men and nations as tools to be exploited to gratify the lust of conquest and commercialism. Assyria existed to render no service to mankind" (Willis).

Jonah prophesied to Nineveh about 758 BC. This resulted in a national repentance. However, this change of heart was short-lived. Nineveh repented of its repentance! They were soon back on a course of world conquest and wicked aggression. Following is a list of her kings and conquests from the time of her "change of heart" until her destruction:

Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC) --- He began a program of world conquest. He invaded the West and deported some of the inhabitants of northern Israel, removing them to an area north of Nineveh. He also extended his authority into Judah, exacting tribute from them ...II Kings 15:29; 16:5-18; I Chron. 5:6, 26; II Chron. 28:16f; 30:6.

Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) --- He began the siege of Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. He died before the city fell.

Sargon II (722-705 BC) --- He completed the siege of Samaria. The city fell in 722 BC, thus bringing an end to the northern kingdom of Israel ...II Kings 17:3-6. He was murdered in 705 BC.

Sennacherib (705-681 BC) --- King Hezekiah (728-687 BC) abandoned his pro-Assyrian policy (II Kings 18:7, 19-20). As a result, Sennacherib invaded Judah (701 BC), conquered its fortified cities, and surrounded Jerusalem. He boasted that he had shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "as a bird in a cage!" However, the Angel of the Lord struck 185,000 of his soldiers dead in a single night, and the army withdrew ...II Kings 18:13 - 19:36; II Chron. 32:1-31; Isaiah 36:1 - 37:38. He was murdered by two of his sons (Adrammelech and Sharezer), and a third son (Esarhaddon) became king ...II Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38.

Esarhaddon (681-668 BC) --- It was this king who captured King Manasseh (686-642 BC) and led him away for a brief period of captivity (II Chron. 33:10-13). He died while marching against Egypt in an effort to subdue them.

Ashurbanipal (668-625 BC) --- This king completed the campaign into Egypt which resulted in the fall of "*No-amon*"

(Thebes) in 661 BC (Nahum 3:8-10). He extended Assyria's influence farther than any of his predecessors. Under his rule, Nineveh became the mightiest city on earth. According to the records, he was an extremely cruel man.

The City --- The walls of Nineveh were almost 8 miles around. They were 100' high and wide enough that three chariots could ride on them side-by-side. Around the walls were towers that stretched an additional 100 feet above the top of the wall. In addition, there was a moat around the city 150' wide and 60' deep. Nineveh had enough provisions within the city to withstand a 20-year siege. Thus, Nahum's prophecy of the overthrow of this city seemed very unlikely indeed to the inhabitants. It was also a city filled with gardens and parks and even a zoo. The royal palace had an area of almost 100,000 square feet, and its walls were sculptured with scenes of the king's victories. There were 15 main gates with huge stone bulls standing guard at each.

Assur-etil-ilani and Sinshumlishir (625-620 BC) --- These two sons of Ashurbanipal had brief and ineffective reigns. The dynastic stability of Assyria was beginning to decline.

Sin-shar-ishkun (620-612 BC) --- This was the son of Assur-etil-ilani. He was also known as Esarhaddon II. During this time Nabopolassar (625-605 BC) established himself as the king of Babylon and began capturing Assyrian holdings. By 616 BC he had won complete independence from Assyria for Babylon. In 614 BC the Medes, under Cyaxares, captured the city of Ashur and inflicted a brutal massacre on the population. An alliance was then formed between the Medes and the Babylonians and the Scythians, and the siege of Nineveh began. The siege lasted 3 months, and it ended (according to the *Babylonian Chronicle*) when flood waters breached the walls allowing the soldiers to enter the city. This was according to the prophecy --- "With an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site" (Nahum 1:8). The Tigris River had overflowed its banks and eaten away at the walls. "As walls of those ancient cities were generally formed of brick kneaded with straw and baked in the sun, a flood of waters could easily effect their dissolution" (Adam Clarke). When the enemy entered the city, King Sin-shar-ishkun gathered his wives and children and all his wealth into the palace and set it on fire. They all perished in the fire.

A few of the Assyrians tried to hold out at Haran and reform the government, but they were defeated in 606 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar at the battle of Carchemish. The destruction of Nineveh was so complete that about 200 years later, when Xenophon the Athenian and "the Ten Thousand," backing out of their entanglement in Persia, passed by the site they said there was no evidence a city had ever been there!! Nahum 3:11, 17 predicted that they would be "hidden" and their place "not known." In more modern times, the site was not discovered until 1842. Today, the site is covered by fields, a water tower for a nearby village, a cemetery, and a local dump!

The Message of Nahum

The people of Nineveh had quickly reverted to their cruel and heathen practices. "They had not transmitted their knowledge of the true God to their children" (*Ryrie Study Bible*). They had repented of their repentance! Therefore, God, through Nahum, foretold the complete destruction of this kingdom. He had spared them once (during the time of Jonah). He would *not* do so again. Unlike Jonah, Nahum does not actually go to the city of Nineveh; rather he declares his oracle from afar. There is no hope of any repentance taking place, thus no need to go to the city.

Although this book is concerned with the downfall of Assyria, it is nevertheless written for the benefit of Judah. God has demonstrated His patience and long-suffering; now He will demonstrate His wrath! The message of this book is that although God may be slow to wrath, He nevertheless always "settles His accounts in full!" "Though God is slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness (as His action toward Nineveh in the book of Jonah shows), His long-suffering is not to be interpreted as indifference or as lack of power --- Nahum 1:1-6" (Willis).

This is also a message of consolation for the people of Judah who are being oppressed by Assyria. Regardless of how things may *seem*, God does not forget His people. The book of Revelation is a perfect example of this message. "When the forces opposing God are so firmly ensconced and the flickering lamp of God's people is at the point of extinction, however, it is easy for the remnant to forget. Nahum reminds us, as do the ruins of ancient Nineveh, that God Himself is the ultimate Ruler. HE WILL HAVE THE FINAL WORD!!" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

"Some have objected to the joyous attitude with which Nahum greets the prospect of the fall of Assyria's capital, and regard it as an exhibition of nationalistic fanaticism and vengeful malice. This, however, is a misunderstanding of the ground which the prophet occupies. Because he is a man of God, he speaks as one who is wholly preoccupied with the Lord's cause on earth. His earnest desire is to see Jehovah vindicate His holiness in the eyes of the heathen, as over against

the inhumane and ruthless tyranny of that God-defying empire which had for such a long time trampled upon all the subject nations with heartless brutality" (Gleason Archer).

J.M.P. Smith describes him as an "enthusiastic, optimistic patriot," but "his book is not the recording of personal glee over the fall of Nineveh, expressing the narrow hatred and prejudice of a single individual; but it is the fervent expression of the outraged conscience of mankind" (Homer Hailey). "It is one great '*At Last*'" (G.A. Smith).

"His cry is not only the cry of jubilation at the fall of an oppressive foe, but is also the cry of faith in the sovereign rule of Jehovah and a vindication of confidence that He will avenge His elect when the time is ripe. The lesson of his beautifully worded yet dreadful prophecy is one to which the world could well give heed today. The prophet reveals the eternal principle of the omnipotent God that for a nation to survive it must be established upon and directed by principles of righteousness and truth. Wickedness will eventually turn a nation back to Sheol, the oblivion of the unseen, when it makes cruelty and wickedness the standard by which it lives" (Homer Hailey).

OBADIAH

Personal Background

The name *Obadiah* means "Servant of Yahweh" (literally -- "One who serves or worships Jehovah"). This prophecy has the distinction of being the *shortest* book in the OT. There are twelve different individuals in the OT with this name (a very common name), but no indication that any of these other individuals are to be identified with this particular prophet.

Nothing is known about his life, background or personality except what little can be inferred from this prophecy. It is assumed that he was a native of Judah. Others feel he may also have been among the circle of prophets attached to the Jerusalem Temple. The Jewish *Talmud* states Obadiah was not Jewish, but rather an Edomite proselyte God used to rebuke his own people.

Date

In addition to being the shortest book in the OT, Obadiah also "bears the distinction of being the most difficult of all the prophecies to date" (Gleason Archer). His work is ascribed to periods ranging from 845 to 400 BC. There are two major theories:

- **585 BC** --- This is the view held by most liberal scholars. It places this prophecy about a year after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.
- **845 BC** --- This is the view held by "a good majority of the evangelical scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries" (Archer). It places the prophecy during the days of King Jehoram (848 - 841 BC) when Jerusalem was attacked by the Philistines and Arabians (with probable cooperation from the Edomites --- II Kings 8:20; II Chron. 21:8-10, 16-17). *This* view seems to be the most probable. (For an excellent defense of this position see -- *A Survey of OT Introduction*, by Gleason L. Archer, Jr., p. 299-303, and *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, by Homer Hailey, p. 28-29.)

Literary Relations

This is one of seven OT books which is not quoted in the pages of the NT. However, there are obvious relationships with several other OT books. There is a similarity between numerous phrases found in Joel 3 and Obadiah:

- **Because of violence** - Joel 3:19 and Obad. 10
- **Your deeds shall return on your own head** - Joel 3:4-7 and Obad. 15
- **The day of the Lord is near** - Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14 and Obad. 15
- **In Mt. Zion there shall be those that escape** - Joel 3:17 and Obad. 17

It appears that Jeremiah was familiar with the work of Obadiah. Compare Jer. 49:7-22 with Obadiah 1-9. There is "strong evidence that the prophet Jeremiah had read and adapted for his own purposes Obad. 1-9" (Archer).

Historical Background

This prophecy is against the people of Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:8-9), whereas the Israelites were descendants of Jacob, the twin brother of Esau. Thus, the peoples were very closely related.

From the very beginning there was enmity between these two brethren --- an enmity which carried over to the nations

which descended from them.

- Jacob and Esau "struggled together" within the womb of Rebekah (Gen. 25:22). In the next verse the Lord tells her, "Two nations are in your womb."
- There was conflict over the taking of the birthright by Jacob from Esau (Gen. 25:27-34). It was at this time that Esau gained the name *Edom* (meaning "red") --- the color of the stew for which he sold his birthright (Gen. 25:30). Much of the land occupied by the Edomites was made up of dark red sandstone; this was also the color of Esau at his birth (Gen. 25:25).
- There was conflict when Jacob tricked Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau (Gen. 27).
- There was trouble years later as the two brothers met (Gen. 32-33).
- Conflict between the two nations (Edom and Israel) began at the time of the Exodus from Egypt when Edom refused to let the people of Israel pass through their region on the way to the promised land (Numbers 20:14-21).
- This enmity continued until the time of King David when he put them under subjection to Israel (II Samuel 8:14).
- During the reign of Jehoram, Edom revolted (II Kings 8:20-22; II Chron. 21:8-10) and set up their own king. It was during this time, about 845 BC, that Obadiah gave his prophecy to the people of Edom.

The people of Edom were continually filled with hatred for Israel. Speaking of these people, Amos 1:11 says, "he pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion; his anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever." As a result, Malachi 1:3-4 says that the Lord would utterly destroy the Edomites. They had become the people "toward whom the Lord is indignant forever!"

During their later history the Nabatean Arabs took over the territory of Edom and drove them from their land. They fled to the area south of the Dead Sea, and in time came to be known as the *Idumaeans*. Around 120 BC they were conquered by John Hyrcanus of the Maccabees, who forced many of them to be circumcised and to accept the Law of Moses.

During the trial of Jesus Christ, we see the final confrontation --- Jesus (a descendant of Jacob) stood before King Herod (a descendant of Esau).

"By 100 AD the people of Edom had become lost to history" (Homer Hailey). "If you travel today in the region of Edom, you will find nothing but the most-stark wilderness and the most isolated emptiness ... it is one of the most formidable, forsaken spots on earth" (Briscoe). They will "become as if they had never existed!" (Obad. 16)

Occasion

The city of Jerusalem had been attacked by the Philistines and Arabians. The city had been stormed and looted. Edom, who was in a state of revolt, sided with the invading forces and shared in the spoils (Obad. 11). They gloated over Israel's misfortune (Obad. 12-13), and killed or imprisoned those who fled the destruction. (Obad. 14)

The Message

This book is structured around two major themes:

1. **The destruction of Edom** --- also referred to as *Esau* and *Teman*
2. **The vindication of Judah** --- also referred to as *Jacob*, *Jerusalem*, and *Mount Zion*

The use of *Jacob* and *Esau* in particular, along with such phrases as "your brother," draws attention to the blood relationship between these two nations. "It is the violation of these ties that occasion both Obadiah's denunciation of Edom and the necessity for Judah's restoration" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

The Great Lessons of Obadiah

John Calvin once remarked that because of the brevity of Obadiah it did "not suggest as many sermons" as the longer

prophetic works. Although this may be true, there are nevertheless numerous lessons to be derived from this book. For example --- when one shares in "the spoils of wrong-doing," even though he may not be an instigator of the crime, by "standing aloof" he becomes "as one of them." (Obad. 11).

- When someone (even a nation) becomes unjust, cruel and bitter toward someone else ...especially when they're brethren ... they will be punished, and the one wronged will be avenged
- As a people sow, so will a people reap! "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap!" (Gal. 6:7). The Edomites sought to destroy the Israelites, and were themselves destroyed. (see Obad. 15)
- Obadiah makes it clear that the idea of a nation being invulnerable is an illusion! Edom felt so secure that they believed no one could destroy them. They built entire cities which were hidden within cliffs, and which could only be reached by narrow passes --- the famous city of *Petra*, which was carved from a mountainside, was in Edom. Their security, however, was misplaced. God said He would destroy them, and history demonstrates how this occurred.
- The people were proud and arrogant which led them to be self-deceived. "The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in the loftiness of your dwelling place, who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?'" (Obad. 3). The answer is in the next verse --- "'From there I will bring you down,' declares the Lord."
- The Edomites had become wise in their own eyes. They had all the answers; had need of nothing; God had been left out of the picture. In the OT there is no mention of any Edomite religion or any Edomite gods. "The Edomites had no allegiance to a god. This has led many scholars to believe that this unusual people were so self-sufficient, arrogant, and self-satisfied that they wouldn't even call upon the name of any kind of god. They believed they had all the answers themselves!" (D. Stuart Briscoe)
- The Kingdom of the Lord will always ultimately prevail (Obad. 21 --- "And the kingdom will be the Lord's").
- The ultimate sin of Edom was "a manifest display of lack of brotherliness" (Jack P. Lewis). Edom stood by and gloated over the misfortune of a brother nation. "He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished." (Prov. 17:5)
- God provides a place of escape for those who would turn to Him --- Mount Zion. (Obad. 17)

ZECHARIAH

Personal Background

The name *Zechariah* (Hebrew: *Zekar-yah*) means "Yahweh has remembered." This was a very common Hebrew name. There are almost 30 different men with this name mentioned in the Bible, "presumably because the Lord had remembered the prayers of the parents for a baby boy." (Gleason L. Archer, Jr.)

Zech. 1:1 indicates he was the son of *Berechiah* and the grandson of *Iddo*. Iddo was one of the priests who returned to Jerusalem in the group led by Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:4, 16; Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Zechariah was also one of the ones who returned under Zerubbabel, and he was already a priest at the time of the return (Neh. 12:16). It is also very likely he was just a *young man* (Hebrew: *na'ar*) at this time (Zech. 2:4). He was likely born in Babylon, and perhaps had just become a priest at the time the exiles returned to Jerusalem.

Jewish tradition states that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the founders of the *Great Synagogue*. The Greek Old Testament (The Septuagint) also credits Zechariah and Haggai as being the co-authors of several of the Psalms (see the study in this series on *Haggai*).

In Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51 Jesus speaks of "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah" who was "murdered between the temple and the altar." (*NOTE* --- Another priest by the name of Zechariah ... the son of Jehoiada ... was also killed in the court of the temple (II Chron. 24:20-22). Some contend Jesus, or some scribe making a copy of the biblical text, confused these two men. Others maintain they were two separate men who happened to suffer similar fates.)

"A tomb is shown to this day at the foot of the Mount of Olives, which, it is pretended, belongs to the prophet Zechariah. Others maintain that he is buried in a place called Bethariah, 150 furlongs from Jerusalem" (Adam Clarke). Zechariah "has been called the prophet with 'the soul of an artist and the eye of a seer.'" (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*)

Date

According to Zech. 1:1 this prophet began to prophesy two months after his contemporary Haggai began his work (see Haggai 1:1). This would place the beginning of Zechariah's work as a prophet around the month of November, 520 BC. From Zech 7:1 we know that Zechariah prophesied for at least two more years. Chapters 9-14 are undated, however, and due to various stylistic differences, and due to internal evidence, "it is likely that this message was given after the dedication of the Temple. Presumably this represents Zechariah's message during a later period in his prophetic career." (Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*)

Note--- There are those who do not believe Zechariah authored chapters 9-14. The two major theories about this are:

The Pre-Exilic Theory --- contends this section was written prior to the exile, perhaps by Jeremiah.

The Post-Alexandrian Theory --- which contends it was written after the time of Alexander the Great (356 - 323 BC) by an unknown author. This is viewed as necessary by some because of the reference to Greece in Zech. 9:13. *Keil*, however, states that such conclusions against the "unity of authorship of the entire book are founded upon false interpretations and misunderstandings!"

Historical Background

For a discussion of the historical background see the study in this series on Haggai. Haggai "furnished the initial impetus for laying the foundation of the second Temple, whereas Zechariah helped materially toward the completion of the project by giving a larger spiritual dimension to the restored theocracy through his prophetic oracles. With his contemporary Haggai he was called to give that kind of spiritual leadership which would regenerate the theocracy, recall it to its true vocation, and guide it toward its destiny as the living witness of God in the world." (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*)

Zechariah "began to prophecy at the time when zeal for the ideals of the theocracy had reached a very low ebb." "As was the case with Haggai, the primary concern of Zechariah was the establishing of spiritual priorities in the life of the returned community." Zechariah saw the "dangers involved in cultic formalism;" he realized that "submission, penitence, and cleansing from sin must precede the outpouring of Divine blessing;" and that "the prosperity of the theocracy depended upon a proper relationship between the covenant people and their God." (*Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*)

Characterization of the Book

"Zechariah is the longest and most obscure of all the twelve minor prophets" (Adam Clarke). "It is the most difficult of any of the OT books to interpret" (Homer Hailey). Zechariah "is the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the OT" (Robinson). "Zechariah predicted more about the Messiah than any other prophet except Isaiah" (*Ryrie Study Bible*). "No prophet of the entire OT is more concerned with the Messianic hope or gives more specific predictions about the coming of the Messiah." (*The Open Bible*)

"Zechariah has exercised a greater influence upon the Messianic picture of the NT than any other minor prophet" (Jack P. Lewis). There are prophecies concerning *His first coming* --- 3:8; 9:9, 16; 11:11-13; 12:10; 13:1, 6-7, and there are prophecies concerning *His second coming* --- chapter 14. "Christ is portrayed in His two advents as both Servant and King, Man and God." (*The Expanded Open Bible*) The following are a few of Zechariah's explicit anticipations of Christ:

The Angel of the Lord --- 3:1

The stone with seven eyes --- 3:9

The Righteous Branch --- 3:8; 6:12-13

The King/Priest --- 6:13

The humble King --- 9:9-10

The cornerstone, tent peg, & bow of battle --- 10:4

The Good Shepherd who is rejected & sold for 30 shekels of silver, the price of a slave --- 11:4-13

The pierced one --- 12:10

The cleansing fountain --- 13:1

The smitten Shepherd who is abandoned --- 13:7
The coming Judge & righteous King --- chapter 14

Jack Lewis points out that "Zechariah exercised other influences on the NT. His demand that everyone speak truth to his neighbor is echoed by Paul (Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:25). The reader of the book of Revelation may also find here the antecedent of certain pictures employed by that writer." For example:

The four horsemen --- Zech. 6:1-8; Rev. 6:1-8

The two olive trees --- Zech. 4:3f; Rev. 11:4

The lampstand & seven eyes --- Zech. 4:2-10; Rev. 1:12f

In Zechariah *Satan* appears as the accuser to bring men's failings to the attention of God --- Zech. 3:1f; cf. I Chron. 21:1; Job 1:6f; 2:1f.

Homer Hailey notes "Zechariah differs in three points from the prophets who preceded him:

1. He gives *emphasis to visions* as a means of divine communication. It is true that visions appear in the Book of Amos, but not in proportion to those in Zechariah.

2. *Angelic mediation* occupies an important place in his message. Angels are especially conspicuous in the first six chapters of the book.

3. *Apocalyptic symbolism* entering into the visions is another outstanding characteristic of this prophet's writings."

"The prophet sees and emphasizes the truth that ultimate triumph is dependent on Divine cooperation and on the submission of the people to God's Divine Will" (Homer Hailey). "It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of such passages from this Minor Prophet in the preaching and the faith of early Christians!" (*The Open Bible*)

ZEPHANIAH

Personal Background

The name *Zephaniah* (Hebrew -- *Tsephan-yah*) means "Yahweh hides" or "Yahweh has hidden." "Zephaniah was evidently born during the latter part of King Manasseh's reign (695 - 642 BC). His name may mean that he was 'hidden' from Manasseh's atrocities" (*Expanded Open Bible*). See II Kings 21:1-18 and II Chronicles 33:1-20 for the nature of this king's reign.

"Only Zephaniah among the prophetic books exhibits a lengthy genealogical note about the author" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*). "His genealogy is much longer than the usual prophetic pedigree and traces four generations" (*New Layman's Bible Commentary*). Zeph. 1:1 identifies him as the great-great-grandson of a man named Hezekiah -- many scholars feel this was the good King Hezekiah (715 - 686 BC), thus making this prophet of royal blood. Others, however, insist this is not possible due to a lack of time from the days of King Hezekiah to the birth of Zephaniah. His reference to Jerusalem as "this place" (Zeph. 1:4) seems to indicate that Jerusalem was his home. "His acquaintance with the conditions of the city (Zeph. 3:1f) further confirms this point." (Homer Hailey)

"His stern denunciations of the sins of the people and his impassioned cries for repentance have given him the name 'puritan'" (Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*). "Taking a hint from Zeph. 1:12, artists of the Middle Ages regularly represented Zephaniah as the man with the lamp, searching Jerusalem for sinners to bring them to punishment." (Jack P. Lewis)

Aside from these few facts and assumptions, nothing is known of this prophet.

Date

Zeph. 1:1 dates this prophecy in the days of King Josiah (640 - 609 BC). It may be inferred from the low moral and religious state of Judah at the time this was written that this prophecy came *before* the great religious reform of 621 BC. (II Kings 22-23; II Chronicles 34-35)

Also, Zeph. 2:13 makes it clear that the fall of Nineveh (which occurred in 612 BC) was an event still in the future. "It

would be safe to suggest 630 to 625 BC as the probable date of his work. If 626 BC is accepted, then the ministries of Jeremiah and Zephaniah began in the same year." (Homer Hailey)

Historical Background

During the reigns of Manasseh (695 - 642 BC) and Amon (642 - 640 BC) the southern kingdom of Judah sank to astounding moral and spiritual depths. These two kings remained loyal vassals to Assyria, and sought to undo all the good that King Hezekiah had accomplished. However, in the year 640 BC --- at the age of only 24 --- King Amon was assassinated by his servants (II Kings 21:23; II Chron. 33:24), and his 8 year old son, Josiah, was made king (II Kings 21:24 - 22:2; II Chron. 33:25 - 34:2). Josiah was the last good king to reign over Judah. When he died in 609 BC --- at the age of only 39 --- Judah would have only 23 years left before her destruction and Babylonian Captivity (586 BC).

At the age of 16 Josiah began "to seek the God of his father David" (II Chron. 34:3). At the age of 20 he began to "purge Judah and Jerusalem" of all that was unholy and wicked (II Chron. 34:3f). His reforms were the most extensive of any that were attempted by any king who ever reigned over Judah.

Several years later (621 BC) Hilkiah the priest discovered the lost book of the Law of Moses ("The Bible had been left on the shelf for so long, and ignored, that no one could even remember where it was --- or even cared!"). When Josiah realized what this was, and its importance, he assembled all the people of his land, from the greatest to the least, and read the Book of the Covenant to them (II Chron. 34:29-30). The temple was then cleansed and a Passover was celebrated --- the likes of which had not been seen in some time (II Chron. 35). Josiah also gained independence from the Assyrians and began to retake some of the land which had been seized by them from the northern kingdom of Israel.

Undoubtedly, the prophecy and work of Zephaniah had an influence upon Josiah, and may well have had a lot to do with the institution of reforms --- and if indeed Josiah and Zephaniah were related (both being descended from King Hezekiah), this prophet probably had a great deal of access and influence upon the young king.

Zephaniah also predicts a coming *Day of the Lord*. Even though reforms were instituted, nevertheless in short time (following the death of Josiah) the people would revert to their old, evil ways. Therefore, Zephaniah warns of impending doom from a nation even now upon the horizon. This nation was Babylon! "Zephaniah's Day of the Lord plays an important role in the forming of the concept of the final judgment day" (Jack P. Lewis). "Zephaniah uses this expression more than any other prophet" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*). Zeph. 3:9-20 "speaks of another side of the day of the Lord: It will be a day of blessing after the judgment is complete. A righteous remnant will survive and all who call upon Him, Jew or Gentile, will be blessed" (*Expanded Open Bible*). Jesus alluded to Zephaniah on two occasions --- Matthew 13:41 (Zeph. 1:3) and Matthew 24:29 (Zeph. 1:15). Both of these passages are associated with the second coming of Christ.

