

Lets Study Bible

**The Message of the Bible Coordinating Facts and Events for a
Clearer Understanding of the Book of Books**

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**PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA**

1950

**TO THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS CHRIST AND WHO DESIRE TO KNOW
HIS WILL MORE PERFECTLY**

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FOREWORD

AFTER more than forty years of Bible teaching to individuals in the home, to church groups, and to students in the classroom, the author is convinced that the large majority of individuals need a guide in the reading of the Bible in order to understand its purpose and to receive the most help from it.

This book is written for the average man and woman, Christians and non-Christians alike, who desire to know the Scriptures. A brief survey of each portion of Scripture