"Pharaoh Necho of Egypt determined to help Assyria fight off the Babylonians at Haran, and so marched north with his army (609 BC). Josiah attempted to stop him at Megiddo by throwing his forces in the path of Pharaoh Necho. He did succeed in preventing the Egyptian army from reaching Haran, but he was killed in the battle. For four years Egypt dominated Judah, but in 605 BC Pharaoh Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar (King of the Babylonians) at Carchemish. Here is enacted one of the ironies of history. Judah, led by Josiah, had attempted to aid the Babylonians by fighting against Egypt at Megiddo. The kingdom that gave its king in the struggle to aid Babylonia was now a vassal of the nation it had attempted to help. Later Judah was to be destroyed by Babylon." (Homer Hailey)

The Day of the Lord

The major message of this book is *The Day of the Lord* --- a day of judgment. It is viewed as a day of terror as imminent as one which will fall upon all creation as a judgment for sin. It is a grim picture of destruction, but out of it will come a remnant. "It is a day of deliverance for the faithful" (Hailey), as well as destruction for the *unfaithful*.

George Adam Smith, in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (Vol. 2, p. 48), has well summarized the spirit of this prophecy --- "No hotter book lies in all the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, salt pits, and owls and raven looking from the windows of desolate palaces."

THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Introduction: From the time we leave Malachi, approximately 400 years pass before the opening lines of the New Testament. In that time many important historical events and transitions occur. Combined, these conditions constitute the "just the right time" for the coming of Jesus Christ. (cf. Roman 5:6)

But first what happened to the Jews and the entire Mediterranean world during the period between the testaments.

I. The Babylonian Empire

A. The following major events occurred after the reign of King David:

1. Solomon, his son, becomes king in 970 BC.
2. Upon Solomon's death in 930 BC the kingdom was divided.
 - a. The Northern Kingdom (i.e.-Israel) consisted of ten tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam.
 - b. The Southern Kingdom falls to Babylon in 606 BC.
 - [1] Daniel and others were taken to Babylon. (Daniel 1:1-7)
 - [2] Other captives were taken in later deportations - 597 and 586 BC.
3. Just as Jeremiah prophesied Judah returned home in 536 BC - 70 years after being taken captive.

B. During the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, several permanent, significant changes took place in Judaism.

1. The synagogue became the dominant place of worship and instruction.
2. The scribe replaced the priest as the men of greatest spiritual influence.
3. The exile to Babylon also created the *Diaspora*, scattered Jew as many of the Jews never returned to Palestine.

II The Medo-Persian Empire

A. Under King Cyrus Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC.

B. In 536 BC Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home and rebuild the Temple.

C. A later Persian King (Xerxes or Ahasuerus) married a Hebrew woman (480 BC) who was used by God to save her people. (cf. Esther)

D. Still another Persian King - Antaxerxes I - allowed more Jews to return to their homeland.

1. Ezra was in this group and became a great teacher of the Law. (cf. Ezra 7-10)
2. Nehemiah received permission to return and rebuild Jerusalem's wall in 445 BC.

E. As the Jews returned, animosity grew between the people who had settled in the land during their absence - the Samaritans, Jews who married gentiles.

F. Under Ezra, Nehemiah and the prophet Malachi revival took place.

G. This takes us to the end of the Old Testament (ca. 400 BC).

H. Persia continued to be the main world power until the coming of the Greek empire.

III. The Greek Empire

A. While the Greek empire had been predicted by the prophet Daniel (cf. Daniel 2) the time of its domination was not reflected in the scripture.

B. Greece came to power as Philip of Macedon was successful in unifying the Greek city states under one rule.

1. He reigned from 359 BC to 336 BC.
2. His son, however, became one of the most famed world leaders in history.

C. Alexander the Great succeeded his father in 336 BC and ruled for thirteen years.

1. Alexander was a military genius.
2. Tutored by Aristotle he was consumed with the idea of conquering and unifying the world under the Greek culture.
3. As nation after nation fell, Greek architecture, Greek sports, the Greek language, Greek customs, etc. spread through

the Mediterranean world.

4. Alexander and his troops conquered Palestine in 332 BC.
 - a. The Jews offered no military resistance.
 - b. Like the Persians, the Greeks allowed the Jews religious freedom.
- D. After Alexander's death, the world wide Greek influence continued, but fighting broke out among his generals and the empire fragmented into four parts:
 1. Ptolemy controlled Egypt.
 2. Antipater controlled Greece and Macedonia.
 3. Seleucus ruled Babylonia.
 4. Lysimachus ruled Thrace.
- E. Eventually, two powers, Ptolemy and Seleucus, prevailed.

IV. The Post-Greek/Pre-Roman Years

- A. The Ptolemies had political and military control over Palestine from 323 BC to 198 BC.
 1. Under their rule, Greek influence continued to grow stronger.
 2. The increased use of the Greek language led to the need for a translation of scripture into that language.
 - a. The Septuagint (LXX) was produced about 250 BC.
 - b. It was the Bible for the Jews of the *Diaspora* and later.
- B. The Seleucids under Antiochus III, wrestled control of Palestine from the Ptolemies in 198 BC. (cf. I Maccabees 1:15)
 1. Thirty years later, his son Antiochus IV Epiphanies was on the throne.
 2. Antiochus Epiphanies tried to conquer the Ptolemies in Egypt but was forced out by upstart Rome.
 3. He retreated through Palestine and vented his embarrassment and anger upon the Jews. (I Maccabees 1:20-53)
 4. For two years, he murdered, plundered, and enslaved.
 - a. He desecrated the temple, stripping it of her treasures.
 - b. On December 16, 167 BC, Antiochus Epiphanies even offered a pig on the holy altar. (I Maccabees 1:54-64)
- C. A Jewish priest named Matthias and his five sons led a revolt against the Seleucids in 166 BC.
 1. From the hill country, they organized guerilla fighters. (I Maccabees 2:1-70)
 2. Matthias died the following year and the leadership of the revolt passed to his son Judas.
 - a. His nickname was Maccabeus. (i.e. – the hammer)
 - b. He was a brilliant military strategist.
 3. Judas Maccabeus took control of Jerusalem.
 - a. He constructed a new altar and refurbished the temple.
 - b. He rededicated the temple to the Lord on December 14, 164 BC.
 - c. Hanukkah (Feast of Lights) is the annual Jewish holiday season that celebrates this event.
 4. Under Maccabean leadership, Palestine ridded itself of Syrian (i.e. - Seleucid) influence, particularly through a treaty made with Rome in 139 BC.
 5. During the Maccabean reign, three groups came to prominence that would have great influence on Palestine in Jesus' day.
 - a. The Maccabees (priests) became the Hasmoneans Priest.
 - b. The Hasidim became the Pharisees.
 - c. The Hellenists became the Sadducees.

V. The Roman Empire

- A. Rome took control of Palestine under Pompey in 63 BC.
- B. While Roman power dominated the civilized world throughout the period of time covered by New Testament literature; Rome basically allowed conquered territories to govern themselves.
- C. After Pompey's conquest of Palestine, the rule of Palestine was given to Antipater.

1. Antipater was an Idumean, not a Jew.
 2. A cunning manipulator, he managed to secure this position.
 3. He was the beginning of the Herodian dynasty.
- D. After Antipater, Herod the Great reigned from 37 BC to 4 AD.
1. He was called Herod "the Great" because of his great building projects.
 2. But Herod was a cruel, ruthless man. (e.g. - Matthew 2)
- E. After Herod's death, Palestine was divided to three of his sons - Philip, Antipas, and Archileus.
- F. Under the Roman Empire, several things were in place for the "fullness of time."
1. A common language.
 2. General worldwide peace.
 3. Widespread poverty among conquered peoples.
 4. Slavery was enforced.

BACKGROUND STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction: The Old Testament constantly pointed to a coming Messiah and a new covenant that He would bring. Some background information will help us better appreciate the full meaning of the New Testament and its setting. Christ came, the apostles were called, and the church grew and flourished in the following world environment.

I. The Roman World of the 1st Century.

A. The political structure of the Roman Empire.

1. By New Testament times, Rome had evolved from a republic to a monarchy.
2. The following chart lists the emperors of the first century along with New Testament references and significant biblical events.

Dates	Name	NT Reference	Significant Event
30 B.C.-A.D. 14	Augustus	Luke 2:1	Birth of Christ
A.D. 14-37	Tiberius	Luke 3:1	Ministry and death of Christ
A.D. 37-41	Caligula		
A.D. 41-54	Claudius	Acts 11:28 Acts 18:2	The great famine Expulsion of the Jews from Rome
A.D. 54-68	Nero	Acts 25:10; 28:19	Trial of Paul
A.D. 68	Galba		
A.D. 69	Otho		
A.D. 69	Vitellius		
A.D. 69-79	Vespasian		Destruction of Jerusalem
A.D. 79-81	Titus		
A.D. 81-96	Domitian		Persecution of Christians
A.D. 96-98	Nerva		
A.D. 98-117	Trajan		

3. While the role of emperor was ultimately important, more central to the New Testament story was the rule of provinces.
 - a. Proconsuls appointed by the Roman Senate ruled the safer provinces.
 - b. Procurators appointed by the emperor governed the less secure areas.
4. Citizenship was a feature introduced to the world through Rome.
 - a. One could be a citizen of Rome based on birth, imperial grant, or purchase.
 - b. Later, the right of citizenship was extended to all free persons.
 - c. Paul appealed to his citizenship to stop unfair punishment. (Acts 22:25-29)
5. Roman law was a major contribution to the civilized western world.
 - a. Roman law was direct and to the point.
 - b. Little emphasis was placed on intent or extenuating circumstances.
 - c. The enforcement of this law was swift and evenhanded.
6. The travel and communication infrastructures were central to the spread of the gospel.
 - a. Generally safe Roman roads connected the cities.

- b. The seas were cleared of pirates.
- c. A common language (i.e., Greek) was spoken.

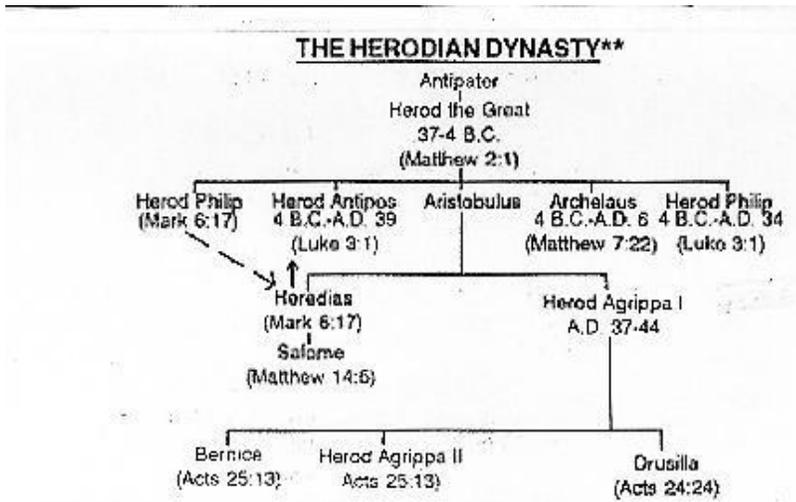
B. The beliefs and religion of the Romans.

1. Astrology and superstition abounded. (cf. Acts. 8:9-24)
2. Traditional Greco-Roman polytheism lingered on.
 - a. By 1st century, these traditional deities were beginning to be mocked.
 - b. A few areas still had thriving cults. (cf. Acts 19:27. 34, 35)
3. Mystery religions had become quite popular (e.g. Zoroastrianism, Isis, and Serapis – like modern cults).
4. Emperor worship became extremely important by the end of the first century.
 - a. From Augustus on emperors were deemed deities upon their death.
 - b. This tradition seemed to combine patriotism and religion, imposing greater control on the people.
 - c. When Domitian came to the throne (A.D. 81-96) he proclaimed himself "*dominiset deus*" (i.e., Lord and God) and ordered worship of himself.
 - [1] Because of their long-standing monotheism, Jews were exempt from this mandate.
 - [2] Viewed as an upstart cult, Christianity received no such exemption.
5. Of key importance is the fact that none of the above created a great sense of morality among the people.

II. Palestine in the 1st Century.

A. The political situation in Palestine.

1. When Pompey conquered the area for Rome in 63 BC, he placed Antipater in charge of Palestine.
 - a. Antipater was officially made procurator in 55 BC
 - b. He was assassinated in 43 BC.
 - c. After some turmoil, Antipater's son, Herod (the Great), was appointed "King of the Jews" in 37 BC.
2. The New Testament has frequent references over a number of years to the Herodian dynasty. To the casual reader, they can be confusing. The following chart may be helpful:



Only those named in the Bible are listed here.

3. Upon the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, Palestine was divided among his three sons.
 - a. Archelaus was made tetrarch of Judea.
 - b. Antipas was made tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
 - c. Philip became the tetrarch of the northern parts of the Transjordan.
4. Archelaus was such an atrocious leader that Rome removed him from office in AD 6.
5. It was because of his removal that authority in Judea was turned over to a series of Roman procurators.

FIRST CENTURY PROCURATORS OF JUDEA

<u>Date of reign</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
A.D. 6-10	Coponius	
A.D. 10-13	M. Ambivius	

A.D. 13-15	Annius Rufus	
A.D. 15-26	Valerius Gratus	
A.D. 26-36	Pontius Pilate	Luke 3:1; 23:1
A.D. 36-38	Marcellus	
A.D. 38-41	Maryllus**	
A.D. 44-46	Cuspius Fadus	
A.D. 46-48	Tiberius Alexander	
A.D. 48-52	Ventidius Cumanus	
A.D. 52-59	M. Antonius Felix	Acts 23, 24
A.D. 59-61	Porcius Festus	Acts 24:27
A.D. 61-65	Albinus	
A.D. 65	Destruction of Jerusalem	
A.D. 70	Gessius Florus - Destruction of Jerusalem	
A.D. 72	Vettulenus Cerialis	
A.D. 72-75	Lucilius Bassus	
A.D. 75-86	M. Salvienus Flavius Silva	
A.D. 86	Pompeius Longinus	

**Herod Agrippa I ruled over Judea in AD 41-44

B. The cultural situation in Palestine:

1. Most of the Jews were poor.
 - a. Fishermen, farmers, and craftsmen eked out a meek existence.
 - b. Little slavery existed among the Jews.
 - c. Few social or class distinctions divided the people.
2. A wealthy aristocracy developed among a few priestly families.

C. The spiritual life of the Jews:

1. Jewish tradition has taken precedent over the Law of Moses.
 - a. The Law had become even more precious during the Babylonian exile.
 - b. However, the very scribes who revered and taught the law soon became guilty of building a great list of traditions that came to supersede the true law. (cf. Mark 7:1-13)
2. The synagogue had become more important in everyday Jewish life than the temple.
3. The temple was primarily honored for being the focal point of the great feast days (Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of the Tabernacles).
4. The priesthood was dominated by the Jewish "liberals" who were the puppets of the Roman procurators.
5. Several parties arose in Judaism.
 - a. The Pharisees, a small strict and respected group, committed to keeping the Law flawlessly. In their separatism, they often fostered hypocrisy.
 - b. The Sadducees were the wealthy aristocrats who collaborated with Rome. They were generally unpopular with most of the Jews.
 - c. The Zealots were a militant, radical group of Jewish patriots bent on ridding the land of Roman dominion.
 - d. The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of Judaism. It heard major disputes over social and religious issues.
6. Because Christianity was born in the bosom of Judaism, it is extremely important to understand this background.

III. A Quick Look at the New Testament.

A. The New Testament was written over a 50-year period.

B. We call it the New Testament, Covenant, because that's what it is.

1. Jeremiah prophesied that a new covenant would be established. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
2. The blood of Jesus established this new covenant. (cf. I Corinthians 11:23-25; Hebrews 8:6-8)

C. We don't know exactly when or how the present canon of 27 books came together.

1. The first grouping of accepted books dates back to about AD 140.
2. Although there was some dispute over a few books, consensus was reached very early in the history of the church as to which books were inspired by God.

3. Major tests for "canonicity" included:
 - a. Was it written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle (e.g. Mark and Luke)?
 - b. Content?
 - c. Corroboration with other scripture?
 - d. Was the letter or book accepted by faithful churches from the earliest of times?
4. Undoubtedly the providence of God was the key factor in bringing the New Testament to us.

MATTHEW

Introduction: Matthew is the first of the four "gospels". While these four gospels provide information about the life of Jesus Christ, they are not mere history or biographies. Rather they are designed like modern day tracts to bring sinners to faith. (cf. John 20:30-1; Luke 1:3-4)

Matthew's gospel is a powerful picture of the life of Jesus. In fact, it was the most popular of the four gospels in the earliest days of the church.

Name: The book is named for the author.

Author: While none of the gospel writers identify themselves in their writings, the earliest traditions attribute the book to the apostle Matthew, a former tax collector.

1. A fragment of the lost work of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia (AD 130) cites Matthew as the author.
2. Other early church fathers and historians (e.g. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Jerome, Origen, and Augustine) agree that the first gospel was penned by Matthew.
3. Because of Matthew's relative obscurity among the apostles, it is very doubtful that the book would have come to bear his name apart from the fact that he did indeed write it.

Purpose: Matthew was written primarily to the Jews to demonstrate that Jesus was the King of the kingdom. (cf. 2:2, 5; 21; 10; 27:29-42; 25:31)

1. Matthew has more Old Testament references than any other gospel.
2. Paradoxically, the book contains some of the harshest statements in the New Testament against the Jews.

I. Background of the book.

A. The man Matthew.

1. He is also known by the name Levi. (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:27-32)
2. Matthew was a tax collector in Capernaum (Matthew 9:9-13), who left everything and followed Jesus. (Luke 5:27-29)
3. After his call, he invited many of his fellow tax collectors to come and meet Jesus. (Matthew 9:10-13)
4. When Jesus later chose the Twelve, Matthew was selected to be in that group. (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)

B. The exact date of the composition of Matthew's gospel is unknown.

1. The phrase "to this day" (Matthew 27:8; 28:15) is evidence for some years after the buying of "Potter's Field."
2. The fall of Jerusalem is predicted but not described in Matthew 24, implying the book was written before AD 70.
3. Most conservative scholars place the writing date between AD 60 and AD 70.

II. The Main Message of the book - The main message of Matthew is identifying Jesus as king of the kingdom of Heaven

A. Many of the parables focus on the kingdom and its value. (cf. 13)

B. The book also makes it clear that the kingdom is near.
(Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 6:10)

III. The Outline of the book.

A. The Early Years of Jesus. (Matthew 1:1 - 4:17)

1. The genealogy from Abraham to Jesus is given.
2. The birth of Jesus is briefly detailed. (1:18-25)
3. The Magi's visit. (2:1-12)
4. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escape to Egypt. (2:13-23)
5. John the Baptist prepares the way. (3:1-12)
6. Jesus is baptized by John. (3:13-17)
7. Jesus faces the temptations in the wilderness. (4:1-11)

B. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee. (Matthew 4:12 - 18:35)

1. In fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus begins preaching in Galilee. (4:12-17)
 2. He calls his first disciples. (4:18-22)
 3. Jesus teaches and heals the sick. (4:23-25)
 4. The Sermon on the Mount. (5:1-7:29)
 5. Christ offers his credentials through miracles and other good works. (8:1-9:38)
 6. Jesus sends out the Twelve. (10:1-42)
 7. He teaches and preaches to the cities of Galilee. (11:1-12:50)
 8. Seven parables concerning the kingdom are given. (13:1-58)
 9. John the Baptist is beheaded. (14:1-12)
 10. Jesus offers various miracles and teachings, including:
 - a. The feeding of the 5000. (14:13-21)
 - b. Jesus walking on the water. (14:22-33)
 - c. Teaching on what is clean and unclean. (15:1-20)
 - d. The healing of a Canaanite woman's daughter. (15:21-28)
 - e. The feeding of the 4000. (15:29-39)
 - f. Rebukes to Pharisees and Sadducees. (16:1-12)
 - g. Peter's confession of the Christ. (16:13-28)
 - h. The Transfiguration. (12:1-13)
 - i. The healing of a boy with a demon. (17:14-23) ⁷
 - j. Teachings about humility and forgiveness. (18:1-35)
- C. Jesus' Ministry in Perea and Judea. (Matthew 19:1 - 20:34)
1. Jesus teaches about divorce and remarriage. (19:1-12)
 2. He welcomes little children. (19:13-15)
 3. He encounters the rich young man. (19:16-30)
 4. Jesus teaches the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. (20:1-16)
 5. He again predicts his death and resurrection. (20:17-19)
 6. The mother of James and John asks for preeminence for her sons. (20:20-28)
 7. Jesus heals two blind men in Jericho. (20:29-34)
- D. The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem. (Matthew 21:1-25:46)
1. Jesus makes a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (21:1-11)
 2. He teaches parables and answers questions. (21:12-22:46)
 3. He denounces the scribes and Pharisees. (23:1 -36)
 4. He laments over disobedient Jerusalem. (23:37-39)
 5. Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the eventual end of time. (24:1-25:46)
- E. The Trial of Jesus. (Matthew 26:1-27:32)
1. Jesus again predicts his death. (26:1-2)
 2. The chief priests and elders plot his death. (26:3-5)
 3. Our Lord is anointed with precious perfume. (26:6-13)
 4. Judas makes a bargain for Jesus' betrayal. (26:14-16)
 5. Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. (26:17-30)
 6. He predicts Peter's denial. (26:31-35)
 7. Jesus prays in Gethsemane. (26:36-46)
 8. He is arrested. (26:47-56)
 9. Jesus is tried before Caiaphas and condemned. (26:57-68)
 10. Peter denies the Lord three times. (26:69-75)
 11. Jesus is handed over to Pilate. (:1-2)
 12. Judas returns the betrayal money and commits suicide. (27:3-10)
 13. Jesus is judged before Pilate. (27:11-26)
 14. He is mocked by Roman soldiers. (27:27-30)
 15. He is led away to be crucified. (27:31 -32)
- F. The Crucifixion. (Matthew 27:33-56)

G. The Burial of Jesus. (Matthew 27:57-66)

1. Joseph of Arimathea requests the body of Jesus. (27:57-58)
2. Jesus is buried in Joseph's new tomb. (27:59-61)
3. The tomb is secured. (27:62-66)

H. The Resurrection. (Matthew 28:1-15)

1. After a severe earthquake, Jesus' tomb is opened. (28:1-4)
2. An angel speaks to the women who report the resurrection to others. (28:5-10)
3. A lie is prepared to explain Jesus' missing body. (28:11-15)

I. The Last Words of Christ. (Matthew 28:16-20)

1. All authority is given to Jesus. (28:16-18)
2. The Great Commission is given by Jesus. (28; 19-20)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The "Synoptic-Problem:"

1. The synoptic problem is the phrase used to describe the difficulty scholars have in dealing with the apparent interrelationship of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
 - a. Many conclude that there was literary dependence among the three.
 - b. Did one write first and the others borrow from his work?
 - c. Did they borrow from a common source, called Q, an unknown document?
 - d. Were they retelling oral traditions?
2. There really is no problem here.
 - a. Scripture plainly tells us that the writers used different sources - eyewitness information, oral reports, written information, etc.
 - b. In the early days of the church, factual legends of Christ's teachings and miracles surely had become rather standardized. (cf. John 14:26)
 - c. These men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
 - [1] Writing from a common source of information about a common figure (Jesus Christ), it is no wonder that they sound so much alike.
 - [2] Yet, each writer had a different slant or emphasis, geared for a particular audience.
 - [3] Frankly, much more concern would be generated if there were not a basic similarity in their writing.

B. The Son of God/Son of Man identity.

1. Jesus as the Son of God is one of the primary themes in Matthew. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 16:16; 28:19)
2. But Jesus is referred to as the "Son of Man" 31 times in the gospel of Matthew. (cf. Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 17:22-23; 24:44, etc.)
3. The emphasis placed on both these titles emphasizes the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully man.

C. The Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Matthew speaks repeatedly about the Kingdom of Heaven (38 times).
2. Mark and Luke use the term "Kingdom of God" to refer to the same entity.
3. The Greek word for kingdom is *basilea*. It has the idea of "sovereignty", "dominion", or "rule."
 - a. The world is generally under the rule of Satan, the Prince of the world. (Luke 4:6; John 12:31; 14:30)
 - b. But Jesus came to defeat Satan and set his captives free. (Matthew 12:25-30; Luke 11:20)
4. The Kingdom of Heaven (or God) is the reign or rule of God in the hearts and minds of His people.
 - a. The decisive reign of God is realized in His church. (Daniel 2:44; cf. Acts. 2)
 - b. However, the kingdom and the church are not exactly identical terms.
 - [1] For example, little children are part of the kingdom of God but not in the church. (Matthew 19:14)
 - [2] There are some who are added to the church who lose the perspective of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 7)
 - [3] In Luke, Jesus says, "The kingdom is within you."
 - c. It is certainly true that every adult who is in the kingdom of God is in Christ's church.

D. The sermons of Jesus.

1. The book of Matthew is organized around five great sermons.
 - a. The Sermon on the Mount. (5-7)

- b. The teaching to the Twelve. (10)
 - c. The parables of the kingdom. (13)
 - d. Teachings on forgiveness. (18)
 - e. Teaching about the "last things." (24-25)
2. Most of the material in these lessons is about the most basic and practical matters in life. (e.g. 5-7, 18)
 3. Much more difficult material is dealt with as well. (e.g. 24)

MARK

Introduction: The book of Mark presents a vivid, fast paced and concise account of the life of Jesus. The miracles of Jesus receive a great deal of attention in this gospel. Over forty times Mark refers to Jesus as a man of action, one who does things "immediately" or "straightway."

Like the other three. Mark's gospel is written to move men and women to faith in the Son of God.

Name - The book is named for its author.

Author - John Mark

1. While the author nowhere identifies himself by name in the gospel, we are quite certain Mark wrote it.
2. The witness of the early church uniformly assigns it to Mark. (e.g. Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome)

Purpose

1. While Matthew geared his gospel for a Jewish audience, Mark writes his account of Christ's life for the Roman perspective.
2. Clement of Alexandria (a church leader of the second century) said that the gospel of Mark was written in response to a request by the Romans for a written account of Christ's life and ministry.
3. In certain places. Mark explains Jewish customs and language for a non-Jewish audience. (Mark 5:41; 7:34; 15:34)

I. Background of the book.

A. The man Mark.

1. Mark is first mentioned by name in Acts 12:12.
2. Like many in his day he was known by two names
 - a. John was his Hebrew name.
 - b. Mark (Marcus) was his Latin name.
3. He was a cousin of Barnabas. (Colossians 4:10)
4. John Mark accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. (Acts 13:5)
 - a. He turned back at Perga. (Acts 13:13)
 - b. Later, when a second missionary journey was proposed by Paul, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again. Paul refused and the two parted company with Barnabas taking Mark on a missionary journey to Cyprus. (Acts 15:36-39)
5. Eventually Paul and Mark reconciled. (Philemon 24; Colossians 4:10; II Timothy 4:11)
6. Mark was also a close associate of Peter. (I Peter 5:13)
 - a. Apparently Mark stayed in Rome when Paul was freed from his first imprisonment.
 - b. Likely Mark joined Peter when he came to Rome. (I Peter 5:13)
7. One other interesting tidbit is that he apparently relates his own experience in Mark 14:51-52.

B. Location and date of the writing.

1. Several references in Mark indicate a Roman origin and destination.
 - a. If "Rufus" mentioned by Mark (15:21) is the same one greeted by Paul in Romans 16:13, this could indicate a direct relationship of the gospel to Rome.
 - b. A number of significant "Latinisms" occur in Mark.
 - [1] bushel (4:21)
 - [2] executioner (6:12)
 - [3] tribute (12:14)
 - [4] centurion (15:39)
2. The date assigned to the gospel is AD 65-70.

II The Main Message of the Book

A. Mark presents Christ as the suffering servant (Mark 8:31; 10:33) who is the Son of God.

B. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

C. “And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’” (Mark 15:38-39)

II. Outline of the Book

A. The Period of Preparation. (Mark 1:1-13)

1. The ministry of John the Baptist is briefly related. (Mark 1:2-8)
2. Jesus is baptized. (Mark 1:9-11)
3. Jesus is tempted by Satan. (Mark 1:12-13)

B. Jesus' Galilean Ministry. (Mark 1:14- 8:30)

1. Jesus preaches in Galilee. (1:14-15)
2. He calls the first disciples. (1:16-20)
3. He teaches with great authority. (1:21-28)
4. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and many others. (1:29-34)
5. Jesus prays in a solitary place. (1:35-39)
6. He cleanses a leper. (1:40-45)
7. Jesus encounters his first controversy with the Pharisees and scribes. (2:1-3:6)
8. Jesus withdraws from the crowd and selects the Twelve. (3:7-19)
9. Jesus' family questions him. (3:20-35)
10. Jesus teaches parables about the kingdom. (4:1-34)
11. Various miracles are performed. (4:35 - 5:43)
12. He is rejected in his hometown of Nazareth. (6:1-6)
13. The Twelve are sent out. (6:7-13)
14. John the Baptist is killed. (6:14-29)
15. More miracles are performed. (6:30-56)
16. Another clash occurs with the Pharisees. (7:1-23)
17. Jesus heals a Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter and a deaf mute. (7:24-37)
18. Jesus feeds the 4000. (8:1-13)
19. He has another run-in with the Pharisees. (8:11-21)
20. Peter makes his confession of the Christ. (8:27-30)

C. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem. (Mark 8:31-10:52)

1. Jesus predicts his death. (8:31 -33)
2. He teaches about the cost of discipleship. (8: 34-9:1)
3. The transfiguration. (9:2-13)
4. Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit. (9:14-29)
5. Jesus again predicts his death. (9:30-32)
6. Jesus teaches on humility, exclusivism, and discipleship, divorce, and children. (9:32–10:16)
7. He encounters the rich young ruler. (10:17-31)
8. For the third time, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection. (10:32-34)
9. James and John request prominence in the kingdom. (10:35-45)
10. Blind Bartimaeus receives his sight. (10:46-52)

D. Jesus in Jerusalem. (Mark 11:1-13:37)

1. Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem. (11:1-14)
2. He cleanses the temple. (11:15-19)
3. He teaches a lesson using a withered fig tree. (11:20-26)
4. Jesus encounters a number of controversies with his enemies. (11:27-12:44)
5. The Olivet discourse is recorded. (13:1-37)

E. The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Servant. (Mark 14:1 -16:20)⁸

1. After relating the plot to kill Jesus, he is anointed at Bethany. (14:1-9)
2. Judas bargains to betray the Lord. (14:10-11)
3. The last supper is recorded. (14:12-31)
4. Jesus agonizes in Gethsemane. (14:32-42)

5. He is betrayed and arrested. (14:43-52)
6. Jesus is tried before Caiaphas. (14:53-65)
7. Peter denies knowing Christ. (14:66-72)
8. Pilate condemns Jesus to death. (15:1-15)
9. The crucifixion. (15:16-41)
10. Our Lord is buried. (15:42-47)
11. The following Sunday morning, Jesus is raised from the dead. (16:1-8)
12. Appearances are made before witnesses. (16:9-14)
13. Jesus gives the apostles the Great Commission. (16:15-18)
14. Jesus ascends to heaven. (16:19-20)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The question of Mark 16:9-20.

1. These verses are omitted from the oldest known Greek manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus).
2. Various translations omit, footnote, italicize, set apart, or otherwise denote a textual question here.
3. Frankly it is uncertain if the verses were the original end to the gospel or were added by a later scribe.
4. Either way, no real problem is posed.
 - a. This is a textual question, not a question of inspiration.
 - b. The contents of Mark 16:9-20 are found in other portions of scripture. (i.e., Matthew 28)

B. The role of John the Baptist.

1. More than any other gospel writer, Mark attaches great importance to John's ministry.
2. He begins the story of Jesus with John's work. (Mark 1:1)
3. Mark is intrigued by John's mission, message, and mannerisms.
 - a. His mission was to prepare people for the coming Messiah. (Mark 1:2-3)
 - b. His message was one of repentance. (Mark 1:4; cf. Matthew 3:2)
 - c. His mannerisms surely made people flock to see him. (Mark 1:5-6)
4. Mark shares with the reader the horrible, graphic details of John's death at the hands of Herod Antipas. (Mark 6:14-29)
 - a. Herod had taken Herodias (his niece and sister-in-law) as his wife.
 - b. John boldly rebukes his immorality.
 - c. Herodias, using her daughter Salome, cunningly brings about John's death.

C. The Suffering Servant motif (central theme or dominate idea).

1. The "servant of the Lord" theme is found in several places in the Old Testament. (e.g. Isaiah 42:1-4; 53:1-11; Zechariah 3:8)
2. Mark pictures a powerful individual, capable of awesome miracles, who voluntarily suffered to save lost humanity. (cf. Mark 8:31; 10:33-45)
3. This portrait would be appealing to the Roman mind.
 - a. The Son of Man is shown as a vigorous man of action.
 - b. His courage and willingness to die for others would attract their attention.

LUKE

Introduction: Luke is the favorite gospel of many people. In fact, it has been called "the most beautiful book ever written". In elegant and articulate style, Luke gives the reader a powerful and emotional picture of the Christ.

Name - The book is named for its author.

Author - The evidence strongly points to Luke, the Gentile physician.

1. Luke and Acts are very obviously companion volumes written by the same author.
 - a. Both are addressed to someone named Theophilus.
 - b. Both are similar in language and style, and the latter refers to the former. (cf. Acts 1:1-5)
2. The strongest evidence of Luke's authorship of both books is found in the "we" sections of Acts.
 - a. The author of Acts uses the pronouns "we", "us", and "our" in certain sections. (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21; 27:1-28:16)

- b. In these sections, the author is personally involved in the journeys of Paul.
 - c. Several scriptures indicate Luke as a close companion of Paul. (cf. Colossians 4:12-14; II Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24)
 - d. After analyzing the data, Luke is the only reasonable candidate for authorship.
3. The use of medical language in Greek points to Luke the physician as author.
 4. Early church historians (e.g. Irenaeus. Justin Martyr, etc.) agree that the author of the third gospel was Luke.

C. **Purpose** - The purpose of Luke is to present a well-documented, historically accurate, chronologically correct account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.⁹

I. Background of the book.

A. The man Luke.

1. Luke was a Gentile and the only non-Jewish writer of any New Testament material. (cf. Colossians 4:10-17)
2. He was a physician. (Colossians 4:14)
3. Tradition says that Luke was a native of Antioch.
 - a. Eusebius makes this assertion.
 - b. Some circumstantial evidence regarding Luke's Antiochian background is found in the sentence structure of Acts 11:28.
4. Luke was a fellow traveler with Paul.
 - a. Luke was with Paul during his two-year Roman imprisonment. (Philemon 24)
 - b. He was with Paul near the end of the apostle's life. (II Timothy 4:11)

B. The original recipient of the book - Theophilus.

1. Theophilus means "friend of God."
 - a. Some take this to be a general name for anyone who is a friend of God.
 - b. Others take it to refer to a particular individual.
 - c. The latter option is more viable.
2. In the prologue to Luke, the physician addresses "most excellent Theophilus."
 - a. This title may reflect some official status.
 - b. By the beginning of the book of Acts, Luke drops the "most excellent" address.
 - [1] Perhaps they simply have become better acquainted.
 - [2] Some have suggested that Theophilus may have been converted to Christianity between the writing of Luke and Acts.
 - [3] Others state they were originally one book.

C. Date of the writing.

1. The book of Acts was written in AD 62.
2. Since Luke was written prior to that time, a date of about AD 60 is projected.

II. The Main Message of the book.

A. The main message of Luke is that Jesus of Nazareth is the King of the Jews.

1. Matthew presents Jesus as the King of the Jews.
2. Mark presents him as the Suffering Servant of God.
3. Luke portrays Jesus as the Lamb of God who took away our sins.

B. Luke is oriented to the Greek mind and is designed to show Christ as the savior of all men.

III. Outline of the book.

A. The Prologue. (Luke 1:1-4)

B. Birth and Infancy Stories. (Luke 1:5 - 2:52)

1. Zechariah and Elizabeth receive an angelic announcement that she will bear a child who will be the forerunner of the Messiah. (1:5-25)
2. Mary receives news that she will give birth to the Christ. (1:26-38)
3. Mary visits Elizabeth. (1:39-56)
4. The account of John's birth is given. (1:57-80)

5. The glorious birth of Jesus is described. (2:1-20)
 6. Later the child is circumcised (2:21) and presented at the temple. (2:22-39)
 7. During his twelfth year, Jesus stays behind at the temple. (2:40-50)
 8. The remainder of his growth to manhood is summarized in two verses. (2:51-52)
- C. Preparation for Ministry. (Luke 3:1 - 4:13)
1. John prepares the way. (3:1-20)
 2. Jesus is baptized by John. (3:21-22)
 3. Luke gives Jesus' genealogy on Mary's side. (3:23-28)
 4. Jesus is tempted by Satan. (4:1-13)
- D. The Galilean Ministry. (Luke 4:14-9:50)
1. Many events are recorded that also appear in Matthew and/or Mark with additions of:
 - a. The miraculous catch of fish. (5:1-11)
 - b. The raising of the widow's son at Nain. (7:11-17)
 - c. The story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet at Simon's house. (7:36-50)
 2. Unique among Jesus' teachings during this period was the parable of the two debtors. (7:41)
- E. On the Way to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51 -19:27)
1. During this period, Jesus particularly emphasizes concern for the Samaritans.
 - a. He demonstrates patience when they reject Him. (9:51-56)
 - b. Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. (10:25-42)
 - c. When Jesus cleansed ten lepers, the only one who returned to thank Him was a Samaritan. (17:11-19)
 2. Other events unique to Luke's record during this period include:
 - a. The healing of a crippled woman. (13:10-17)
 - b. The healing of a man with dropsy. (14:1-4)
 - c. Jesus' meal with Zacchaeus. (19:1-10)
 3. Parables or teachings unique to Luke during this period include:
 - a. The Good Samaritan. (10:25-42)
 - b. The friend at midnight. (11:5-10)
 - c. The rich fool. (12:13-21)
 - d. The watching servants. (12:35-48)
 - e. The barren fig tree. (13:6-9)
 - f. The parable of the great banquet. (14:15-24)
 - g. The unfinished tower or the unwaged war. (14:28-33)
 - h. The "lost" parables-sheep, coin, son. (15:1-32)
 - i. The shrewd manager. (16:1-15)
 - j. The rich man and Lazarus. (16:19-31)
 - k. The unprofitable servants. (17:7-10)
 - l. The persistent widow. (18:1-8)
 - m. The Pharisee and the publican. (18:9-14)
 - n. The ten minas. (19:11-27)
- F. The Jerusalem Ministry. (Luke 19:28 - 24:53)
1. After a triumphal entry (19:28-44), Jesus encounters increased conflict with the Pharisees, scribes, and chief priests. (19:45 - 21:38)
 2. Judas agrees to betray Jesus. (22:1-6)
 3. Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. (22:7-20)
 4. After his prayer in Gethsemane (22:39-46), Jesus is arrested. (22:47-53)
 5. Peter denies Jesus three times. (22:54-62)
 6. Jesus is tried by both the Jews (22:63-71) and the Romans. (23:1-25)
 7. Delivered up to death (23:26-32), Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem. (23:33-49)
 8. He is buried. (23:50-56)

9. Finally, Luke closes with the glorious account of Jesus' resurrection (24:1-49) and ascension. (24:50-53)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. Luke's emphasis on people.

1. Luke showed Jesus' particular interest in those who would have been considered "socially inferior."
 - a. Samaritans. (Luke 10:25-42; 17:11)
 - b. Women. (Luke 1; 7:11-15; 7:36-48; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; 13:10-17; 21:1-4; 23:28-31)
 - c. The poor. (Luke 6:20; 12:15; 16:19-31)
2. Luke demonstrates Jesus' passion and compassion for the individual. (Luke 5:17-26; 7:1-10; 7:36-50; 8:26-39, 40-56; 15:1-32, etc.)

B. Luke's emphasis on prayer in the life of Jesus.

1. Luke is the only one to mention Jesus' praying at:
 - a. His baptism. (3:21)
 - b. Before selecting His twelve apostles. (6:12)
 - c. The event of Peter's confession of Him as the Christ. (9:18)
 - d. The transfiguration scene. (9:29)
2. Other references are made to Jesus' prayers. (5:15-16; 10:17-21:11:1, etc.)
3. Special parables about prayer are found only in Luke's gospel.
 - a. The parable of the unjust judge. (18:1-8)
 - b. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican. (18:9-14)
4. Luke shares with the reader the fervor and intensity of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. (22:39-46)

C. Luke's emphasis on the purpose of the life of Jesus.

1. Luke's gospel is built along the theme of Jesus on the way to Jerusalem.
 - a. Unlike the other gospels, Luke does not have Jesus in Jerusalem until the end of his life.
 - b. It seems Luke makes Jerusalem the climax of Jesus' life.
2. The turning point of Luke's gospel is "**As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.**" (Luke 9:51)

D. Luke's emphasis on the parables.

1. A unique section of parables demonstrates Luke's fascination with this teaching method. (Luke 9:51 -18:14)
 - a. Twenty-two parables are found in Luke.
 - b. Of these, seventeen are unique to Luke's gospel.
2. A parable is a story or saying which uses a familiar situation to illustrate a spiritual truth or truths.
3. Each parable should be studied for its main point, not for chasing axioms.
4. Parables were widely used prior to Jesus, but He brought this teaching form to perfection.

JOHN

Introduction: The fourth gospel is the most unique. Written several years after the others, John gives us insights into the life of Jesus that the others omitted. Over 90% of John's material is not found in the synoptics, revealing that John consciously avoided repetition of their material. Simple in vocabulary and style, John is profound in the depth of issues it raises.¹⁰

Name - The book is named for its author

Author – The author is the Apostle John

1. Like the other gospels, John does not autograph his work.
2. The author identifies himself as an eyewitness of many events in the life of Jesus. (cf. John 1:14; 6:5, 7; 13:21-22; 19:35, etc.)
3. The author describes himself as the "one whom Jesus Loved."
(John 21:20, and 24)
4. Further, the author was obviously a Palestinian Jew who was well familiar with Jewish customs, Jewish history, and Palestinian geography.

Purpose

1. John is the only gospel to clearly state its purpose.
2. "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

I. Background of the book.

A. The man, John.

1. Most likely John was a disciple of John the Baptist before he began to follow Christ. (John 1:40)
2. He and his brother James, and their father, were in a fishing business with Peter and Andrew. (Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:10)
3. After following the Lord for over a year, he was selected along with eleven others to have a special relationship with Jesus as His apostles. (Luke 6:12-6)
4. He and his brother were called Sons of Thunder by Jesus. (Mark 3:17; cf. Luke 9:49-56)
5. John was a member of the "inner circle" and was allowed to witness the events of:
 - a. The Transfiguration. (Luke 9:28)
 - b. The raising of Jairus' daughter. (Luke 8:51)
 - c. The private moments in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Mark 14:33)
6. John was the only apostle to actually witness the crucifixion (John 19:26) and was entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother. (John 19:25-27)
7. He later became one of the pillars of the early church in Jerusalem. (Galatians 2:9-10)
8. As an old man, John was exiled to the isle of Patmos by the Roman government because of his testimony for Christ. (Revelation 1:9) Here he wrote the Revelation.
9. Tradition says that John returned to Ephesus about AD 96 and died there during Emperor Trojan's reign. (AD 98-117)

B. Date and Place of the Writing.

1. The book was composed during John's mature years -likely AD 95.
2. Most scholars believe it was written in Ephesus.
3. The oldest fragment of a New Testament book in our possession is a scrap of papyrus with five verses from John 18.
 - a. Identified as P⁵², it is housed in Manchester, England.
 - b. That papyrus piece dates back to AD 125-150, providing evidence that the gospel was being circulated shortly after its production.

II. The Main Message of the book.

A. We stated earlier that John clearly states the purpose of the book of John. (John 21:30)

- B. With that purpose, the main message of the book is that Jesus brings you life.
1. The book begins with the affirmation that inherent in Jesus is this new life. (John 1:14)
 2. The message rings clearly throughout the book. (John 3:3-16; 5:26; 11:25 and 14:6)

III Outline of the Book

A. The prologue. (John 1:1-18)

B. Considerations of the Claims of Jesus. (John 1:19- 4:54)

1. The testimony of John the Baptist is recorded. (1:19-28)
2. John the Baptist encounters Jesus. (1:29-34)
3. Jesus calls His first disciples. (1:35-51)
4. Jesus attends the wedding feast at Cana and turns water into wine. (2:1-11)
5. Jesus attends the Passover in Jerusalem and cleanses the temple. (2:12-25)
6. Nicodemus visits Jesus. (3:1-21)
7. Further testimony from John the Baptist is given. (3:22-36)
8. Jesus converses with a Samaritan woman. (4:1-26)
9. Many Samaritans believe in Jesus. (4:27-42)
10. Jesus heals the Nobleman's son. (4:43-54)

C. Controversy and conflict with the Jews. (John 5:1 -11:53)

1. There is opposition to Jesus healing a lame man in Jerusalem. (5:1-47)
2. Jesus feeds the multitude. (6:1-15)
3. He walks on the Sea of Galilee. (6:16-21)
4. Jesus' claims turn back much of the multitude. (6:22-71)
5. Jesus' brothers do not believe in Him. (7:1-9)
6. The Lord goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles. (7:10-13)
7. Jesus teaches in the Temple. (7:14-44)
8. The Jews seek to trick Jesus in a case involving a woman caught in adultery. (8:1-11)
9. Jesus addresses the Pharisees. (8:12-30)
10. Jesus addresses believing Jews. (8:31-50)
11. Jesus heals the man born blind. (8:12-30)
12. Jesus offers a discourse on the Good Shepherd. (10:1-18)
13. Jesus offers a discourse in the Portico of Solomon. (10:12-39)
14. Many believe n Him. (10:40-42)
15. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. (11:1-44)
16. Some Jews begin to plot the death of Jesus. (11:45-53)

D. Crises Over the Claims of Jesus. (John 11:54-12:36)

1. The chief priests order Jesus seized. (11:54-57)
2. Jesus comes to the home of Lazarus. (12:1-11)
3. Jesus enters Jerusalem to the praise of the multitude. (12:12-19)
4. The Hour has come. (12:20-36)

E. The Conference with the Disciples. (John 12:37 -17:26)

1. Unbelief is prophesied and fulfilled. (12:37-50)
2. Jesus eats the Last Supper with the apostles. (13:1 -14:31)
3. Jesus is the true vine. (15:1-8)
4. Jesus commands and demonstrates love. (15:9-27)
5. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit. (16:1-16)
6. Jesus speaks plainly of His death. (16:17-33)
7. Jesus offers a prayer for Himself, the apostles, and all believers. (17:1-26)

F. The Arrest, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. (John 18:1-20:31)

1. Jesus is seized in the Garden. (18:1-11)
2. Jesus is taken before the high priest. (18:12-14)

3. Peter denies the Christ. (18:15-18)
4. Jesus is led to the Praetorium of Pilate. (18:28-40)
5. Pilate seeks to release Jesus. (19:1-12)
6. Pilate condemns Jesus to death. (19:13-16)
7. Jesus is crucified at Golgotha. (19:17-37)
8. Jesus is buried by Joseph and Nicodemus. (19:38-42)
9. The tomb is found empty. (20:1-10)
10. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. (20:11-18)
11. He appears to the disciples. (20:19-23)
12. He appears to them again about a week later. (20:24-29)
13. John tells us the purpose of signs. (20:30-31)

G. Epilogue.

1. Jesus manifests Himself to the disciples in Galilee. (21:1-25)
2. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" (21:1-14)
3. Conclusion. (21:15-16)

IV. Key Themes of the Book

A. The Word. (Greek *logos*):

1. In his prologue, John uses a motif to identify Jesus that would register with Jew and Greek alike.
 - a. To the Jew the *logos* was the creative power of God (Genesis 1:3), gave life (Isaiah 55:13), and accomplished the divine purpose in all things. (Isaiah 55:11)
 - b. To the Greek, the *logos* supplied the universe with order and harmony. (e.g. Heraclitus)
2. John tells us the *logos* has come in the flesh. (John 1:14)
 - a. To the Jew, this meant Jesus was the ultimate power and life.
 - b. To the Greek, it signified that Jesus was the source of the rational, powerful and transcendent meaning of life.
3. John begins his gospel with an affirmation that Jesus is divine - the rational, all-powerful, creative, cohesive force of the universe.

B. The "signs" of Jesus.

1. The New Testament uses various terms to refer to miracles.
 - a. Miracle – *dunamis*: a mighty work/a great exhibition of power. (cf. Acts 19:11)
 - b. Work - *ergon*: a deed making good one's word. (cf. John 14:11)
 - c. Wonder - *teras*: a marvel/something that amazes, startles or mystifies. (cf. Acts 2:22)
 - d. Sign - *sēmeion* an attestation of genuineness/an affirming act. (cf. John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, etc.)
2. John uses the last of these four terms intentionally.
 - a. John saw the miracles of Jesus not just as awesome acts that defied natural law or marvels to stun an audience.
 - b. John presents the miracles of Jesus as signs -attestations of the genuineness of His claims to be the Messiah and the Son of God. (John 5:36; 7:31)
3. The miracles of Jesus are essential to who He was and what He accomplished.
 - a. Throughout the years many have sought to accept a historical Jesus while rejecting the reality of His miracles.
 - b. The rejection of miracles is basically a philosophical problem.
 - c. If an individual believes in an omnipotent, omniscient God, the reality of miracles proves His existence and bring about His purposes.

C. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and the new birth.

1. Nicodemus, a Jewish leader, came to Jesus by night.
2. He was curious about this man's teaching.
3. Jesus told him, "except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
 - a. The "born of water" is surely a reference to the birth of a spiritual life by baptism.¹¹
 - b. The actual power of rebirth and regeneration comes from the Holy Spirit of God. (cf. Titus 3:5; Romans 8:11)
4. The power and effectiveness of baptism is not in its administration (I Corinthians 1:17) or the water (I Peter 3:21). Its effectiveness is in the forgiving power of God (Acts 2:38), the trust in Jesus and obedient faith of the respondent. (I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-5)

ACTS

Introduction: The book of Acts is the only historical record of the birth and early days following Christ's establishing His church.¹² Acts, then, is a book of history. Without this historical record, little would be known about the expansion of the church. The author's primary purpose was to give a detailed account of how men and women were converted to Christ and how churches were planted throughout the Roman world.

Name - From the time of the Septuagint, this book has been called the Acts of the Apostles.

Author - Internal and external evidence point to Luke as the Spirit-inspired author of Acts.

1. Internal evidence is found largely in the "we" sections of the book. (Acts 16:10-17; 20:6-21:18; 27:1-28:16)-see notes on Luke.
 - a. In compiling a list of Paul's companions from the period of time covered by the "we" sections, a total of seventeen individuals is found.
 - b. Through a process of elimination, the list is reduced to Luke.
2. It is the unanimous testimony of church tradition that Luke authored the book of Acts. (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenaeus, etc.)

Purpose - At least three purposes seem to clearly emerge for the composition of Acts.

1. The first purpose was to complete what Luke began in his gospel.
 - a. Luke and Acts are two parts of a whole.
 - b. In volume I (Luke), Luke related the words and works of Christ. In volume II (Acts) he told the story of the words and works of Christ that were done through His apostles.
2. A second purpose in writing Acts was to give a written defense of Christianity.
3. A third purpose in the writing of Acts was to provide stability to the new faith.

I. Background of the Book

A. When was Acts written?

1. The book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul's imprisonment in Rome.
2. The most probable explanation for leaving the reader in suspense is that the outcome of Paul's appeal had not yet been decided when the book was being written.
3. We know that Paul and his associates arrived in Rome in AD 60 and stayed there two full years before going to trial. (Acts 28:30)
4. Therefore Acts must have been written early in AD 62.
5. Note: Acts makes no mention of the persecution Nero would bring upon the Christians in AD 64.

B. Where was Acts written? – Since Luke was with Paul in Rome at the time, it is reasonable that Rome was the place of writing.

II. Main Message of the book.

A. The main message of the book is found in Acts 1:8 “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”¹³

B. Luke traces the pattern of the spread of the gospel:

1. The gospel is preached in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:1 - 8:3)
2. The gospel is taken to Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:4-11:18)
3. The gospel spreads to the uttermost parts of the world. (Acts 11:19 -28:31)

III. Outline of the book.

A. The Early Spread of the Church in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:1- 7:60)

1. Jesus ascends to heaven. (1:1-11)
2. Matthias is chosen to replace Judas. (1:12-26)
3. The Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles on Pentecost. (1-13)
4. Peter preaches that the Jesus they crucified God has made Lord and Christ. (2:14-36)¹⁴

5. The church begins. (2:37-47)
 6. Persecution begins. (3:1-4:31)
 7. The believers share generously with each other. (4:32-37)
 8. Ananias and Sapphira are slain for lying to God. (:1-11)
 9. A second wave of persecution erupts. (5:12-42)
 10. Provision is made for neglected Grecian widows. (6:1-7)
 11. Stephen is arrested (Acts 6:8-15), preaches (7:1 -53), and is stoned. (7:54-60)
- B. The Church Spreads to Samaria. (Acts 8:1 -9:31)
1. With increased persecution, the church scatters throughout Judea and Samaria. (8:1-4)
 2. Philip preaches in Samaria. (8:5-8)
 3. Simon the sorcerer is "converted" and seeks miraculous power. (8:9-25)
 4. Philip converts an Ethiopian. (8:26-40)
 5. The account of Saul's conversion is given. (9:1-31)
- C. The Church Spreads to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. (Acts 9:32-12:25)
1. Peter raises Dorcas from the dead. (9:32-43)
 2. God uses Peter to take the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius. (10:1-48)
 3. Peter explains his actions to Jewish Christians in Judea. (11:1-18)
 4. A Gentile church starts in Antioch. (11:19-30)
 5. Peter is imprisoned by Herod and released by God. (12:1-19)
 6. Herod dies. (12:20-25)
- D. The Extension of the Church from Antioch to Galatia. (13:1-5:35)
1. Paul takes his first missionary journey. (13:1-14:28)
 2. A council is held in Jerusalem to determine behavior for Gentile Christians. (15:1-35)
- E. The Extension of the Church to Macedonia. (Acts 15:36-21:16)
1. Paul's second missionary journey is recorded. (15:36-18:22)
 2. Paul's third missionary journey is recorded. (18:23-21:16)
- F. The Years of Paul's Imprisonment. (Acts 21:17-28:31)
1. In Jerusalem. (21:17-23:35)
 2. In Caesarea. (24:1-26:32)
 3. The voyage to Rome. (27:1-28:15)
 4. In Rome. (28:16-31)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

- A. The Growth of the Early Church.
1. In the earliest days, the preaching of the gospel stayed in Jerusalem.
 2. The persecution of Christians that followed Stephen's stoning led to the evangelizing of the larger region of Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:1ff)
 - a. Philip preached in Samaria. (Acts 8:4-25)
 - b. He converted an Ethiopian. (Acts 8:26-39)
 - c. Philip preached in the Gentile city of Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)
 3. After about a decade, the first record of Gentile conversion is detailed in Peter's encounter with Cornelius. (Acts 10)
 - a. Not surprisingly, objections are raised. (Acts 11:1-3)
 - b. However, the right of Gentiles to hear the gospel was affirmed. (Acts 11:4-8)
 4. At about the time Cornelius was converted (ca. A.D. 40) the gospel came to Antioch. (Acts 11:19-30)
- B. The man Paul.
1. The influence of Judaism on Paul.
 - a. Paul was a Hebrew patriot. (cf. Romans 3:1; 9:1-3)
 - b. He was a "Pharisee of Pharisees". (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5)
 - c. Paul was therefore a great student of the Old Testament. (22:3)
 2. The influence of Hellenism on Paul.

- a. Paul was from Tarsus, the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia.
 - [1] Tarsus was founded as a Greek city-state in 171 BC by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - [2] Evidence points to the fact that Jews settled in Tarsus from the founding of the city and were given rights as citizens. (e.g. Acts 21:39)
 - [3] Tarsus was also a seat of learning, having a university there.
 - b. As a Jew in the Hellenistic world, Paul must have been well acquainted with the mythological gods and the mystery religions.
3. Paul's personal life.
- a. Saul was his Hebrew name; Paul was his Latin name.
 - b. Paul was not married. (cf. I Corinthians 7:8)
 - [1] He may have never married.
 - [2] Some scholars have speculated that his wife died or perhaps left him when he became a believer in Christ.
 - c. God used Paul's (Saul's) zealous persecution of the church to spur its growth. (Acts 8:1-4)
 - d. His conversion (cf. Acts 9:22-26) is one of the great apologetics (defense) of the Christian faith.

C. The Central Personalities of Acts - Peter and Paul.

- 1. Luke divides the material in the book proportionately around the two key leaders of the early church.
 - a. Peter, apostle of the circumcision, is the principal figure of the first 12 chapters.
 - b. Paul, apostle to the un-circumcision, is the focal point of the remainder.
- 2. Luke not only gives the men equal space, but notes how their miraculous acts parallel:
 - a. The healing of lame men. (Acts 3:22ff; 14:8ff)
 - b. Miracles of harm. (Acts 5:1ff; 13:6ff)
 - c. Healings through secondary means. (Acts 5:15; 19:12)
 - d. Casting out demons. (Acts 5:16; 16:18)
 - e. Confronting sorcerers. (Acts 8:18ff; 13:6ff)
 - f. Raising the dead. (Acts 9:36ff; 20:9ff)

D. The missionary tours of Paul.

- 1. The church at Antioch was apparently founded by fugitives from Saul's persecution in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:19)
 - a. Gentiles became Christians here. (Acts 11:19-21)
 - b. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to look into this situation. (Acts 11:22-24)
- 2. Ironically, Barnabas sought Saul's help in building the church at Antioch. (Acts 11:25)
 - a. Barnabas had already vouched for Paul's integrity of conversion. (Acts 9:26-27)
 - b. Now he saw a place for Saul's unique background and education.
- 3. As the church there grew, three great missionary tours were sponsored from Antioch.
 - a. The first tour (Acts 12:25 -14:28) occurred between AD 46-47 and was followed by a conference in Jerusalem which debated the issue of Gentile acceptance into the church. (Acts 15:1-35)
 - b. The second missionary journey began ca. AD 48 and extended into late 51 or early 52. (Acts 15:36 -18:22) The gospel was carried to Europe.
 - c. The third tour began in AD 52 and ended with Paul's arrest in Jerusalem in AD 57. (Acts 18:23 - 21:16) During this time, Paul stayed in Ephesus 2 to 3 years.
- 4. After these journeys, Acts tells us Paul spent time as a prisoner in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome.
- 5. Tradition relates a fourth missionary journey to the West (possibly to Spain) following his release from his first confinement in Rome.

ROMANS

Introduction: Paul's letter to the Romans stands among the most important pieces of literature in the history of Western man. Though Paul would probably be surprised to hear such a statement, he never would have questioned the power of the message which the letter contains. In it, the apostle gives the most compelling discourse in Scripture on the saving power of the gospel.

Author - Paul, the apostle. (Romans 1:1)

Place of Writing - Corinth; as evident from the greetings of Gaius, who lived at Corinth (Romans 16:23; I Corinthians

1:14), and of Erastus, who had settled down there (Romans 16:23; II Timothy 4:20). Also, Phoebe, who apparently accompanied Paul (Romans 16:1-2), was from the church at Cenchrea, a "suburb" of Corinth.

Time of Writing - 57-58 AD while on his third journey (Acts 20:13), just prior to his arrival to Jerusalem with the collection for the needy Christians there. (Romans 15:25-26; Acts 20:16; 24:17)

The Epistles (Letters) as a Literary Form

1. The epistles of the New Testament are the 21 books from Romans through Jude. The apostle Paul is identified as the writer of 13 of them (Romans through Philemon).
2. Letters were a common literary form in the time of Paul. The letter form was used for purposes larger than mere communication.
 - a. Paul's letters were designed to be read aloud in churches. (I Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16) It is clear that the epistles were intended to benefit more than the primary recipients.
 - b. It is in the epistles that the order, position, privileges, and duties of the church are most fully given. The church as the body of Christ, the "mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God (Ephesians 3:9) is revealed.
3. A convenient way to group Paul's epistles is as follows:
 - a. Letters to churches written during the missionary tours: I & II Thessalonians, Galatians, I & II Corinthians, and Romans.
 - b. Letters written while a prisoner at Rome (AD 60-62): Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
 - c. Letters following the first Roman imprisonment: I & II Timothy and Titus.

I. Background of the Book of Romans.

A. Rome

1. The beginnings of the city of Rome are lost in legend. The story was that it had been named after its founder, Romulus, whose ancestors had escaped from the Greek destruction of Troy. The date was said to be 753 BC. That was the year from which the later Romans counted the beginning of their history.
2. For centuries Rome was a small and struggling city-state. After times of strife, poverty and war, Rome slowly won ground, and by 275 BC, controlled all of Italy.
3. By the first century AD Rome was the capital city of the empire, and the largest and most important city of the world, with a population somewhere between two and four million souls.
 - a. There were more slaves than free people in Rome at this time. The stark contrast of wealth and poverty could not have been missed by a visitor.
 - b. The hedonistic life (personal pleasure the chief goal in life) of Rome during this period is well known.
 - c. Rome was a city of bewildering religious diversity, encompassing all manner of eastern mysticism, astrology, magic, and Greek mythology. When the Romans conquered the Greeks, they took over all their gods and gave them Roman names (Zeus became the Roman god Jupiter, etc.).
 - d. This smorgasbord of "religious" options did not satisfy people. It offered no real answers to the problems of good and evil, life and death. Life was uncertain. These gods had no power to save their cities from sudden disaster. People looked for purpose in life. Why should they live good lives if the gods could not give them justice?
 - e. A sizable Jewish colony was there. Rome had often protected the Jews in the past. Paul was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, and he naturally looked to Rome for justice and protection. Rome had provided the peace and freedom to travel and spread the gospel. When Paul was treated unjustly, he used his right as a Roman to appeal to the Emperor. (Paul may not then have known what an evil man Nero was becoming.)

B. The church at Rome.

1. Nothing is revealed in the New Testament as to the start of the church at Rome.
 - a. It is possible that visitors to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were among the 3000 saved (Acts 2:10) and later took the gospel with them back home.
 - b. Or it could be that among those dispersed following Stephen's death were some that went to Rome and preached the gospel there. (Acts 8:1-4)
2. The first we read of Christians at Rome is possibly that of Aquila and Priscilla along with all the Jews who were expelled from Rome by Claudius and were found by Paul at Corinth during his second journey. (Acts 18:1-2) After traveling with Paul to Ephesus and working with the church there (Acts 18:18-19, 24-26; I Corinthians 16:19), we find them back at Rome and hosting a church in their house. (Romans 16:3-5)
3. From the greetings given by Paul in chapter sixteen, it appears that there were Christians in Rome meeting in various homes (Romans 16:5, 14-15). The names of individuals suggest that the Christians were primarily Gentiles, with a

smaller number of Jews.

4. The reputation of the Christians in Rome was widespread; both their faith (Romans 1:8) and obedience (Romans 16:19) were well known. For this reason Paul had long wanted to see them (Romans 15:23), with the goal of sharing in their mutual edification (Romans 1:11-12) and to be assisted on his way to Spain. (Romans 15:22-24)

C. Purpose of the Letter.

1. The spreading cancer of the "Judaizing teachers" which had disrupted churches in Antioch, Corinth and Galatia was likely to make its way to Rome.
2. To prevent this, and to assure that his visit to Rome would be a favorable one (Romans 15:30-33), Paul writes this letter **TO SET STRAIGHT THE DESIGN AND NATURE OF THE GOSPEL.**
3. In doing so, he demonstrates how the gospel of Christ fulfills what is lacking in both heathenism and Judaism, thereby effectively replacing them as religious systems. Such a letter would arm the church at Rome against those who would pervert the gospel or suggest that it was inadequate by itself.
4. The letter will always serve as a nourishing exposition of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

II. The Main Message of the Letter - Romans 1:16-17

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

III. Outline of the Letter.

A. Introduction (1:1-17)

1. Address and salutation. (1:1-7)
2. Thanksgiving. (1:8-15)
3. Theme. (1:16-17)

B. Man under the wrath of God. (1:18- 3:20)

1. The unrighteous Man - Gentile. (1:18-32)
 - a. Knowledge of God possible. (1:18-20)
 - b. God not acknowledged. (1:21-32)
2. The self-righteous man - Jew. (2:1-3:20)
 - a. Self-righteous critics. (2:1-29)
 - b. Law reveals man's estrangement. (3:1-20)

C. Righteousness as a gift to sinners. (3:21 5:11)

1. For all who believe in Jesus Christ. (3:21-26)
2. Apart from the law. (3:27-31)
3. Fulfillment of the covenant. (4:1-25)
4. Peace of Reconciliation. (5:1-11)

D. Creation of a new humanity. (5:12-8:17)

1. Christ as the new Adam. (5:12-21)
2. Baptism as death and resurrection. (6:1-14)
3. The new life is freedom. (6:15-8:17)
 - a. Freedom from "Freedom." (6:15-23)
 - b. Freedom from Law. (7:1-12)
 - c. Freedom from Anxiety. (7:13-25)
 - d. Freedom in the Spirit. (8:1-17)

E. Freedom dependent on God's sovereign love. (8:18-11:36)

1. God's love is sovereign over the creation. (8:18-39)
2. God's love is sovereign over history. (9:1-11:36)
 - a. Paul's grief concerning Israel's disbelief. (9:1-5)
 - b. Affirmation of the power of God's word. (9:6-26)
 - c. Righteous remnant doctrine. (9:27-11:10)
 - d. Universal hope. (11:11-36)

F. Freedom acts in love. (12:1-15:13)

1. Toward God. (12:1-2)
2. Toward brethren. (12:3-13)
3. Toward persecutors. (12:14-21)
4. Toward authorities. (13:1-7)
5. Toward the law. (13:8-14)
6. Toward the weak. (14:1 -15:13)

G. Personal notes. (15:14-16:27)

1. Proposed itinerary. (15:14-33)
2. Commendation of Phoebe. (16:1-27)

IV. Key Themes in the Letter.

A. All have sinned and fall short.

1. Jews and Gentiles alike are under condemnation because of sin. (1:18f)
 - a. Gentile pagan moralizers were no better than other pagans. (2:1-11)
 - b. When considering our spiritual condition, we must look to God who is holy, rather than seek the pseudo-security which comes by comparing ourselves to other sinners. (2:1-4); 3:23)
2. Paul himself struggled with his "sinful nature" and knew that apart from Christ, he had no hope of righteousness or eternal life. (7:15-25; see also Ephesians 2:1-10)
3. Law cannot save us, but it does make us aware of our sinful state. (3:20)

B. Justification by faith.

1. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known." (3:21)
2. This wonderful doctrine is summarized in Romans 3:23-26.
 - a. **Sin** is the problem. (v. 23)
 - b. **Christ** is the solution. (v. 24)
 - c. **Faith** is the means to salvation. (vs. 25-26)
3. Salvation cannot be gained by doing good works. (4:1-25) It is the work of Christ giving Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross which secures our salvation. (4:24-25)
4. But grace is not a license to sin! True faith is a living and active faith which involves the kind of surrender to God by dying to sin, being buried in water and being resurrected In Christ symbolized in baptism. (6:1-23)

C. Life in the Spirit.

1. Not only has God freed us from the guilt and condemnation our past sins have generated, He has made it possible for the new life in Christ to be lived in victory over past weaknesses and temptations. (5:1-11)
2. The presence and power of the indwelling Spirit make this a reality. (8:1-17, 26-27 also see I John 4:4) At baptism, God's Spirit is given to quicken (make alive) and empower us for a new life (6:5-11). (See also Acts 2:38 and I Corinthians 6:19-20)
3. We now can have full confidence that our God will deliver us from sufferings. (8:18-39)
4. We are to dedicate our lives to God - this pleases our great God who first had mercy on us. (12:1-2)

D. The community of faith.

1. We are to serve our fellow Christians, the church, with our spiritual gifts. (12:3-8)
2. We are to love one another (12:9-16), and those outside of God's family. (12:17-21)
3. We are to model good citizenship. (13:1-14)
4. We are to live in unity with one another. (14:1 -15:7)
 - a. True *unity* does not depend upon *conformity* in the body of Christ. Regarding debatable matters, there must be tolerance and forbearance. (14:1-8)
 - b. We are to "make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (14:19)

I CORINTHIANS

Introduction: Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth is the most diversified of all of Paul's letters which we

have. Someone has said that Paul's letters enable us to remove the roof from the meeting-places of the early Christians and look inside. No other letter which we have from Paul does this more or better than First Corinthians.

Author: Paul, the apostle. (1:1; 16:21)

Place of Writing: Ephesus, at the close of Paul's three years residence there. (Acts 20:31; I Corinthians 16:5-8)

Time of Writing: About 56 AD shortly before the Jewish feast of Pentecost. (16:8)

I. Background information.

A. The City of Corinth

1. Corinth was situated on the Isthmus of Greece (Achaia in the Bible) between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea, above the Mediterranean Sea. About 50 miles to the east was the city of Athens.
2. The Corinth of Paul's day was relatively new. The old Corinth (which was famous and powerful in the days of the Peloponnesian War) was burned in 146 BC by the Romans. Because it was a city devoted to the gods, a hundred years were required to pass before the city could be rebuilt. In 46 BC, Julius Caesar rebuilt the city and named it Julia Corinthus. It soon became a very important commercial center.
3. With a population of 400,000 and being a prominent center of commerce in the Mediterranean world, it was a place for all sorts of vice. An example of its immorality was found in the temple of Venus (Aphrodite) which hosted 1,000 priestesses dedicated to prostitution in the name of religion.
4. The city's close proximity to the city of Athens probably added the problem of intellectualism.
5. As noted in the epistle, such an environment had its effect upon the church. It is amazing that a church existed at all in such a city!
6. Corinth had great potential for worldwide missions. Even so, when Paul entered Corinth, he entered "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." (I Corinthians 2:3)

B. The Church at Corinth

1. Paul established this church during his second missionary journey. This is recorded by Luke in Acts 18:1-18.
2. We learn from reading the epistle that the church was adversely affected by the corrupt environment found in the city.
 - a. Pride caused division in the church and disruption in the assembly. (1:4-11)
 - b. Immorality and immodesty found its way into the church, which gave it a bad reputation. (5)
 - c. The brethren were taking their personal problems with each other before the heathen courts instead of working them out among themselves. (6)
3. The church was beset with other problems and questions that needed to be answered.
 - a. Questions about marriage. (7)
 - b. Questions about meats sacrificed to idols. (8-10)
 - c. Questions about women praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. (11)
 - d. Questions about the use of spiritual gifts. (12-14)
 - e. Questions about the resurrection from the dead. (15)
 - f. Questions about the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. (16)

C. Purpose of the Letter

1. The bad news concerning the problems at Corinth had reached Paul in Ephesus. It seems that this news came from at least two sources:
 - a. The household of Chloe. (1:11)
 - b. A letter sent to Paul. (7:1; 16:17)
2. Therefore, in answer to these reports, Paul writes the letter
 - a. To correct sinful practices.
 - b. To refute false doctrine,
 - c. To call the church back together in a spirit of unity.

II. The Main Message of the Letter:

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1:10)

III. Outline of the Letter

A. Introduction: Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1-9)

B. Letter Body (1:10—16:4)

1. Paul responds to oral reports about the Corinthian church. (1:10—6:20)
 - a. Divisions in the church. (1:10—4:12)
 - [1] The problem: rival factions. (1:10-17)
 - [2] The cross as the necessary center of the gospel. (1:18—2:5)
 - [3] Christian wisdom as the necessary growth. (2:6—3:23)
 - i. Spiritual people vs. natural people. (2:6-16)
 - ii. Spiritual Christians vs. Carnal Christians. (3:1-23)
 - [4] The right attitude toward the apostles. (4:1-21)
 - b. A case of incest. (5:1-13)
 - c. Lawsuits between believers. (6:1-11)
 - d. The seriousness of sexual immorality in general. (6:12-20)
2. Paul responds to the letter from the Corinthians. (7:1-16:4)
 - a. Concerning marriage (7:1-40)
 - [1] To those currently or previously married. (7:1-16)
 - [2] Analogies with circumcision and slavery. (7:17-24)
 - [3] To those never married or contemplating marriage. (7:25-40)
 - b. Concerning food sacrificed to idols. (8:1—11:1)
 - [1] Introduction to the problem and the solution: Tempering knowledge with love. (8:1-13)
 - [2] A second application: Money for ministry. (9:1-18)
 - [3] The underlying motive: Saving as many as possible. (9:19-27)
 - [4] Examples of the danger of license: The idolatry of Israel and idol feasts in Corinth. (10:1-22)
 - [5] Summary: Balancing freedom and restraint. (10:23-11:1)
 - c. Concerning worship. (11:2—14:40)
 - [1] Head-coverings. (11:2-16)
 - [2] The Lord's Supper. (11:17-34)
 - [3] Spiritual gifts. (12:1—14:40)
 - i. Diversity within Unity (12:1-31a)
 - ii. The preeminence of love. (12:31b—13:13)
 - iii. Prophecy and tongues: Prefer intelligibility. (14:1-25)
 - iv. Prophecy and tongues: Prefer Order. (14:26-40)
 - d. Concerning the resurrection (15:1-58)
 - [1] The certainty of the resurrection. (15:1-34)
 - [2] The nature of the resurrection. (15:35-58)
 - e. Concerning the collection for Jerusalem. (16:1-4)

C. Conclusion: Travel plans and final greetings. (16:5-24)

1. The travel plans of Paul and his co-workers. (16:5-12)
2. The formal closing. (16:13-24)

IV. Some Key Themes in the Letter

A. Christianity at Work in a Heathen Culture

1. The church is sanctified (made pure or freed from sin) in Jesus Christ and called to be holy. (1:2)
2. The church exists as a counter culture. At the same time, Christians should seek to influence the lost souls of the surrounding culture. (5:9-11; see also I Peter 2:9-15)

B. Unity and Peace among Christians

1. The new life in Christ is meant to be lived in unity and peace among brethren. (I Corinthians 1 - 4; see also John 17:20-21)
2. Baptism binds one to Christ, not to a preacher. (1:13-17)
3. Faithful teachers of the Word do not promote personal loyalties. (3:5-9)
4. As Paul instructed the church at Rome, God's people must seek peace with one another. (Romans 14:19) This unity does not depend upon a strict conformity of opinion or preferences in "debatable matters." (Romans 14:1-8)

5. In cases of offense among brethren, reconciliation must be sought according to the Lord's will. (I Corinthians 6:1-8; see also Matthew 18:15-17)

C. The Sanctify of Marriage

1. A Christian marriage calls for mutual devotion on the part of the husband and the wife. (7:3-5)
2. Consistent with other inspired writers Paul teaches positively about the spiritual means to strengthening marriage and negatively about God's hatred of divorce.

D. The Body of Christ

1. The blessing and problems of spiritual gifts. (12:14)
2. Love, the most excellent way. (13:1-8; 13)

II CORINTHIANS

Introduction: The book we call II Corinthians is one of the most powerful and emotional letters in the New Testament. After Paul's earlier letter of correction and instruction (I Corinthians), some opposition rises against the apostle. Some of this antagonism would be a reaction to Paul's rebuke; more of it likely came about from visiting Jewish Christians who sought to persuade the Corinthian Christians that Paul was not an apostle. Instead, they claimed to be apostles, even carrying letters of recommendation as such. (II Corinthians 3:1; 11:5, 13) These false teachers had won a following at Corinth (II Corinthians 11:20-23) and were undermining Paul's authority and the church's confidence in him. (II Corinthians 10:1-12)

Because of the above, II Corinthians is an intensely personal letter in which Paul boldly defends his calling and ministry.

Name — The book is named for the people at the church in Corinth who would initially receive the letter.

Author—The apostle Paul is the author, and he includes Timothy in the introduction.

Purpose — Paul wrote II Corinthians to reinforce his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

1. It was absolutely necessary for him to do this in order to preserve the health of the church.
2. He also wrote to give thanks for the favorable response toward him that was being expressed by the majority.
3. Furthermore, Paul felt compelled to remind the Corinthians about giving to the poor saints of Judea and to instruct them about the proper attitude toward the one who reports.

I. Background of the Book.

A. Paul first came to Corinth from Athens in AD 50.

1. While staying with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul worked as a tent-maker to support himself.
2. For eighteen months his preaching and teaching resulted in many conversions.

B. From Corinth Paul traveled to Ephesus and stayed there for three years. (cf. Acts 19)

1. While at Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to Corinth about immorality in the church. (I Corinthians 5:9)
2. In early A.D. 55, Paul wrote the letter we now call I Corinthians.

C. Upon learning that this letter did not have the desired effect and that false apostles were upon the scene Paul made a hasty, difficult and largely unsuccessful visit back to Corinth. (2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2)

D. Back at Ephesus, he wrote a third letter to Corinth "out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears."
(Note: a letter we do not have.)

E. After encountering trouble at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:24ff), Paul left for Troas and Macedonia. (2:12-13)

F. Titus brought Paul a report that the situation has improved somewhat. (7:5-16)

G. Against that background, Paul penned his *fourth* letter to Corinth — the epistle we call II Corinthians (ca. A.D. 55).

H. Later Paul went back to Corinth (AD 56), stayed three months (Acts 20:1-3), and probably wrote the letter to the Romans from there.

II. The Main Message of the book.

A. II Corinthians is the plea of a faithful mentor whose spiritual children have been wrongly led to mistrust him. (6:11f)

B. Accused of fickleness and carnality (1:17), of withholding information (1:13; 3:12f; 4:1f), of self-commendation (3:1; 5:12; 12:19), of being beside himself (5:13), of taking advantage of people (7:2; 12:17f), and even being suspect of whether Christ is speaking through him, Paul is compelled to assume a posture of defense throughout the letter.

1. In the process of defending himself, the apostle reveals a great deal about the nature of genuine gospel ministry.
2. "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." (4:4)

III. Outline of the book.

A. An apostolic minister explains himself. (1:1—2:13)

1. Salutation (1:1-2)
2. Paul offers a benediction, referring to the comfort he has received in his affliction. (1:3-11)
3. He explains the problem of his postponed visit. (1:12—2:4)
4. Paul encourages forgiveness after church discipline. (2:5-11)
5. Paul is anguished over not finding Titus. (2:12-13)

B. An apostolic minister explains his ministry. (2:14—6:10)

1. He declares that he is involved in a ministry greater than that of Moses. (2:14—3:18)
2. Paul likens the gospel to "treasures in jars of clay." (4:1-18)
3. He speaks of our eternal dwelling. (5:1-10)
4. He speaks of the ministry of reconciliation.¹⁵ (5:11-21)
5. The apostle speaks of his numerous hardships. (6:1-13)

C. An impassioned plea for acceptance. (6:11—7:4)

1. Paul pleads to them as a father to his children. (6:11-13)
2. He calls for their sanctification. (6:14 - 7:1)
3. Paul makes a plea for personal reconciliation. (7:2-4)

D. Paul's comfort and joy at Titus' coming. (7:5-16)

E. Paul calls for their help to the poor of Judea. (8:1—9:15)

1. He speaks of the grace-filled generosity of the Macedonian Christians. (8:1-5)
2. Titus is commissioned to encourage such generosity at Corinth. (8:6-24)
3. The apostle speaks of the beauty and blessings of generous giving. (9:1-15)

F. An apostolic minister defends himself. (10:1—12:18)

1. Paul defends his boldness. (10:1-18)
2. Paul assails false apostles. (11:1-15)
3. He speaks of his suffering for the gospel's sake. (11:16-33)
4. He talks of enduring his "thorn in the flesh" to help him appreciate the sufficiency of God's grace. (12:1-10)

G. Paul contemplates his third visit to Corinth.

1. He explains that everything he has done has been out of concern for the Corinthians. (12:11-21)
2. Paul closes with:
 - a. Final warnings. (13:1-10)
 - b. Final greetings. (13:11-13)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The "lost" letters to Corinth.

1. It was stated earlier in this lesson that we do not have some pieces of correspondence Paul sent to the Corinthians. (cf. I Corinthians 5:9; II Corinthians 2:3-4)
2. There were literary works referred to in the Old Testament which are otherwise unknown to us.

3. While problematic to a paranoid few, we confidently trust in the Lord's providence in preserving the inspired literature we need for salvation and divine guidance.
4. Frankly, our concern shouldn't be for any material we do not have so much as for our neglect over daily obedience to the material we do have.

B. The Grace of Giving.

1. In both canonical epistles to Corinth. (I Corinthians 16:1-4); II Corinthians 8:1—9:15), Paul refers to a collection he was preparing for Jerusalem.
2. He delivered those funds at the close of his third missionary journey. (cf. Acts 24:17)
3. In II Corinthians 9, Paul teaches us the beauty of the grace of giving:
 - a. The principle. (v.6)
 - b. The procedure. (v.7)
 - [1] What he has decided in his heart. i.e. give with right attitude.
 - [2] Not reluctantly i.e. enthusiastically.
 - [3] Not under pressure i.e. voluntarily.
 - [4] "God loves a cheerful giver" i.e. God is a cheerful giver.
 - c. The promise. (vs.8-11)

C. The essential presence of trials.

1. Paul's life was a bizarre array of trials and difficulties. (II Corinthians 11:24-29)
 - a. On top of these, the opposition he was beginning to encounter at Corinth and Galatia added to his woes.
 - b. Incredibly, in addition to the above, Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" that God would not remove. (II Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - [1] That thorn in the flesh may have been an ailment the apostle mentions in Galatians 4:13-14.
 - [2] Others have interpreted Galatians 4:15 to mean that Paul had a major eye disease. (cf. Galatians 6:11)
 - [3] Frankly, we have no idea what the "thorn" was.
2. Thankfully Paul viewed and dealt with these problems through the perspective of faith.
 - a. He came to realize that his "thorn" made him truly rely on the grace and sufficiency of God. (12:9-10; 11:30)
 - b. Paul lived out the reality James speaks of in James 1:2-4.
3. Paul's example is both an encouragement and challenge to all of us.

GALATIANS

Introduction: The book of Galatians contains a vigorous defense of the gospel of Christ in which we have freedom from sin and the law. This epistle was influential in the Reformation Movement, as men challenged the oppressive works system of the Roman Church. Galatians has frequently been called "The Magna Charta of Christian Liberty."

Name: The epistle is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. – Galatia)

Author: Paul, the apostle. (1:1; 5:2)

II. Background of the epistle.

- A. During his first missionary journey (46-48 AD), Paul and Barnabas had the opportunity to establish several churches in the Roman province of Galatia (Acts 13:14—14:23). On his second tour, Paul and Silas visited them again. (Acts 16:1-5)
- B. It wasn't long, however, before some Jewish Christians came in and began teaching that Gentile Christians need to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (similar to what happened at Antioch of Syria, cf. Acts 15:1f). These "Judaizing teachers" labored hard to persuade the Galatians that:
 1. Paul was not a legitimate apostle.
 2. Salvation comes by the gospel plus the performance of works.
 3. Paul's preaching of the gospel would lead to loose-living.
- C. Thus, Paul writes this circular letter to the "churches of Galatia." (Galatians 1:2)

III. Time and Place of writing.

Dating Galatians is affected by one's view of whether the churches of Galatia were located in the north central part of Asia Minor (ethnic Galatia), or in the south-central part (the Roman province of Galatia).

1. The "North Galatia Theory" maintains that the churches were in the north, and that Paul had not been there until the beginning of his third missionary journey. (52-57 AD cf. Acts 18:23) This would mean that Paul wrote his epistle sometime toward the end of that journey, or afterward (i.e., 57-58 AD or later).
2. The "South Galatia Theory" identifies the churches of Galatia as those established on Paul's first journey, such as those of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. (cf. Acts 13:14 - 14:23) Supporting this theory is the belief that the meeting described in Galatians 2:1-10 took place during the "Jerusalem Conference" related in Acts 15:1-29. This view opens several possibilities for the place and time of writing:
 - a. Corinth, in the period of Acts 18:1-17.
 - b. Antioch, in the period of Acts 18:22.
 - c. Ephesus, in the period of Acts 19:1-41.
 - d. Macedonia or Achaia in the period of Acts 20:1-3.

IV. Purpose of the Epistle.

- A. The churches in Galatia were being influenced by those who would "pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1) by teaching that Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. (cf. Acts 15:1f)
- B. Paul recognized that this doctrine would jeopardize the salvation of those souls who accepted it (Galatians 5:4). So he writes his letter to the Galatian churches to affirm and defend the gospel of justification by faith in Christ.
- C. Because the enemies of the true gospel were trying to support their case by undermining Paul's authority as an apostle of Christ, it was necessary to verify that he was truly an apostle "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father." (1:1)

II. Main Message of the Letter:

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be entangled again by a yoke of bondage." (5:1)

III. Thematic outline of the letter.

- A. Introduction (1:1-10)
 1. Salutation (1:1-5)
 2. Reason for the letter (1:6-10)
- B. Paul's Defense of His Apostleship (1:11—2:21)
 1. The divine origin of his gospel. (1:11-17)
 - a. Thesis: His gospel received directly from God. (1:11-12)
 - b. His pre-Christian years and conversion. (1:13-17)
 2. His Relationship to the other apostles. (1:18—2:21)
 - a. His first visit with Peter, and early years as a Christian. (1:18-24)
 - b. The council at Jerusalem. (2:1-5)
 - c. His sanction by James, Cephas, and John. (2:6-10)
 - d. His rebuke of Peter at Antioch. (2:11-21)
 - [1] Peter's hypocrisy. (2:11-13)
 - [2] His speech to Peter, how we are justified by faith in Christ. (2:14-21)
- C. Paul's defense of the gospel of justification by faith (3:1—4:31)
 1. The personal argument: (3:1-5)
 - a. How they received the Spirit. (3:1-5)
 - b. From whom they received the Spirit. (3:5)
 2. The scriptural argument: (3:6-25)
 - a. The example of Abraham. (3:6-9)
 - b. The curse of the Law. (3:10-14)
 - c. The priority of the Promise over the Law. (3:15-18)
 - d. The purpose of the Law. (3:19-25)

3. The practical argument: (3:26—4:7)
 - a. In Christ they are one, as children of God, Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise. (3:26-29)
 - b. Redeemed from the law, and adopted as sons, they are no longer slaves, but heirs. (4:1-7)
4. The sentimental argument: (4:8-20)
 - a. His fears over their returning to bondage. (4:8-11)
 - b. Their past and present relationships to him. (4:12-20)
5. The allegorical argument: (4:21-31)
 - a. An allegory for those who desire to be under the Law. (4:21-24a)
 - b. Symbolic of the two covenants; one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, and the other from the Jerusalem above which makes free. (4:24b-31)
- D. The call to stand fast in the liberty of the Gospel: (5:1– 6:10)
 1. A liberty that excludes the necessity of circumcision. (5:1-6)
 - a. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (5:1)
 - b. Circumcision means nothing; requiring it results in falling from grace. (5:2-4)
 - c. We should wait for the hope of righteousness with faith working through love. (5:5-6)
 2. A liberty that fulfills the law: (5:7-15)
 - a. Beware of those who would bind the Law. (5:7-12)
 - b. Use your liberty as an opportunity to serve one another with love, and you will fulfill the Law. (5:13b, 15)
 - c. But beware that you do not use it as an opportunity for the flesh in which you consume one another.
 3. A liberty in which one is to be led by the Spirit. (5:16-26)
 - a. Liberty is not an excuse for license. (5:16-18)
 - b. The works of the flesh contrasted with fruits of the Spirit.¹⁶ (5:19-23)
 - c. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh and are walking in the Spirit. (5:24-26)
 4. A liberty with a sense of responsibility. (6:1-10)
 - a. Helping those with burdens. (6:1-5)
 - b. Doing good to all, thus sowing to the Spirit. (6:6-10)
- E. Conclusion (6:11-18)
 1. A final rebuke to those who would bind circumcision. (6:11-13)
 2. Paul's confidence in the cross of Christ. (6:14-17)
 3. Benediction. (6:18)

EPHESIANS

Introduction: After the reading of the controversies in Corinth and Paul's fiery epistle to the Galatians, the letter to the Ephesians seems quite benign and calm. Unlike many of Paul's letters, this epistle isn't problem oriented. Its purpose is not to rebuke but to illuminate. Paul unveils a great doctrinal statement about the relationship between Christ and His church.

Name — The epistle is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. - Ephesus)

Author — Paul (Ephesians 1:1)

Purpose—Paul wrote the letter to instruct the Christians of Asia Minor concerning the privileges and responsibilities of those who were part of the church, the body of Christ.

I. Background of the book.

- A. The city of Ephesus.
 1. Ephesus was located in Asia Minor where the Cayster River emptied into the Aegean Sea.
 2. It was a major center of commerce.
 - a. Ephesus served as one of the great seaports of the ancient world.

- b. In addition, three great highways met at Ephesus.
 - 3. The city also had great political importance.
 - a. It was a Roman "free city" which meant that no occupation troops were stationed there.
 - b. The city was virtually self-governing and was called the "Supreme Metropolis of Asia."
 - c. Ephesus was also an "assize town", meaning that important legal cases which had been referred to the governor would be tried there.
 - 4. A center for religion, Ephesus is noted for having the ancient temple to Artemis (Diana) —one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- B. The church at Ephesus.**
- 1. When Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla stopped on their way to Palestine from Corinth (ca. AD 53-54), and Paul debated the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:18-21), the church was begun in Ephesus.
 - 2. Paul returned about five years later on his third missionary journey.
 - a. For three months he preached in the synagogue. (Acts 19:1-8)
 - b. When strong opposition arose, he taught for two years in the Hall of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:9-10)
 - c. Paul stayed at Ephesus a total of three years on this journey. (Acts 20:28-32)
 - 3. The importance Paul attached to his work at Ephesus is indicated by his length of stay there and a statement he made when he wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus —"But I will stay at Ephesus because a great and effective door has been opened to me."
 - 4. The effect of the gospel upon the Ephesians is evidenced by the fact that believers burned occult books worth 50,000 pieces of silver at one time. (cf. Acts 19:18-20)
 - 5. After he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul took Timothy to Ephesus to oppose the false teaching done by Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, and others. (I Timothy 1:3-7, 18-20)
 - 6. Thirty years after Paul's epistle, another letter was addressed to the church at Ephesus as a part of the Revelation.
- C. The Prison Epistles.**
- 1. The "prison epistles" received this title because Paul wrote them during his house arrest in Rome. (cf. Acts 28:30-31)
 - 2. Each of the letters mentioned his confinement. (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Philippians 1:7,13,14, 17; Colossians 1:14; 4:3; 10, 18; Philemon 1, 10, 13, 23)
 - 3. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written at the same time and together were sent by Paul to their destinations.
 - a. These three letters were carried by Onesimus (the runaway slave of Philemon) and Tychicus. (cf. Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-9; Philemon 10-12)
 - b. A date of A.D. 61 is assigned to these three letters.
 - 4. Philippians was composed and sent the following year.

II. The Main Message of the book.

- A. This beautiful epistle presents an exalted view of the church and the blessed privilege of being **In Christ**.
- B. In the opening chapter, Paul discusses the role of each member of the Godhead in relation to the church.
 - 1. The Father purposed that salvation would be available to sinners in Christ. (1:3-6)
 - 2. The Son sacrificed his own blood that we might be redeemed. (1:7-12)
 - 3. The Holy Spirit seals believers by his indwelling presence.
- C. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." (1:3-4)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. The design of the church. (Ephesians 1:1 — 3:21)
 - 1. The church has a divine origin. (1:1-14)
 - 2. Paul prays for the readers to have an understanding of God's grace. (1:15-23)
 - 3. The church is made up of sinners saved by God's grace. (2:1-10)
 - 4. It is a single body made up of Jews and Gentiles. (2:11-22)
 - 5. God's plans are being fulfilled through the church. (3:1-13)

6. Paul prays that the readers of the letter be empowered and made complete in Christ. (3:14-21)

B. Life within the church.¹⁷ (Ephesians 4:1—6:24)

1. Christians should live in:
 - a. Unity. (4:1-16)
 - b. Moral purity. (7:17—5:20)
 - c. Domestic tranquility. (5:21—6:9)
2. Paul describes the armor God has given us for spiritual warfare. (6:10-20)
3. He concludes the letter with:
 - a. A commendation of Tychicus. (6:21-22)
 - b. A benediction. (6:23-24)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. The beauty of Christ's church.

1. Through the years image and perception of the Body of Christ, the church, has been tarnished.
 - a. Denominationalism, sectarianism, cults, and apostasies have given the world a distaste for the concept of "church."
 - b. Some who have sought to restore simple New Testament Christianity have often displayed division, a sectarian spirit, and frequently lacked the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (4:3)
2. Surely none of us have anything near the divine appreciation our God has for His church.
3. In Ephesians three great pictures are painted of the church:
 - a. The church is the Body of Christ. (1:23; 2:16; 4:16)
 - b. The church is the Temple of Christ. (2:20-22)
 - c. The church is the Bride of Christ. (5:21 -33)
4. As much as any other piece of scripture, Ephesians gives us a renewed appreciation for the beauty and necessity of having relationship with Christ through his church.

B. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3.

1. It begins with humility. (v. 14, 15)
2. He prays for the strengthening of the Ephesians "through his Spirit in your inner being." (v. 16)
 - a. That Spirit allows "Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith." (v. 17)
 - b. The Holy Spirit also empowers us to grasp a fuller understanding of the love of Christ and fills us with the fullness of God." (v. 18, 19)
3. Paul acknowledges that God is able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." (v. 20)
4. The apostle closes the prayer by declaring glory to God "in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations." (v.21)

C. Christian armor. (Ephesians 6:10-20)

1. The Christian is constantly involved in spiritual warfare.
2. While Satan is relentless in his attack, God gives us the power and weapons to stand firm against the devil and his forces.
3. As Paul writes Ephesians, he is under the constant guard of a Roman soldier whose armor reminds him of God's protection for the Christian.
 - a. The *belt* secures the entire outfit and is the piece on which the weapons hang. Paul likens it to the truth of God's Word.
 - b. The *breastplate* protects the heart. The righteousness of Jesus Christ does the same for the Christian.
 - c. The shoes or *sandals* allow the soldier to travel long distances. In like manner, the gospel takes the salvation of Christ around the world.
 - d. A soldier's *shield* protects him from arrows and swinging swords. Our faith serves the same function in spiritual warfare.
 - e. The *helmet* protects the brain and mind. Paul likens this piece of armor to the knowledge of one's salvation.
 - f. Finally, a warrior's *sword* is his offensive weapon to overcome an enemy. The Christian's offense against evil is the Word of God.

PHILIPPIANS

Introduction: Philippians is the most joyful of Paul's letters. The words "rejoice", "rejoicing", or "joy" are used seventeen times in the book's four brief chapters. Paul has been given reason to rejoice by the church's kind treatment of

him, most recently evidenced in a gift sent by Epaphroditus. Through this letter, the apostle wishes to thank the church for their mindfulness of him and to encourage them to make rejoicing a life-style.

Name — The epistle is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. - Philippi)

Author — Paul (Philippians 1:1)

Purpose — Paul wrote this letter to:

1. Thank the believers at Philippi for sending him a financial gift.
2. Let them know that even though he was a prisoner, the gospel was still being preached.
3. Encourage two women in the church who had differences between them to be reconciled.

I. Background Of The Book.

A. The city of Philippi.

1. Philippi was located on the Bounarbachii, now Amgistes, River, about eight miles from the Aegean Sea and was called "the chief city" of that part of Macedonia. (Acts 16:12)
2. Originally named *Crenides* (i.e. Fountains), the city was captured and rebuilt by Philip of Macedon.
 - a. Philip wanted the town for its strategic importance and for gold and silver mines nearby.
 - b. He renamed the city for himself in 356 BC.
3. Philippi claimed political importance.
 - a. Augustus made a colony of the city.
 - b. A Roman colony was like a miniature Rome.
 - c. Their official language was Latin, and they wore Roman clothing and used Roman money.
 - d. Their two chief magistrates were appointed from Rome and were not subject to the provincial governor.

B. The church at Philippi.

1. The Philippian church was planted when Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke responded to the "Macedonian call" which Paul received in Troas on his second missionary journey. (AD 51-52; Acts 16:6-12)
2. When Paul came to Philippi, the first converts were Lydia and her household. (Acts 16:6-10)
 - a. Lydia was apparently a God-fearing Gentile.
 - b. There apparently was no synagogue in Philippi.
3. The next notable conversion came in connection with the casting out of a demon from a servant girl. (Acts 16:16-34)
 - a. For this heroic action, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison.
 - b. At midnight, they were singing hymns to God.
 - c. After a miraculous release, their jailor was converted.
4. In summary, the church was founded with the conversions of a business woman, her household, a jailor and his family, and possibly a young slave girl and some prisoners.
5. Evidently, Luke stayed behind to help establish these new Christians in the faith.
 - a. We make this assumption from the fact that the first "we" section of Acts ends here. The next episode in Thessalonica is told using the third person, plural pronoun, "they." (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 17:1)
 - b. When Paul returned to Philippi on his third tour, Luke apparently rejoins his group. (cf. Acts 20:5-6)
6. When the Philippians learned of Paul's imprisonment at Rome, they sent a gift to him by Epaphroditus. (Philippians 4:18)
7. Paul composed his epistle to the Philippian Christians during Epaphroditus' stay at Rome and sent it back by him. (2:25-28)
 - a. Philippians was probably the latest written of the four prison epistles.
 - [1] Paul's confinement has been lengthy. (1:14-17)
 - [2] The epistle implies that several journeys and activities have taken place since his confinement in Rome.
 - [3] Also, the letter seems to indicate that Paul's fate would be decided shortly. (1:23; 2:23-24)
 - b. All these facts point to a date of AD 62 for its composition.

II. The Message of the Book

A. From what he learned from Epaphroditus, Paul wanted to address certain situations at the church there.

1. He pleaded for unity and appealed for a spirit of humility. (2:1-8; 4:2-3)
2. He warned against Judaizing teachers. (3:1-4:1)

B. Through these challenges he called for them to maintain their joy in Christ.

1. Philippians is often called "the epistle of joy."
2. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (4:4)

III. Outline of the Book.

A. Introduction. (Philippians 1:1-11)

1. Paul offers a typical salutation. (1:1-2)
2. He expresses thanks for the saints there. (1:3-11)

B. Paul's ministry while in bondage. (1:12-30)

1. The apostle assures the readers that God is using his situation to advance the gospel. (1:12-18)
2. He expects to be released soon. (1:19-20)
3. However, he is prepared to die for Christ (1:21-26) and encourages the Philippians to be bold in their faith. (1:27-30)

C. Rejoicing in Christ. (2:1-18)

1. Paul appeals for the Christians there to have in them the mind of Christ. (2:1-11)
2. He encourages them to "shine like stars in the universe" as they cooperate with God's purposes. (2:12-18)

D. Paul sends to them Timothy and Epaphroditus. (2:19-30)

E. Paul's past and present needs. (Philippians 3:1-21)

1. Paul recalls his status as a Jew. (3:1-6)
2. He counts it all as loss for the sake of knowing Christ. (3:7-11)
3. He exhorts them to press on to the goal "for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (3:12-21)

F. Paul's principles for joyful living. (Philippians 4:1-23)

1. He appeals for unity. (4:1 -3)
2. He encourages dependence on God and a focus on noble things. (4:4-9)
3. He talks of the secret of contentment. (4:10-13)
4. He thanks them for their gift. (4:14-20)

G. Closing words and benediction. (Philippians 4:21-23)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Paul's attitude toward hardship and suffering. (Philippians 1:12-18)

1. The apostle maintained a perspective that his chains had served to advance the gospel and the cause of Jesus Christ. (1:12-14)
2. Yet for reasons we're not told, some at Rome were embarrassed or threatened by Paul's presence as a prisoner there. (1:15-17)
 - a. Perhaps they were embarrassed that an apostle was imprisoned like a common criminal and wanted to show the church could grow without him.
 - b. Perhaps some leaders in the church there felt their importance threatened by his presence.
 - c. Whatever the specifics, we are told their motives for preaching the gospel were insincere.
3. Because their problem was not *doctrinal* but *personal*, Paul simply rejoiced that the gospel was being preached. (1:18)

B. Jesus Christ — Man, God, Savior (Philippians 2:5-11)

1. In his appeal for unity among Christians at Philippi, Paul urged them to imitate the mind of Jesus. (2:1-5)
2. As he described the humility our Lord displayed, Paul penned one of the most beautiful and meaningful texts in the Bible.
 - a. We don't know if this is a contemporary hymn sung by early Christians or Paul's own poetic composition.
 - b. Regardless, it simply and beautifully traces the career of the Christ from his pre-incarnate state to his present exaltation.
3. Jesus Christ is God. (2:6; cf. John 1:1 -3; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9)
4. Jesus Christ became a man. (2:7; John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15)
5. Jesus Christ is exalted as our Lord. (2:8-11; Hebrews 12:2; Mark 16:19)

C. The Secret of contentment

1. After Paul thanks the Philippians for their gift, he declares that he has learned the secret of contentment. (4:10-12)
2. The secret is found in Philippians 4:13 **“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”**

COLOSSIANS

Introduction: The Colossian letter is unique in that Paul never visited that church personally. (cf. Colossians 2:1) However, it likely was founded as an outgrowth of Paul's extended ministry at Ephesus. In the letter, Paul addressed a cultic heresy that had erupted in the church there. He sent the letter to Colossae by Tychicus. (Colossians 4:7-8)

Name -The book is named for the church that received the letter. (i.e. - Colossae)

Author — Paul (Colossians 1:1) from house arrest in Rome. (AD 61)

Purpose — The letter was written primarily to stabilize the church doctrinally. The church was being affected by subtle but heretical teaching which Paul wrote to combat.

I. Background of the book.

A. The city of Colossae.

1. The city was located in the Lycus Valley about 100 miles east of Ephesus.
 - a. Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13) were located nearby.
 - b. Colossae was in the district of Phrygia, a part of the Roman province of Asia.
2. In the Persian period (500-400 BC), Colossae was on a major trade route.
 - a. Xerxes, the Persian king, had camped there while on his way to invade Greece in 480 BC.
 - b. Cyrus also camped there when marching against Artaxerxes in 401 BC.
3. By the first century AD Laodicea and Hierapolis had out classed Colossae as a commercial center.
 - a. By the time of Paul's writing, the city was primarily known for the production of a dark glossy black wool called *colussinus*.
 - b. The city had no political significance and was considered the least important city to which Paul addressed a letter.

B. The church at Colossae.

1. Paul stayed in Ephesus for about a three-year period ca. AD 52-55. (cf. Acts 19:1—20:1)
 - a. From there, he and his colleagues conducted evangelistic efforts throughout the entire province of Asia. (Acts 19:10)
 - b. Apparently on one of these, the church was founded.
2. Five or six years later, Paul was informed about the Colossian church through Epaphras. (1:7-8)
 - a. In general, the report was positive and encouraging. (1:3-6; 2:5)
 - b. But there was also cause for serious concern. (2:8)
3. A unique heresy had invaded the church at Colossae.
 - a. It seems to have been a bizarre mixture asceticism (strict self-denial like a hermit), Jewish legalism, and some kind of philosophic mysticism.
 - b. The heresy combined elements of Greek philosophy and mythology (2:8) with Jewish legalism. (2:16)
 - c. It called for the worship of angels. (2:18)
 - d. It had elements of Gnosticism. (2:9)
 - e. This heresy boasted of visions and superior knowledge. (2:18b, 23a)
4. Paul's letter was primarily designed to combat this false teaching and call the church back to a solid faith.

II. The main message of the book.

- A. As stated in the "Background" section, the primary goal of the epistle was to rebut and rebuke the false teaching the Colossians had been exposed to.
- B. Against that heresy, the apostle presents the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ.
- C. “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the

head over every power and authority.” (Colossians 2:9-11)

III. Outline of the book.

A. Introduction. (Colossians 1:1-14)

1. The letter opens with a brief salutation (1:1-2) and a word of thanksgiving for the church at Colossae. (1:3-8)
2. Paul commends their spiritual progress. (1:9-12)
3. He praises the saving power of Christ. (1:13-14)

B. The supremacy of Christ. (Colossians 1:15-29)

1. Paul declares that Christ is preeminent in all things:
 - a. In creation. (1:15-17)
 - b. In the church. (1:18)
 - c. In the work of reconciliation. (1:19-23)
2. Paul affirms his mission as preaching this "mystery" to the Gentiles. (1:24-29)

C. Warnings about heresy. (Colossians 2:1-23)

1. Paul expresses a personal concern about the Colossians. (1-7)
2. He declares that Christ is what they need. (8-15)
3. He condemns specific tenets in the false teaching they are receiving. (16-23)

D. The apostle appeals for holy living. (Colossians 3:1—4:6)

1. Since we have been "raised with Christ" following our death to sin and burial in the water grave of baptism our affections should be centered on things above. (3:1-4)
2. Christians should put off evil things (3:5-11) and put on holy things. (3:12-17)
3. Paul appeals for proper domestic relationships:
 - a. In marriage. (3:18-19)
 - b. Between parents and children. (3:20-21)
 - c. Between masters and servants. (3:22—4:1)
4. Each Christian should be watchful and prayerful. (4:2-6)

E. Conclusions. (Colossians 4:7-18)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The "Colossian heresy."

1. We have already taken a quick, broad look at the strange heresy that threatened the church at Colossae.
2. One of the key components of this false doctrine appears to have been a strange Jewish form of Gnosticism.¹⁸
 - a. The Greek word *gnosis* means knowledge.
 - b. The Gnostics were a cultic group that claimed special enlightenment.
 - c. They developed a pride-based religion by teaching that divine mysteries could be understood by superior intellect.
 - d. Gnostics taught that spirit was good and matter was evil, hence the ascetic practices.
 - e. Because of their doctrine about the good/evil of spirit/matter, they believed that the two could not truly be mixed, thus denying the full deity of Jesus Christ.
 - [1] They believed in a hierarchy of deities.
 - [2] By the 2nd century AD the Gnostics believed that there were fourteen steps between God and man.
3. While many questions remain unanswered about the specifics of this strange cult, Paul's letter makes certain facets of it clear:
 - a. It was seductive. (2:4)
 - b. It appealed to intellectual elitism. (2:8)
 - c. It was based on human tradition. (2:8)
 - d. It was legalistic. (2:16-20)
 - e. The heresy ascetic (strict self-denial, and austere in appearance, manner, or attitude) in nature. (2:23)
 - f. It involved worship of other beings. (2:18)
 - g. It attacked the sufficiency of Christ.

4. Amazingly, throughout the ages, thousands of cults have come and gone, each characterized by most or all of the above.

B. The all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

1. To combat the Colossian heresy, Paul simply presented the all-sufficiency of Christ.
2. Jesus Christ embodies the fullness of deity. (1:19; 2:9)
3. The "fullness" or sense of purpose we seek is not from:
 - a. Human wisdom. (2:8)
 - b. Circumcision at the hands of men. (2:11)
 - c. What we eat or drink. (2:16)
 - d. Observance of special days. (2:16)
 - e. The worship of angels or other beings. (2:18)
 - f. Asceticism. (2:23)
4. We have fullness when we have Jesus Christ in us! (2:13-15)

I THESSALONIANS

Introduction: I Thessalonians is likely the second earliest of Paul's canonical letters. Unlike the second epistle to Thessalonica, this letter is positive in tone. Paul finds a number of things to commend about the church there and wants to clear up some confusion about the second coming of Christ.

Name — The book is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. - Thessalonica)

Author — Paul. (I Thessalonians 1:1; 2:18)

Purpose — Paul's key purpose for writing to the Thessalonians was to prove his love for the Christians there. A second purpose in writing was to clarify the truth about the Lord's return.

I. Background of the book.

A. The city of Thessalonica.

1. Geographically, it was located 100 miles west of the city of Philippi at the mouth of the Gulf of Therma.
2. Thessalonica was located in the region of Macedonia and was its chief city.
 - a. As the seaport developed, Thessalonica became a commercially oriented city.
 - b. A loyal Roman city, it was declared a "free city" in 42 BC
 - c. In New Testament times, the city's population was about 200,000.
3. The city had a fairly large Jewish population but was predominantly Greek.

B. The church at Thessalonica.

1. The church was established at Thessalonica during Paul's second missionary journey.
 - a. On that journey, Paul was asked to leave Philippi. (Acts 16:39-40)
 - b. From there he went to Thessalonica where he began his evangelistic work in the synagogue. (Acts 17:2-3)
 - [1] Some converts were made there. (Acts 17:4)
 - [2] Jewish opposition incited a riot and brought false charges against Paul. (Acts 17:5-9)
 - [3] Paul's comrades offered a "peace bond" for Paul's release, and he left the city during the night.
 - c. Having been at Thessalonica only a short time, Paul moved on to Berea (Acts.17:10) where he again was forced to leave because of a riot.
 - d. From Berea, Paul moved on to Athens and then to Corinth. (Acts 17:11—18:4)
 - [1] From Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica. (3.1-2)
 - [2] Silas and Timothy rejoined (Acts 18:5), and Timothy brought a report about the condition of the church at Thessalonica. (3:6-8)
2. In Corinth, Paul penned and sent his first letter to the Thessalonians.
3. The date of the epistle is AD 51.

II. The message of the book.

A. The main message of the book is the expectation of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

B. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the

trumpet call of God. (4:16)

III. Outline of the book.

A. Paul's relationship to the church at Thessalonica. (1:1—3:13)

1. After a brief salutation (1:1), Paul offers words of thanksgiving for the conditions of the church at Thessalonica. (1:2-10)
2. He recounts the circumstances of his ministry there. (2:1-16)
3. Paul tells the Thessalonians he is eager to see them. (2:17-20)
4. He explains that Timothy had been sent to establish them in the faith. (3:1-5)
5. Timothy had returned with an encouraging report about their faith. (3:6-10)
6. Paul prays for their further strengthening by the Lord. (3:11-13)

B. Exhortation of the saints. (I Thessalonians 4:1—5:28)

1. The apostle instructs the Christians to live holy and righteous lives. (4:1-12)
2. He describes what will happen when the Lord comes again. (4:13-18)
3. He gives counsel on personal attitudes and behavior connected with that second coming. (5:1-22)
4. Closing words. (5:23-28)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The second coming of the Lord.

1. One out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
2. The attestations of that coming are from various sources.
 - a. Jesus repeatedly promised that he would come again. (Matthew 25:31ff; John 14:3, etc.)
 - b. The apostles declared it.
 - [1] Peter. (Acts 3:19-20; II Peter 3:3-10)
 - [2] Paul. (4:16; I Corinthians 15:23)
 - [3] John. (Revelation 1:7)
 - c. Angels even said he would come again. (Acts 1:11)
3. Christ's first coming to this world was marked by lowliness and humility; his second coming will be marked by glory, splendor, and triumph. (1:7-10)
 - a. He will come "bodily" and visibly. (Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; Philippians 3:21)
 - b. The arrival will be sudden and without warning. (4:16; 5:2; I Corinthians 15:52a)
 - c. The dead will be raised. (4:13-14; I Corinthians 15:52a)
 - d. The living will be changed and "caught up in the air" with the resurrected dead.
 - e. All humankind will appear before the Lord for judgment. (Matthew 25:32; Revelation 20:12)
 - f. An eternal separation will take place and final sentence will be passed on all men. (Matthew 25:33-34, 41)
 - g. The earth will be destroyed. (II Peter 3:10)
 - h. The kingdom will be delivered up to the Father. (I Corinthians 15:24)
4. Speculation about when this return will occur is pointless and fruitless.
 - a. Through the years, many individuals have claimed to know the exact time of Jesus' return.
 - b. Whenever anyone claims to set a date for Christ's second coming, they automatically mark themselves as a false prophet. (cf. Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:32; II Peter 3:10)
5. Whatever the date, the Christian is to be prepared for his *parousia*, Greek meaning second coming.¹⁹ (5:4)

B. Living in light of Christ's coming.⁷

1. The doctrine of Christ's second coming, the Judgment, and the reward of heaven are our motivation to be faithful to our calling. (II Peter 3:11-14)
2. In the first Thessalonian letter, Paul concludes with practical exhortations in light of the future. (cf. 5:16-24)

II THESSALONIANS

Introduction: A period of no more than several months separates the writing of I and II Thessalonians. The first letter dealt with some misunderstanding about the second coming of Jesus Christ. For example, some had feared that those who had already died would be unable to participate in that glorious event (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Others were speculating on a time or date for Jesus' coming. (5:1-4)

Despite the fact that Paul addressed these concerns in his first letter to Thessalonica, the problems and misperceptions had grown worse. (2:1ff) Because of the deaf ear the Thessalonians had turned to Paul's first letter, his second letter takes on a much harsher and firmer tone.

Name — The letter is named for the people who initially received it.

Author — Paul (II Thessalonians 1:1: 3:17)

Purpose — II Thessalonians was written for two key reasons:

1. To correct error about the "day of the Lord."
2. To talk about the discipline of problem believers.

I. Background of the book.

A. The first Thessalonian letter had been written and sent from Corinth in AD 51.

B. The second Thessalonian letter was written within a few weeks or months of the first.

1. Paul had received an updated oral report of the situation there. (II Thessalonians 3:11)
2. Apparently a forged letter had been circulating among the Christians there. (II Thessalonians 2:2-3)
3. Therefore Paul felt an obligation to respond to these problems immediately.

C. The date of II Thessalonians is likely late AD 51.

II. The main message of the book.

A. Like the first letter to the Thessalonians, this letter is primarily concerned with the second coming of Jesus.

B. Paul strongly exhorts the Thessalonians to stand firm in the teaching they had already received and not to be persuaded by false teaching and silly speculation.

C. "On the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." (1:10)

III. Outline of the book.

A. Personal remarks. (II Thessalonians 1:1-12)

1. Salutation. (1:1-2)
2. Paul offers a prayer of thankfulness for the Thessalonians. (1:3-12)

B. Additional teaching about the second coming of Jesus. (2:1 — 3:18)

1. Paul disclaims having taught that the *parousia* is imminent. (2:1-2)
2. In fact, the Lord will not come back until the "man of lawlessness" has been revealed. (2:3-12)
3. He appeals for a steadfast faith and prayers on his behalf. (2:13—3:5)
4. He commends discipline toward those who teach falsely about the second coming. (3:6-15)
5. The letter closes with:
 - a. A prayer. (3:16)
 - b. A benediction. (3:17-18)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Who is the "man of lawlessness" in II Thessalonians 2:1-12?

1. Characteristics:
 - a. The man of lawlessness will be revealed before the Day of the Lord. (v. 3)
 - b. He will lead a rebellion. (v. 3)
 - c. He will "oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped." (v. 4)
 - d. He will set himself in "God's temple" proclaiming himself to be God. (v. 4)
 - e. His coming will be accompanied by all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, (v. 9)
 - f. He will bring with him every sort of evil to deceive those who are perishing. (v. 10)
2. What are the possibilities of his identity?
 - a. Premillennialists equate the "man of lawlessness" with the Antichrist (ff. I John 2:18) — supposedly a final

- personification of evil who would appear just prior to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ and his establishment of a 1000-year reign.
- b. Many Protestants identify the man of lawlessness with the papacy of Catholicism.
 - c. Others identify the man of lawlessness with a Roman emperor or emperors who persecuted the early church (e.g. - Nero or Domitian).
 - d. Another possibility dismisses the identification with any particular person but associates the man of lawless with a spirit of rebellion and disobedience.
3. Who is/was he?
- a. Because of the unfounded speculations that are the foundation of premillennialism, this possibility is implausible.
 - b. While the pope claims to be the "vicar of Christ", he does not claim to be God.
 - c. The identification of the man of lawlessness as a Roman emperor (or line of emperors) is quite possible.
 - [1] v. 4 — Roman emperors (e.g. - Domitian) blasphemed deity and demanded to be worshipped as gods.
 - [2] v. 6-7 — That which may have been "holding back" the man of lawlessness could be the last vestiges of Roman democracy.
 - [3] v. 8 — Jesus will destroy him at His coming.
 - [4] v. 9-10 — There will be many counterfeit signs and miracles associated with the man of lawlessness. This could be a reference to mock priesthood which Domitian set up to worship him.
 - [5] Finally, Paul's veiled references to this person would be an understandable attempt to avoid government suppression and persecution from the Roman governor.
 - d. The idea that the man of lawlessness represents the continuing struggle between Christianity and Satan is the next most likely interpretation.
 - [1] I John 2:18 states that as time passes, many Antichrists will appear.
 - [2] The point made with this interpretation would be that every time evil becomes a real threat to the continuing existence of Christianity, the Lord will come and remove the threat.
 - [3] The problem with this interpretation is that the text seems to refer to a specific person or persons.
 - e. Frankly, it must be admitted that no one can identify the man of lawlessness with dogmatic specificity.
- B. What about "signs" of the second coming?
1. In every generation sensationalists point to earthquakes, wars, volcanoes and other calamities to be signs declaring that the coming of the Lord is near.
 2. Many of these individuals point to the signs of Matthew 24:5-31 as indicators of his *parousia*.
 - a. These were signs that foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (Matthew 24:1-3)
 - b. Jesus specifically stated that all these would be fulfilled in his own generation. (Matthew 24:34)
 3. By contrast, Jesus declares that there would be no sign given to usher in His second coming. (Matthew 24:36-44)
 4. Some early Christians expected the appearance of Jesus at any moment.
 - a. Some had even stopped working and spent all their time waiting. (II Thessalonians 3:6-10)
 - b. Paul instructed the Thessalonians that the man of lawlessness would come first. (II Thessalonians 2:3)
 - c. Given the options for his identity described earlier, that condition has apparently been met.
 5. Therefore, we stand ready for Christ's return, not hinging our faith upon subjective interpretation of alleged signs.
- C. Thessalonian problem with idleness. (3:6-13)
1. Some of the Christians at Thessalonica had decided that since Jesus was coming immediately, there was no need to work.
 - a. These folks became "moochers" (v. 6-8) and busy-bodies. (v.11)
 - b. Paul said that their behavior was contrary to the example he had set while among them. (v. 7-9)
 2. Paul lays down the principle in verse 10 "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."
 3. This command speaks volumes to our modern entitlement mentality.

I TIMOTHY

Introduction: The young preacher Timothy was not too happy in his church in Ephesus. Paul writes this letter to encourage him. In the three "pastoral epistles" (I & II Timothy and Titus), Paul used the Greek word *pistos* (faithful) at least seventy times. The theme runs through each chapter: Be faithful to the Word, be faithful to your task, and be faithful to the people to whom you minister.

I Timothy has both a negative and positive goal. Negatively, it encourages the opposition of false doctrine and false teachers. Positively, it encourages capable leadership for the church which will guide it to the fulfillment of its mission. In general, we may say this letter gives counsel for the conduct of a local church's life.

Author: The apostle Paul, as stated in the salutation (I Timothy 1:1). The internal evidence certainly supports Paul as the author, especially references to his earlier life (I Timothy 1:13), and the close relationship between the author and Timothy. (I Timothy 1:2; cf. Philippians 2:22)

Recipient: Timothy, Paul's "true son in the faith" (1:2-8).

A. We are first introduced to Timothy in Acts 16:1 -3, where we learn that his mother was Jewish (cf. also II Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15) and his father Greek.

B. Well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium, Paul desired that the young disciple travel with him and therefore had him circumcised to accommodate Jews they would seek to evangelize. This began a long relationship of service together in the work of the Lord, in which Timothy served Paul as a son would his father. (Philippians 2:19-24). Such service included:

1. Traveling with Paul.
2. Remaining with new congregations when Paul had to leave suddenly. (Acts 17:13-14)
3. Going back to encourage such congregations. (I Thess. 3:1-3)
4. Serving as Paul's personal emissary. (I Corinthians 16:10-11; Philippians 2:19-24)

C. Timothy had the honor of joining Paul in the salutation of several epistles written by Paul (II Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1), and from such epistles we learn that Timothy had been with Paul during his imprisonment at Rome.

D. Such faithful service helps us to appreciate why Paul would leave him in Ephesus. (I Timothy 1:3)

III. Time and Place of Writing.

A. Some commentators (such as Barnes) believe that Paul may have penned I Timothy after his extended stay at Ephesus and departure to Macedonia on his third missionary journey. (cf. Acts 19:1-41; 20:1-3) This would place its composition around 58-59 AD.

B. The general consensus, though, is that Paul wrote this epistle from Macedonia, following his first imprisonment in Rome. (cf. Acts 28:16, 30-31)

IV. Purpose of the Epistle: Paul had left Timothy behind at Ephesus with an awesome responsibility: to charge some not to teach anything contrary to the "sound doctrine" which was according to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God." (I Timothy 1:3-11) Fulfilling this charge was made difficult by Timothy's youth and natural shyness. (I Timothy 4:11-12; cf. II Timothy 1:7-8) While Paul hoped to come himself, he writes Timothy to guide him in the meantime. (I Timothy 3:14-15)²⁰ Therefore, Paul writes:

A. To instruct Timothy on how to conduct himself while administering the affairs of the church. (I Timothy 3:14-15)

B. To encourage Timothy by providing counsel concerning his own spiritual progress. (I Timothy 4:12-16)

C. To teach Christians how to conduct themselves.

V. Theme of the Epistle:

This letter is addressed to a young evangelist charged with the responsibility of working with a congregation and

guiding them in the right way. Everything that is written is designed to aid both him and the congregation in doctrine and conduct. An appropriate theme for this epistle might therefore be: "**Sound Doctrine For A Congregation And Its Preacher.**"

VI. Key Verses.

"These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Timothy 3:14-15)

VII. Outline of the letter.

- A. Introduction (1:1-2)
- B. Charge concerning sound doctrine. (1:3-20)
 - 1. Teaching sound doctrine. (1:3-11)
 - 2. Thanksgiving for the Lord's grace and mercy. (1:12-17)
 - 3. Timothy's responsibility. (1:18-20)
- C. General instructions concerning the church. (2:1-3:13)
 - 1. The practice of prayer. (2:1-8)
 - 2. Instructions for women. (2:9-15)
 - 3. Qualifications for church officers. (3:1-13)
 - a. For bishops [overseers is a more accurate translation]. (3:1-7)
 - b. For deacons. (3:8-13)
- D. Advice to Timothy. (3:14-19)
 - 1. Paul's purpose in writing. (3:14-16)
 - 2. Remember the Spirit's warning of apostasy. (4:1-6)
 - 3. Exercise yourself unto Godliness. (4:7-16)
- E. Instructions concerning members of the church. (5:1 - 6:19)
 - 1. Maintain proper relationships. (5:1-2)
 - 2. Concerning widows. (5:3-16)
 - 3. Concerning elders. (5:17-25)
 - 4. Concerning servants. (6:1-2)
 - 5. Concerning teachers motivated by greed. (6:3-10)
 - 6. Concerning the man of God himself. (6:11-16)
 - 7. Concerning the rich. (6:17-19)
 - 8. Concluding charge to Timothy. (6:20-21)

VIII. Key Themes of the letter.

- A. The organization of a local church.
- B. Care of widows.
- C. Example of godly life.
- D. Use of wine (fermented or unfermented) by Timothy.

II TIMOTHY

Introduction: Chronologically, II Timothy is the last of Paul's inspired letters. Written from a prison in Rome, the apostle is keenly aware that his execution is imminent. It is a very personal letter from the aged apostle to his younger coworker. The letter emphasizes the necessity to guard the treasure of the gospel (1:14) and to carry on the ministry that had been passed on to him by Paul. (2:2)

Name — The book is named for Timothy, Paul's younger coworker and understudy.

Author—Paul. (II Timothy 1:1)

Purpose — Paul wrote Timothy to:

- A. Exhort him to be strong and faithful in his ministry.
- B. Warn him of trouble that lay ahead for the church.

C. Request that he come to Rome.

I. Background of the book.

A. Little is known of Paul's life and work between his release from Roman house arrest (spring of AD 62) and his second imprisonment there (summer or fall of AD 64).

1. He may have made the trip to Spain as he planned. (Romans 15:28)
2. During this period, Paul could have worked with Timothy in Ephesus and before going on to Macedonia.

B. Apparently Paul was arrested in Troas. (II Timothy 4:13)

1. A sudden and unexpected arrest would explain Paul's need for certain of his belongings.
2. In his letter, Paul called for his cloak, his books and his parchments. (II Timothy 4:13)

C. In this second letter to Timothy, Paul gave insights into his personal situation.

1. Some of his faithful coworkers were serving other churches. (II Thessalonians 4:10)
2. Other former associates had deserted Paul in his time of need. (II Thessalonians 4:10)
3. Only Luke is with Paul, and the apostle is anxious to see Timothy and Mark. (II Timothy 4:9-11)

D. While Paul does not reveal the circumstances surrounding his arrest, history may shed light on the reasons for his incarceration.

1. A huge fire destroyed most of the city of Rome over a period of nine days in July, AD 64.
2. The populace of Rome blamed Nero for the tragedy.
3. To escape blame, Nero found a scapegoat in the Christian community.
4. There followed an intense, local persecution of the church, resulting in many cruel martyrdoms,
5. Paul was most likely arrested in the aftermath of these events.

E. While his execution appeared to be certain and soon (probably executed sometime in AD 65), Paul was confident in his eternal reward. (II Timothy 4:6-8:18)

F. This letter was written to Timothy in the fall of AD 64.

II. The main message of the book.

A. This letter is a personal charge to Timothy to be faithful and steadfast in his ministry.

1. Paul encourages him not to be ashamed to testify about the Lord. (1:8)
2. He instructs Timothy to be willing to endure hardships "like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2:3)
3. Paul exhorts the young preacher to protect his personal integrity. (2:14-26)
4. The apostle warned Timothy to beware of evil doers and false teachers. (3:1-9)

B. "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction." (4:2)

III. Outline of the book.

A. Personal greetings. (II Timothy 1:1-2)

B. Encouragement to be faithful. (1:3—2:13)

1. Paul recalls his love and appreciation for Timothy. (1:3-7)
2. He charges Timothy to not be ashamed of the gospel. (1:8-10)
3. Paul recalls coworkers who have deserted and been faithful to him. (1:11-18)
4. The apostle encourages Timothy to be faithful. (2:1-7)
5. He reminds his protégé that Christ will faithfully protect and empower those faithful to Him. (2:8-13)

C. A workman approved by God. (II Timothy 2:14-26)

1. Timothy is encouraged to avoid needless controversies. (2:14-19)
2. He further encourages him to be pure in life and doctrine. (2:20-26)

D. Warnings about godlessness in the last days.

1. Paul tells Timothy of all kinds of evil behavior to will come. (3:1-9)
2. Paul charges the young preacher to hold fast to the sacred writings and the teachings of Paul. (3:10-17)
3. The apostle gives Timothy a final charge to preach sound doctrine. (4:1-5)

E. Closing remarks. (II Timothy 4:6 - 22)

1. Paul tells of his impending death. (4:6-8)
2. He shares with Timothy personal information about associates. (4:9-15)
3. Paul declares that the Lord stood with him through all these trials. (4:16-18)
4. Final greetings and benediction. (4:19-22)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. Timothy's spiritual journey.

1. Timothy was apparently converted on Paul's first missionary journey.
2. When Paul started out on his second missionary journey, only Silas accompanied him. (Acts 15:40)
3. However, Timothy joined them at Lystra. (Acts 16:1)
 - a. His mother, Eunice, was also a believer. (Acts 16:1; II Timothy 1:5)
 - b. His father, however, was a Greek unbeliever. (Acts 16:1)
4. Timothy had some disadvantages and barriers to effective discipleship.
 - a. His home life left something to be desired. (Acts 16:1-2)
 - b. He apparently had chronic health problems. (I Timothy 5:23)
 - c. He likely had a problem with shyness and timidity. (1:7)
5. Timothy also had some major assets.
 - a. He had a godly mother and grandmother. (1:5)
 - b. He had received excellent training in the scripture. (3:15)
 - c. He was deeply committed to the Lord.
6. Timothy became Paul's closest and most trusted coworker.
 - a. Twice Paul calls him his "son in the faith." (I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2)
 - b. Paul said, "I have no one else like him." (cf. Philippians 2:19-22)
 - c. Knowing his execution is at hand, Paul wants Timothy by his side. (4:9)

B. The inspiration and purpose of scripture.

1. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (3:16-17)
2. The Greek word rendered "God-breathed" (NIV) or "given by inspiration of God" (KJV) is *theopneustos*.
3. The doctrine of inspiration refers to the supernatural process of the Holy Spirit guiding certain individuals to speak and write the authoritative Word of God.
 - a. The process of inspiration did not negate the individual writing style of the authors.
 - b. The Spirit utilized the differences of background and personal interest to effectively communicate God's truth.
4. There are many claims in scripture relative to inspiration.
 - a. Jesus validated the inspired nature of the Old Testament. (Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:35)
 - b. He authorized the apostles to be agents of His inspired Word. (John 14:26; 16:13; Matthew 18:18)
 - c. Peter's second letter made essentially the same claim. (II Peter 2:21)
5. The difference between theological conservatism and liberalism lies in an attitude toward scripture.

C. Paul's faith in the face of death. (II Timothy 4:6-8)

1. Paul uses several metaphors to depict his impending death:
 - a. Being poured out like a drink offering.
 - b. Fought the good fight.
 - c. Finished the race.
2. Through it all, Paul said, 'to have kept the faith' and confidently looked forward to his reward.

TITUS AND PHILEMON

Introduction: Because of their brevity Titus and Philemon have been combined. While part of different groupings of scripture (i.e. Titus is a "pastoral epistle" and Philemon is a "prison epistle"), both are written to godly men, offering valuable instruction.

Name — Both books are named for the individuals who received them. (i.e. Titus and Philemon)

Author — Paul authored both books. (Titus 1:1; Philemon 1:1)

Purpose

A. Titus —

1. Paul wrote this letter:
 - a. To remind Titus to complete the needed organizational matters in the church on the island of Crete.
 - b. To encourage him to teach correct doctrine and refute false teachers.

B. Philemon — Paul wrote this personal letter to his friend Philemon to intercede for the slave Onesimus.

I. Background of the books.

A. Titus

1. Titus was a trusted and valued associate of Paul.
 - a. Strangely, however, he is not mentioned in Acts.
 - b. What we know of Titus is his connection with Paul's works.
2. Titus was a Greek.
 - a. He evidently was converted through Paul's preaching. (Titus 1:4)
 - b. Paul did not demand that Titus be circumcised. (Galatians 2:3)
 - c. Apparently Paul wanted to make a point to the "Judaizers" that circumcision was not a requirement for conversion to Christ. (Galatians 2:4-5)
3. Between the writing of his letters to the Corinthians, Paul sent Titus to work with the church at Corinth. (cf. II Corinthians 8:16-24)
4. Upon release from his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul took Titus with him to Crete and left him there to oversee the work. (Titus 1:5)
 - a. Crete is a large island in the Mediterranean.
 - b. The church may have been established there through Jewish converts on Pentecost. (Acts 2:11)
 - c. Titus was there to appoint elders and correct certain problems.
 - d. Paul was evidently at Nicopolis and eager for Titus to join him after finishing his work. (Titus 3:12)
5. One of the pastoral epistles, Paul wrote this letter in AD 63 from Ephesus.

B. Philemon

1. The letter to Philemon was one of the four prison epistles (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians) written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.
2. Philemon was apparently written concurrently with Colossians.
 - a. Philemon evidently lived in Colossae.
 - b. Paul sent Tychicus to accompany Onesimus and deliver the letters. (Colossians 4:7-9)
 - c. Colossians dealt with church-wide issues; Philemon addresses a personal problem.
3. To understand Philemon, one must have some understanding of slavery in the Roman Empire.
 - a. It is estimated that one third of one-half of the population of the Empire in the first century consisted of slaves.
 - b. Slavery was particularly harsh in that culture.
 - [1] Slaves were viewed as "living tools."
 - [2] Their life, death, and treatment were all at the discretion of their master.
 - [3] Slaves were acquired through battle conquest, birth, indebtedness, etc.
 - c. In New Testament times, some civil protection began to be afforded slaves. However, it was still a cruel and awful life-style.
4. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. (Philemon 18-19)
 - a. He had run away to Rome.
 - b. What's more, he had taken stolen property.
5. Somehow Onesimus came in contact with Paul and was converted. (Philemon 10)
 - a. Upon his conversion, Onesimus assisted Paul in his ministry. (Philemon 11-13)

- b. Knowing the moral obligation to square things with Philemon, Paul sent Onesimus back with a promise and a request. (Philemon 12-14)

II. The main messages of the books.

A. Titus

1. The main message of this letter was to provide Titus instruction and encouragement in fulfilling his ministry at Crete.
2. "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you." (Titus 2:15)

B. Philemon

1. The main message of Philemon was to encourage Philemon to receive, forgive and even release Onesimus.
2. "So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me." (Philemon 17)

III. Outline of the books.

A. Titus

1. Introduction (Titus 1:1-4)
2. Paul reminds Titus of the tasks he needs to complete while at Crete. (Titus 1:5)
3. The apostle reminds him of the requirements for men who would be appointed as elders. (Titus 1:6-9)
4. Paul warns him about false teachers who would oppose him. (Titus 1:10-16)
5. Paul offers instruction for teaching specific groups, including:
 - a. Aged men (Titus 2:1-2)
 - b. Aged women. (Titus 2:3)
 - c. Young women. (Titus 2:4-5)
 - d. Young men. (Titus 2:6-8)
 - e. Slaves. (Titus 2:9-10)
6. The apostle writes of the grace of God which is the basis of morality. (Titus 2:11-15)
7. Paul gives instruction about proper behavior for all believers (Titus 3:1-7) and condemns those who live otherwise. (Titus 3:8-11)
8. Final remarks. (Titus 3:12-15)

B. Philemon

1. Paul's greetings to Philemon. (Philemon 1-3)
2. The apostle expresses gratitude for Philemon's godly character. (Philemon 4-7)
3. Paul offers his plea for Onesimus. (Philemon 8-21)
4. He speaks of his desire to visit Philemon soon. (Philemon 22)
5. Closing greetings. (Philemon 23-25)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The preacher's life. (Titus 2:7-8)

1. Paul tells Titus that the quality of his life must confirm his teaching. (2:7)
2. Specifically, Paul outlined these responsibilities:
 - a. Do what is good. (v. 7)
 - b. In teaching, show integrity. (v. 7)
 - c. Have "soundness of speech." (v. 8)
 - d. Speak what "cannot be condemned." (v. 8)
3. This model and instruction are timeless.

B. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised but not Titus?

1. Paul refused to have Titus circumcised to appease Judaizing teachers. (Galatians 2:1-3)
2. He circumcised Timothy when the young man became part of his missionary team. (Acts 16:3)
3. There is no inconsistency in Paul's actions.
 - a. Timothy was not circumcised to appease false teachers but to make him a more effective minister to the Jews.
 - b. If Titus had been circumcised, it would have compromised the integrity of the gospel.

C. The ministry of reconciliation.

1. Quick and through reconciliation between Christians is a key theme in scripture. (II Corinthians 5:17-20; Matthew 5:9; 23, 24; 18:15; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:31-32)

2. The letter to Philemon provides a wonderful model of practical, relevant, Christ-centered reconciliation. That reconciliation involves:
 - a. Prayer (v. 4-6)
 - b. Politeness (v. 8-9)
 - c. Privacy (v. 10-14)
 - d. Personal
 - e. Partnership (v. 17-19)
3. The key to reconciliation is found in “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

HEBREWS

Introduction: The letter to the Hebrews is unique in its eloquent presentation of Jesus Christ as the perfect high priest and ideal sacrifice for sin. The author sees the entire Old Testament revelation as pointing directly to Jesus, who fulfills not only specific prophecies but also the intent of the Old Testament.

Author — Unknown. Internal evidence suggests that the author was a second-generation Christian (Hebrews 2:3). Suggestions that the book was written by Paul or Luke have been discarded, primarily because the Greek style is so different from the writings of either of these two men. Whoever wrote Hebrews was very familiar with the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch and --Psalms, with 23 of 29 direct quotes coming from these books. Other suggested authors include Apollos, John, Priscilla, Barnabas, and Phillip.

Place of writing — Perhaps Rome (as suggested in Hebrews 13:24). Timothy was with the writer. (Hebrews 13:23)

Time of writing — The letter was written very early. Its references to Old Testament sacrifices presume they are still being carried out, though the temple was destroyed and the sacrifices ceased in AD 70.

I. Background information.

A. Recipients — This epistle does not name the persons to whom it is addressed. But the author is quite obviously directing a defense of Christianity to the Jewish community, most likely to Jewish believers who felt drawn back to the traditions of Judaism, which they loved and revered. The book was well known as "The Letter to the Hebrews" by the late second century.

B. Purpose of the letter.

1. To show the superiority of Christ's Covenant over the Old Covenant.²¹ Throughout the letter, Jesus Christ is compared with, and shown to be better than, the Old Testament revelation.
2. To prepare Jewish Christians for the approaching fall of Jerusalem. Jewish Christians no doubt thought that their beloved city, under their Messiah's reign, was about to become the capital of the world. Instead, they were to receive the shock of their lives. By one stroke of the Roman army, the Holy City was to be wiped out, the Temple destroyed, and the Temple rites ceased.

II. The main message of the letter:

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” (Hebrews 1:1-3)

III. Outline of the letter.

- A. Introduction. (1:1-4)
- B. Superiority of Christ's Identity. (1:5 — 4:13)
 1. Superior to angels. (1:5-14)
 2. Superior as author of greater salvation. (2:1-9)
 3. Superior as true man. (2:10-18)
 4. Superior to Moses. (3:1-6)

5. Warning: Listen to Him. (3:7-4:13)
 - a. Rebellion keeps God's people from experiencing rest. (3:7-19)
 - b. Experience God's rest by responding obediently to Jesus' words. (4:1-13)
- C. Superiority of Christ's High Priesthood. (4:14 —7:28)
1. Confidence in Jesus. (4:14-16)
 2. Qualities of a High Priest. (5:1-4)
 3. Christ's unique qualifications. (5:5-10)
 4. Warning: Do not turn back. (5:11- 6:20)
 - a. Slow progress toward maturity a problem.²² (5:11-14)
 - b. Cannot lay faith's foundations again. (6:1 -3)
 - c. Cannot re-crucify Jesus. (6:4-8)
 - d. So persevere. (6:9-12)
 - e. Certain God will keep His promise and that our salvation is secure. (6:13-20)
 5. Christ's priesthood is superior to that of the Old Testament. (7:1-28)
 - a. It is modeled on Melchizedek, not Levi. (7:1-14)
 - b. It is superior because:
 - [1] It is permanent. (7:15-19)
 - [2] It was confirmed by God's oath. (7:20-22)
 - [3] It is guaranteed by Christ's endless life. (7:23-25)
 - [4] His ministry was accomplished by a single sacrifice. (7:26-28)
- D. Superiority of Christ's sacrifice. (8:1—10:39)
1. The covenant providing for Christ's sacrifice is superior. (8:1-7)
 2. The old covenant was always destined to be superseded. (8:8-13)
 3. The old covenant provided only an earthly, symbolic place for sacrifice. (9:1-10)
 4. Christ offered His own blood, not animal blood. (9:11 -14)
 5. His sacrifice ransomed us from sin. (9:15-22)
 6. His once-for-all sacrifice was sufficient. (9:23-28)
 7. His once-for-all sacrifice provides forgiveness and makes us holy. (10:1-18)
 8. Warning: Preserve. (10:19-39)
 - a. Hold unswerving to our hope in Him. (10:19-25)
 - b. Deliberate sin always brings judgment. (10:26-31)
 - c. Hold on to confidence in Christ despite suffering and persecution. (10:32-39)
- E. The sufficiency of faith: (11:1—13:19)
1. The nature of faith. (11:1 -3)
 2. Faith's hall of fame: (11:4-40)
 - a. Faith before the flood. (11:4-7)
 - b. Faith of Abraham and Sarah. (11:8-19)
 - c. Faith of the patriarchs. (11:20-22)
 - d. Faith of Moses. (11:23-28)
 - e. Faith of the exodus generation. (11:29-31)
 - f. Faith of others. (11:32-38)
 - g. Faith's promise. (11:39-40)
 3. Faith's response to discipline: (12:1-13)
 - a. Consider Christ's example. (12:1-3)
 - b. Remember God loves those He disciplines. (12:4-11)
 - c. Therefore, persevere. (12:12-13)
 4. Faith's commitment to righteousness: (12:14-29)
 - a. The importance of personal holiness. (12:14-17)
 - b. The glory of the present revelation. (12:18-24)
 - c. The importance of responding to God with reverence and awe. (12:25-29)
 5. Exhortations to the faithful: (13:1-19)
 - a. Keep on loving others. (13:1-5a)
 - b. Keep on trusting God. (13:5b-6)
 - c. Keep on responding to leaders. (13:7-8)

- d. Keep on praising God. (13:9-16)
- e. Keep on being responsive to leaders. (13:17)
- f. Keep on praying. (13:18-19)

F. Conclusion (13:20-25)

- 1. Doxology (expression of praise to God). (13:20-21)
- 2. Final Exhortations. (13:22-25)

IV. Key themes in the letter.

A. We cannot honor Jesus too highly.

- 1. He and the God, Father are one.
- 2. He rose to lift us up.
- 3. He guarantees our salvation.

B. "Rest" depends on faith and trust expressed by obedience.

C. Jesus truly understands our situation.

D. Let us ... a series of eleven exhortations:

- 1. Be careful. (4:1)
- 2. Labor. (4:11)
- 3. Come confidently to the throne of grace. (4:16)
- 4. Go on. (6:1)
- 5. Draw near. (10:22)
- 6. Holdfast. (10:23)
- 7. Consider one another. (10:24)
- 8. Throw off every hindrance and run with perseverance. (12:1)
- 9. Worship God acceptably. (12:28)
- 10. Go forth. (13:13)
- 11. Offer a sacrifice of praise. (13:15)

JAMES

Introduction: The book of James is one of the most practical and needed letters for believers in any generation. In this epistle, James deals very little with doctrinal issues; rather he focuses on the outworking of genuine faith. The letter appeals to Christians to live their lives consistent with their profession.

James offers particularly stinging rebukes against worldliness, religious pretense, and social injustice. These rebukes have led many to label James "the Amos" of the New Testament.

Name — The book is named for its author.

- 1. Several personalities named James appear in the New Testament record. (cf. Matthew 4:21; 10:3; Luke 6:16; and Mark 6:3)
- 2. By process of elimination, the only reasonable possibility is James, the brother of Jesus.
 - a. James, the father of Judas, and James, son of Alphaeus, have no link to the letter.
 - b. James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, died in AD 44—almost certainly before this book was penned.
 - c. Origen and Eusebius, early church leaders, both attribute the letter to James the brother of Jesus.

Purpose — The letter was written to believers whose lives apparently did not match their profession of faith in Christ. James reminds them (and us) that genuine faith is seen in a transformed life.

I. Background of the book

A. James, the brother of Jesus.

- 1. During Jesus' earthly ministry, James was skeptical of Jesus' claims. (John 7:3-5)
- 2. However, Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection and James became a believer. (I Corinthians 15:7; cf. Acts 1:14)

3. James became a leader of the early Jerusalem church.
 - a. Upon his escape from prison, Peter sent word to James. (Acts 12:17)
 - b. He made the definitive address at the Jerusalem conference dealing with Gentile conversion. (Acts 15:31f)
 - c. Upon return from his third missionary journey, Paul reported to James. (Acts 21:18-25)
 - d. Paul referred to James as a "pillar" in the church. (Galatians 2:9)
 - e. Eusebius, a fourth century church historian, tells us that James was nicknamed "the Righteous" and spent so much time in prayer that "his knees grew worn and hard like those of a camel."
4. Yet notice James' introduction to the letter — "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (James 1:1)
 - a. James saw his spiritual relationship with Christ as far more important than the relationship they had in the flesh. (cf. Mark 3:31 -35)
 - b. It also testifies to James' sense of genuine humility.

- B. The letter is addressed to Jewish Christians who were dispersed from Palestine because of persecution.
 1. This dispersion had occurred as a result of attacks from unbelieving Jews. (Acts 8—ca. AD 33; Acts 12— ca. AD 41)
 2. Yet the book was written before the controversy of whether to or how to receive Gentiles into the church. (ca. AD 48)
 3. Therefore, James was likely written about AD 45 making it the earliest of the New Testament books.

II. The Main Message of the book.

- A. The main message of the book of James is the practice of true religion.
- B. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. Address and greeting. (James 1:1)
- B. Trials and temptations. (James 1:2-18)
 1. The readers are admonished to consider trials as faith builders. (1:2-4)
 2. Ask for wisdom. (James 1:5-11)
 3. Preserver under trials. (James 1:12)
 4. Remember the source and nature of temptations. (James 1:13-16)
 5. Remember that God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. (1:17-18)
- C. Instructions on listening and doing. (James 2:19-26)
- D. Favoritism is forbidden. (James 2:1-13)
- E. The true nature of faith and works. (James 2:14-26)
- F. Proper use of the tongue. (James 3:1-12)
- G. "Earthly" versus "heavenly" wisdom. (James 3:13-17)
- H. Submission to God. (James 4:1-12)
- I. Daily dependence on God. (James 4:13-17)
- J. Warnings about wealth. (James 5:1-6)
- K. Patience through suffering. (James 5:7-12)
- L. The power of prayer. (James 5:13-18)
- M. Restoring an erring brother. (James 5:19-20)

IV. Key themes of the book.

- A. Hearing and doing. (James 1:22-27)

1. The command: (v. 22)
 - a. James warns against the pitfall of hearing what one should do, but not doing it.
 - b. The Greek word translated "hearer" is the root word from which we get the English word "auditor."
 - c. The truth of the gospel must be translated into concrete deeds and actions of faith.
 2. The illustration: (v.23-24)
 - a. James compares the person who "hears" but never "does" to one who sees his reflection in a mirror and does nothing about it.
 - b. Imagine seeing yourself in the mirror in your worst possible condition, and simply walking away!
 - c. James likens that foolishness to the one who sees his poor spiritual condition reflected in the truth of scripture and apathetically walks away.
 3. The application: (v. 25-27)
 - a. James first applies this truth to the tongue. (v. 26)
 - b. His next application deals with care for widows and orphans. (v. 27a)
 - c. His third application is for the "doer" to obey commands that would keep him/her from being polluted by the world.
- B. Faith and works. (James 2:14-26)
1. James attacks the false doctrine that one can have a genuine faith that does not bear fruit evidenced in good works.
 2. He makes the following assertions:
 - a. Genuine faith helps others. (v. 15-16)
 - b. A living faith produces good works. (v. 17-18)
 - c. Faith is not merely an intellectual activity. (v. 19)
 3. Then James shares historical examples of living, active, productive faith:
 - a. Abraham. (v. 21-23; cf. Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19)
 - b. Rahab. (v. 25; cf. Joshua 2:1-24; Hebrews 11:31)
 4. For centuries, the Christian world has created a straw controversy over faith vs. works.
 - a. No such controversy is found in scripture.
 - b. Scripture makes it abundantly clear that they are inseparable.
 - c. We are saved "by grace through faith," (not grace alone; not faith alone). (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - d. A living faith (i.e. — that is not dead) will always produce good works and deeds.
 - e. But no amount of good works will earn salvation.
- C. The use of the tongue. (James 3:3-12)
1. James introduces this subject by using three analogies for the tongue.
 - a. It is like a bit in a horse's mouth. (v. 3)
 - b. It is like the rudder of a ship. (v. 4)
 - c. It is like the spark that ignites a great forest fire. (v. 5b-6)
 2. In each of these similes/metaphors, James is emphasizing the constructive and destructive power in this tiny part of the human anatomy.
 3. He then specifically warns of the tongue's destructive inclinations, calling it:
 - a. An untamed beast. (v. 7-8a)
 - b. A restless evil. (v. 8)
 - c. Full of deadly poison. (v. 8)
 4. His final concern is over its inconsistent use.
 - a. With the same mouth we praise and curse. (v. 9-10)
 - b. James notes that such inconsistency is foreign to God's handiwork. (v. 11-12)

I & II PETER and JUDE

Introduction: Though they are not adjacent in our New Testaments, these three books are grouped for this study.

There is good reason to study these three epistles together. All three letters share a common concern for Christians to stay faithful. In addition, much of the material of II Peter and Jude share very obvious similarities. (cf. II Peter 2:1 —3.3 and Jude 4 - 19)

Names - Each of the letters are named for their authors.

Authors - Peter (I Peter 1:1; II Peter 1:1) and Jude (Jude)

Purpose

1. I Peter was written to encourage believers in the midst of their suffering.
2. Knowing his death was near, Peter in his second epistle wanted to remind believers of certain doctrines and warn them about false teachers.
3. Jude was going to write a letter on the subject of salvation (v. 3), but upon hearing that some individuals were departing the faith, he wrote to counter apostasy.

I. Background of the books.

A. The apostle Peter,

1. Aside from Jesus himself, Peter is the best known character in the New Testament.
2. Peter, Andrew (his brother), James and John partners in a fishing business when Jesus called them to be "fishers of men." (Luke 5:9-11)
3. All four of these men were named as apostles, and in all four lists of the apostles, Peter's name appears first. (cf. Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13)
4. Peter is well-known for his failures and lapses in faith early in his career. (e.g. Matthew 14:28-31; 16:21-23; 26:69-75)
5. However, after the resurrection Peter became the "rock" his name signifies and stood firm in the face of trial and persecution. (cf. Acts 4:18-21; 5:27-41; 12:1-17)
6. Paul called him a "pillar" of the church at Jerusalem. (Galatians 2:9)
7. It was in his later years that Peter wrote his first letter to Christians scattered among the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. (I Peter 1:1)
8. He is less specific in naming the audience of his second letter, but it was likely a follow-up to the same group of believers. (II Peter 1:1)
9. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome circa AD 65.

B. The man Jude.

1. We know little about Jude.
2. He identifies himself as "the brother of James", making him like James the half-brother to Jesus. (Mark 6:3)
3. Like James, he claims no special fleshly relationship to Jesus but identifies himself only as "a servant of Jesus Christ." (Jude 1)

II. The main messages of the books.

A. I Peter was written in the mid-60's to encourage the readers to prepare for the painful trial they would face.

1. This warning and admonition came in connection with the persecutions launched by Nero.
2. "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (I Peter 4:16)

B. II Peter was written a short time later to warn of false teachers

1. Included in their error will be scoffing about Jesus' second coming. (II Peter 3:3-4)
2. "Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position." (II Peter 3:17-18)

C. Jude seems to be a general letter to Christians telling them to contend for the faith.

1. Apparently the threat of false teachers Peter had warned about had come to pass.

2. "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (Jude 4)

III. Outlines of the books.

A. I Peter.

1. Salutation. (I Peter 1:1-2)
2. Peter praises God for a living hope. (I Peter 1:3-12)
3. He commands holy living. (I Peter 1:13—2:3)
4. The apostle uses several metaphors to describe the relationship between Christ and his believers.
5. Peter discusses a series of relationships in the life of God's people:
 - a. With unbelievers. (I Peter 2:13-17)
 - b. Slaves to masters. (I Peter 2:18-25)
 - c. Between marriage partners. (I Peter 3:1 -7)
6. He admonishes believers to live for God and to be willing to suffer for doing good. (I Peter 3:8—4:19)
7. Peter exhorts:
 - a. Elders. (I Peter 5; 1-4)
 - b. Young men. (I Peter 5:5-9)
8. Benediction. (I Peter 5:10-14)

B. II Peter.

1. Salutation. (1:1-2)
2. Peter exhorts his readers to make their calling and election sure. (1:3-11)
3. He validates the authenticity and accuracy of the prophets. (1:12-21)
4. The apostle gives a stern warning against false prophets. (2:1-22)
 - a. Peter tells of their true character. (2:10-16)
 - b. He then foretells their destruction. (2:17-22)
5. The letter ends with a reminder that Jesus is coming again (3:1-13) and an exhortation for holiness as they await that coming. (3:14-18)

C. Jude

1. Salutation (1-2)
2. After noting what he originally intended to write about (3-4), Jude announces the doom of false teachers. (5-16)
3. He exhorts believers to hold to true faith. (17-23)
4. Benediction. (24-25)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Peter's spiritual growth.

1. As stated under the "Background" section. Peter's early history is one of instability. (Matthew 14:28-31; 16:21-23; 26:69-75)
2. After the resurrection, his faith was stronger. (Acts 4:18-21; 5:27-41; 12:1-17)
3. However, even long after the establishment of the church Peter exhibited some instability. (cf. Galatians 2:10-21)
4. Throughout the apostle's life, three things were consistent in his relationship with the Lord:
 - a. His love for Christ. (I John 21:15-23)
 - b. His humility and repentance after his short comings. (Matthew 26:75)
 - c. Jesus' forgiveness and patience. (John 21:15-23)
5. These are the essential elements of the heart God can use. (cf. James 4:6; Matthew 23:12; Matthew 22:37-38; II Peter 3:9)
6. How appropriate that God would use a matured, rock-solid Peter whose past best qualified him to encourage wavering Christians.

B. The similarities between II Peter and Jude.

1. Already noted is the strong similarity between II Peter 2:1—3:3 and Jude 4:19.
2. How do we account for this similarity?
 - a. This could be a colossal coincidence, but it's not likely.
 - b. They could have both borrowed from another source, but there is no manuscript evidence of that theory.

- c. One writer may have borrowed from the other's work. This is the most plausible and likely explanation.
- 3. Apparently, II Peter was written before Jude.
 - a. II Peter warns of false teachers who will come. (II Peter 2:1)
 - b. Jude indicates false teachers have come. (Jude 4)
 - c. In all likelihood, Jude's reference to apostolic warning about such (Jude 17-18) is a reference to Peter's second letter.
 - d. It is probable that Jude's encounter with Peter's second letter prompted the change of focus in his epistle. (Jude 3-4)
- C. Suffering as a Christian: (I Peter 4:12-19)
 - 1. Every human being faces trials and suffering. (Matthew 5:45; James 1:2)
 - 2. Sometimes being a Christian brings a unique set of troubles. (Matthew 5:10-12; II Timothy 3:12)
 - 3. Why does God allow suffering?
 - a. For maturity. (I Peter 1:7; James 1:3-4)
 - b. For dependence on the Lord. (I Peter 3:14; II Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - c. To help us long for Heaven. (I Peter 1:3-4; James 1.12)
 - d. For Christ's likeness. (I Peter 2:21)

I, II and III John

Introduction: In these epistles John the "apostle of love" will share his concerns about those things that would threaten the welfare of the church at the end of the first century.

Name — The books are named for the likely author.

Author—Probably John, the apostle.

1. The author is not named in these books.
2. However, there are unmistakable similarities in vocabulary, thought pattern, and writing style between these letters and John's gospel. (e.g. John 1:1 and I John 1:1)

Purpose

1. I John was written to combat false teaching concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.
2. In II John, the apostle, wrote to warn believers about false teachers.
3. In the third letter, John wrote to commend, encourage, and instruct his good friend Gaius.

I. Background of the books.

A. Earlier in our study we examined John's life.

B. Irenaeus tells us that the apostle spent his last years in Ephesus,

1. From there, he would have served as a mentor to churches throughout Asia Minor. (cf. Revelation 1:4a)
2. I John was probably a circular letter distributed among the same group of congregations.

C. These letters were likely written from Ephesus. (ca. AD 90-95)

1. I John was not addressed to any specific person or church and probably widely distributed.
2. The second epistle was addressed to "the elect lady."
 - a. Some believe that to be a reference to a local church.
 - b. More likely, the "elect lady" was a well-known, deeply loved sister in the Lord. (II John 1:5, 13)
3. III John was written to John's friend Gaius.

II. The main messages of the books.

A. The main message, of I John is that Jesus was God come in the flesh to save humanity.

1. False teachers had infiltrated the church denying the divinity of Jesus Christ.
 - a. They denied that God could be packaged in flesh. (I John 4:1-3)
 - b. Apparently, they claimed to be sinless. (I John 1:8-10)
 - c. They were attempting to lure others into their apostasy.
2. This heretical teaching was the groundwork for the false doctrine that came to be known as *Gnosticism*.
 - a. The Gnostics regarded spirit as divine and matter as evil, thus denying the possibility of incarnation.
 - b. Gnostics believed that Jesus was a man specially used by God (beginning at his baptism) and abandoned by God (at the crucifixion).
 - c. An offshoot of this heresy — *docetic Gnosticism* — believed that Jesus was a divine spirit but not really human.
3. In his first epistle, John affirms the true identity and mission of Jesus Christ. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (I John 5:11)

B. The main message of II John is an appeal to protect the gospel.

1. The elect lady was apparently well-known for her hospitality and welcomed visiting teachers.
2. John wrote her to warn her that some of those teachers were foreign to the truth.
3. "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him." (II John 10)

C. The main message of III John is to encourage a friend.

1. John commended Gaius for his good life. (III John 3, 4)
2. Gaius encouraged others through his love and hospitality. (III John 5-8)
3. But John also warns his friend about a troublemaker named Diotrephes. (III John 2 and 9)
4. "Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who

does what is evil has not seen God.” (III John 11)

III. Outlines of the books.

A. I John

1. John outlines his general purposes for the epistle. (I John 1:1-4)
2. He writes of the nature of fellowship. (I John 1:5 — 2:6)
 - a. Fellowship and light. (I John 1:5-7)
 - b. Fellowship and confession. (I John 1:8 — 2:2)
 - c. Fellowship and obedience. (I John 2:3-6)
3. John writes of love in action. (I John 2:7-11)
4. He addresses different ages and categories of believers. (I John 2:12-14)
5. The apostle commands that believers not "love the world". (I John 2:15-17)
6. John warns against "antichrists." (I John 2:18-27)
7. We are God's children! (I John 2:28 — 3:10)
8. Love one another. (I John 3:11-24)
9. John commands that believers "test the spirits." (I John 4:1-6)
10. We love because God first loved us. (I John 4:7-21)
11. John speaks of faith. (I John 5:1-13)
 - a. Faith overcomes the world. (I John 5:1-5)
 - b. Faith is always centered on Christ. (I John 5:6-12)
 - c. One who has faith can be confident of eternal life. (I John 5:13)
12. Christians should pray for one another. (I John 5:14-17) and be on guard against sin. (I John 18-21)

B. II John

1. John writes this letter to encourage love and obedience on the part of a Christian lady and her children. (II John 1-6)
2. He warns the sister about giving hospitality to false teachers. (II John 7-11)
3. He expresses hope of seeing her soon (II John 12) and sends greeting to her nieces and nephews. (II John 13)

C. III John

1. John sends well wishes to his friend Gaius (III John 1 -4) and encourages his continued support of missionaries. (III John 5-8)
2. The apostle warns Gaius about Diotrephes. (III John 9-10)
3. He then commends Demetrius. (III John 11-12)
4. John expresses hope for a visit soon. (III John 13-14)
5. Benediction. (III John 15)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Scriptural warnings against **false teachers**.

1. In earlier lessons we have come across examples of false doctrine.
 - a. In the Galatian letter, "Judaizers" were trying to mix elements of the Law of Moses with obedience to the gospel. (Galatians 2:4-5; 5:1-6)
 - b. In the Colossian letter, a strange mix of Judaism and mysticism had led believers to bizarre conclusions about the work of Christ. (Colossians 2:4, 8-23)
 - c. In II Thessalonians, some were promoting idleness and gossiping. (II Thessalonians 3:2, 6-13)
2. What does the Bible say about false teachers?
 - a. II Peter 2:1 — But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them— bring swift destruction on themselves.
 - b. I John 4:1-2 — “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”
 - c. II John 7-10 — “Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.”

- d. Jude 4 — “For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”
 - 3. Interestingly, the use of the term "false teacher" or "false prophet" in the New Testament is reserved for those who deny the very deity and saving work of Christ.
 - a. We live at a time when many are eager to label anyone with whom they disagree about a point of doctrine as "false teacher."
 - b. While every point of doctrine is important, there have always been disagreements about their application. (cf. Romans 14; I Corinthians 8, etc.)
 - c. From a scriptural perspective, the use of the indictment "false teacher" should be used where the very heart of the gospel is denied.
- B. What is the "antichrist"?
- 1. In the early part of this century, a doctrine was born proposing that the antichrist would come just before a millennial reign of Christ.
 - a. Scripturally, that entire millennial theory is without substance.
 - b. The concept of a future individual serving as the sole antichrist is equally foreign to the Bible.
 - 2. I John 2:22 defines the antichrist — "who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son."
 - a. John further states that "many antichrists" had already come at the time of his writing. (I John 2:18)
 - b. John goes on to define the antichrist as a spirit rather than a specific individual. (I John 4:3)
- C. The assurance of salvation. (I John)
- 1. One of John's primary purposes for his first letter is to assure believers of their salvation. (I John 5:13)
 - 2. The word "know" appears in the little book 42 times!
 - 3. Our weakness in the flesh at some time causes every believer to question the assurance of our salvation.
 - 4. John gives several reasons for such assurance:
 - a. The power of the blood of Christ. (I John 1:7; 2:1)
 - b. The power of forgiveness [for Christians] enacted by our confession. (I John 1:9)
 - c. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer. (I John 4:13)
 - d. Our confession of the Christ. (I John 4:14-16a)
 - e. Our love for the brethren. (I John 4:16b-21)
 - f. Our obedience to His will. (I John 5:1-5)

REVELATION

Introduction: No book of the Bible is more puzzling to the average Bible reader than Revelation. It is a book filled with symbols, figures, and strange imagery. For that reason, many would-be students have become discouraged in their attempt to discern its message. In addition, many have been put off by its abuse as prophecy mongers *du jour* put their own spin on its contents.

Nonetheless God did not include this book for our confusion, but for our encouragement. In fact, consider a few good reasons why Revelation should be studied:²³

1. It is a revelation given by Jesus Christ. (1:1)
2. A blessing is promised to those who read it. (1:3)
3. The book presents the Christian view of history.
4. The message centers on our savior. (1:12-13; 5:2, 9-10; 12:5; 20:11)
5. The book was written to encourage God's church.

Name — The book received its name because its contents came in the form of a revelation (i.e. - vision) to the apostle John.

Author — John (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9)

Purpose — The book of Revelation was written to:

1. Encourage first century Christians to endure their persecution.
2. Let Christians of all generations know that God's good will triumph over Satan's evil as God is always in control.

I. Background of the book

A. Revelation belongs to a style/class of writing known as "apocalyptic" literature, (from Greek. *apokalopsis*).

1. The Old Testament books of Daniel, Ezekiel and parts of Zechariah belong to the same genre.
2. This style of writing was used to make a message more vivid and pronounced through the use of dramatic figures and symbols.
3. Apocalyptic literature was typically used in time of turmoil to convey a message of optimism — specifically that God is in control of history.
4. This style of literature flourished among the Jews from 200 BC to 200 AD.

B. Some characteristics of an apocalypse include:

1. The message being transmitted by vision.
2. The personification of good vs evil in some form of conflict (e.g. woman vs. dragon — Revelation 12).
3. Symbolism.

a. Numbers are symbolic.

- [1] The number 2 = something strengthened or fortified.
- [2] The number 3 = the divine number.
- [3] The number 4 = the world men inhabit.
- [4] The number 6 = evil or imperfection.
- [5] The number 7 = completion or divine perfection.
- [6] The number 10 (and its multiples) = human completion.
- [7] The number 12 = organized religion.

b. Colors have special meaning, e.g. —

- [1] white = purity.
- [2] red = blood.
- [3] black = death.

c. Domesticated animals represent God's people, while wild animals represent evil forces.

4. It often being "sealed" for future generations.

C. The major question about Revelation is how this apocalypse is to be interpreted. There are four major schools of thought:

1. The *continuous* historical view holds that Revelation is a blueprint of church history from the time of its writing to the

end of history.

2. The *futurist* school or view holds that the events of chapter four to the end of the book will take place in literal fashion just before the Lord returns for a 1000-year reign on earth.
 3. The *idealist* view makes the entire book an allegory.
 4. The *preterist* school interprets the book against the struggle that existed between Rome and the church at the time of its writing.
 5. I believe a moderate preterist view is appropriate.
 - a. It keeps the book in its historical context.
 - b. It is in keeping with the purpose of apocalyptic literature.
 - c. It keeps Revelation consistent with other scriptural teaching.
 - d. It permits the usefulness of the Revelation in any generation.
- D. Revelation was penned at a time when Christians were facing intense empire-wide persecution.
1. Toward the end of Domitian's reign (AD 81-96) the emperor proclaimed himself "*dominus et deus*" (i.e. lord and god").
 2. He erected statues of himself to be worshiped.
 3. Christians who refused to participate in this worship were subject to economic boycott or even death. (cf. 13:5-10)
 4. An aged apostle John was in exile on Patmos (an island in the Aegean Sea) when he received the Revelation. (1:9)

II. The main message of the book

A. The main message is victory in Jesus.

1. This special book was designed to let persecuted Christians know that Christ's cause will ultimately triumph.
2. Undoubtedly, the use of apocalyptic symbols and imagery instead of straight forward prose allowed the circulation of the letter without government suppression.
3. The original recipients would have understood the symbols as easily as we interpret modern political cartoons.

B. The Revelation has become a catalyst for theological nonsense when interpreted apart from its historical context, writing style, and intended purpose.

C. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must **soon** take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John." (Revelation 1:1)

III. Outline of the book

A. Introduction. (Revelation 1:1-20)

1. The purpose of the book is related and the original readers identified. (1:1-8)
2. John tells of his call to write the book and recalls his vision of the glorified Christ. (1:9-20)

B. The letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. (Revelation 2-3)

1. Ephesus. (2:1-7)
2. Smyrna. (2:8-11)
3. Pergamum. (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira. (2:18-29)
5. Sardis. (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia. (3:7-13)
7. Laodicea. (3:14-22)

C. The Vision of God Enthroned and the Scroll with the 7 Seals. (4-7)

1. Almighty God is surrounded by a heavenly host. (4:1-11)
2. John saw a book containing the destiny of mankind in the Father's hand. (5:1-5)
3. The book was taken by the Lamb as all heaven praised him. (5:6-14)
4. As the seals of the book were opened, four forces are unleashed against the church:
 - a. Conquest. (6:1-2)
 - b. War. (6:3-4)

- c. Famine. (6:5-6)
 - d. Death. (6:7-8)
 - 5. As the sixth seal is opened, the martyrs cry out for vindication. (6:9-11)
 - 6. The opening of the sixth seal begins the judgment of the church's enemies. (6:12-17)
 - 7. Prior to that judgment there is a sealing of God's saints. (7:1-17)
- D. The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets. (Revelation 8—11:19)
- 1. Seven trumpets are sounded. (8:1-6)
 - 2. The first four are blown in rapid succession and the environment is affected. (8:7-12)
 - 3. The fifth trumpet begins the torment against Rome. (9:1-12)
 - 4. The sixth trumpet envisions external invasions on the empire. (9:13-21)
 - 5. John sees an angel holding a scroll which John is told to eat. (10:1-10)
 - 6. The "temple of God" (i.e. - His church) is measured as an assurance of her divine protection (11:1-14), and the seventh trumpet sounds to signify the overthrow of her enemies. (11:15-19)
- E. Vision of the church and Her foes. (Revelation 12-14)
- 1. A new set of figures is introduced.
 - a. A woman, a child, and a dragon are the central characters. (12:1-6)
 - b. They represent Israel, Christ, and Satan, respectively.
 - 2. Satan tries to destroy Christ and His people. (12:7-17)
 - 3. He calls two allies:
 - a. A beast from the sea [Roman Empire]. (13:1-10)
 - b. A beast from the earth [Roman priesthood]. (13:11 -18)
 - 4. The triumph of the saints is secured as the "144,000" are safe at home with the Lamb. (14:1-5)
 - 5. A series of angels announce divine judgment against God's enemies. (14:6-20)
- F. The Seven Bowls of Wrath. (Revelation 15-16)
- 1. Seven more angels unleash the last and most devastating plagues against the Roman Empire. (15:1-8)
 - 2. The bowls of wrath are poured out on the:
 - a. Earth. (16:1-2)
 - b. Sea. (16:3)
 - c. Fresh waters. (16:4-7)
 - d. Sun. (16:8-9)
 - e. Throne of the beast. (16:10-11)
 - f. Euphrates River. (16:12-16)
 - g. Air. (16:17-21)
- G. The Judgment and Fall of "Babylon." (Revelation 17 — 19:21)
- 1. Rome is pictured as a harlot. (17:1-6)
 - 2. The mystery of the beast and harlot is explained. (17:7-18)
 - 3. Rome (symbolically, Babylon) is overthrown. (18:1-24)
 - 4. Heaven praises! (19:1-10)
 - 5. The beast and the false prophet are destroyed. (19:11-21)
- H. The Judgment of Satan and Humankind. (20)
- 1. The devil is bound for "1000 years." (20:1-3)
 - 2. The martyrs are raised to reign with Christ. (20:4-6)
 - 3. The final overthrow of Satan is pictured. (20:7-10)
 - 4. The judgment of humanity is described. (20:11-15)
- I. The Eternal Home. (Revelation 21-22)
- 1. John is allowed a glimpse of heaven. (21:1-22:5)
 - 2. Conclusion. (22:6-21)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

A. Common misunderstandings from the book.

1. Who are the 144,000? (Revelation 7:1-8)
 - a. Between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals 144,000 persons are "sealed" (i.e. - marked for identification and protection).
 - b. The seventh seal will usher a terrible judgment against the Roman Empire. (Revelation 8: If)
 - c. This is obviously a symbolic representation of the entire faithful church which would be subject to the persecution.
 - [1] The number is derived by using numerical symbols for organized religion ($12 \times 12 = 144$) and human completeness ($10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$).
 - [2] The number 144,000 represents the totality of the faithful church on earth.
 - d. The 144,000 are seen again in Revelation 14, safe in heaven after the ordeal.
 - e. The concept that only 144,000 people will be ultimately saved (from all humanity) is refuted by the scene in heaven of a "great multitude which no man could number." (Revelation 7:9)
2. The mark of the beast — "666".
 - a. Those who worship the "beast from the sea" (i.e. the Roman emperor) are marked with the number 666.
 - b. Numerous and bizarre attempts have been made to explain 666.
 - [1] Many have used *gematria*, a Jewish word game in which letters were assigned numerical values, to associate the mark of the beast with Nero, Hitler, etc.
 - [2] The speculations are as broad as one's imagination.
 - c. The mark of the beast is most likely a certificate given to those who worshiped at his shrines.
 - d. Non-participants suffered social and economic reprisals.
 - e. Another possibility is to simply see the "marking" of the beast as the opposite of the marking of God's people. (Revelation 7:3; 14:1)
 - [1] John says 666 is the "number of a man" or "man's number."
 - [2] Symbolically, 6 falls short of perfection, thus 666 is evil to the ultimate.
 - [3] The mark of the beast could refer to God's heavenly designation of the enemy's forces.
3. The binding of Satan and the millennium.
 - a. This is one of the most abused texts in the Bible and is central to the premillennial theory.
 - [1] This text nowhere speaks of Jesus' second coming, a reign from Jerusalem, a rapture, etc. - all of which are part of a premillennial interpretation.
 - [2] A proper interpretation can be found if the text is kept in context.
 - b. The "binding" of Satan refers to an abating of his power to continue devastating the early church through his imperial allies. (cf. Revelation 13:7)
 - [1] The two beasts and the dragon (i.e.—Satan) were an unholy trinity to destroy - the saints.
 - [2] Chapter 19 tells of the two beasts being slain.
 - [3] After their destruction, Satan is bound for 1000 years. (20:2)
 - (a) The number 1000 is sometimes used in scripture to represent a long, indefinite period of time. (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 50:10; II Peter 3:8)
 - (b) In apocalyptic literature, it is a symbol of completeness.
 - [4] In this context the binding of Satan for 1000 years refers to the duration of the Christian age.
 - c. The "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5) is not a physical resurrection, but a raising of the martyrs who died under Rome's persecution to their heavenly thrones.
 - d. The 1000-year reign of Christ is a reign shared by the exalted martyrs of Revelation; it is not an earthly experience still to come.
 - e. Revelation 20:6-7 is an intriguing conclusion to this section.
 - [1] It may indicate a final persecution of Christ's church near the end of time.
 - [2] It may simply be a dramatic description of Satan's release for the purpose of facing his final judgment.

B. God is Victorious.

1. The greatest value of the Revelation is a vivid, dramatic reminder that our great God is in control of history.
2. While it is true that evil pervades our world in epidemic proportion, that will not always be the case.
3. Revelation assures us that God's goodness will prevail, and that those whose faith is in Him will be redeemed and vindicated.
4. The final two chapters of the book offer some of the most comforting and encouraging words in all scripture.

The BibleWay Online lessons footnoted in The Outlined Bible

- ¹ For additional information about How we got the Bible refer to Compiling and Translating the Bible
- ² Spiritual Milk, Page 49
- ³ For more information on the nature of God and His image refer to Worship God and Serve Him ONLY.
- ⁴ For additional study on God's salvation refer to Planned Redemption
- ⁵ For lessons on Nehemiah see Repent, Restore and Rebuild
- ⁶ You may also be interested in The Greatest Questions Ever Asked.
- ⁷ For more information on Demons refer to Beyond The Terrestrial.
- ⁸ For additional studies of the crucifixion and Jesus' last words read The Cross
- ⁹ For a more detail study, see The Life of Christ.
- ¹⁰ Read Jesus of Nazareth on what He did while a man.
- ¹¹ For a detail study read Baptism Into Christ
- ¹² The booklet on The Church may be of interest.
- ¹³ The Holy Spirit Book is available for an in-depth study.
- ¹⁴ A lesson on What Shall We Do? asked of Peter is available.
- ¹⁵ Reconciliation with God is the theme of the entire Bible. Refer to Preparing The Way Unto Salvation
- ¹⁶ For studies in overcoming the works of the flesh refer to Living Liberated.
- ¹⁷ The Work of The Church may help in understanding your function of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- ¹⁸ For more on Gnosticism refer to Teachings, Practices and Interpretations of The Scripture after AD 100
- ¹⁹ See Are you living for the AFTER-LIFE or AFTER DEATH?
- ²⁰ Paul was a mentor to many young Christians. To learn about more Mentoring.
- ²¹ For an in depth look at the Sabbath read Sabbath.
- ²² Read Spiritual Milk to learning about your place and function in the Church.
- ²³ For an easy to read study on the Book of Revelation see The Revelation of the Apostle John.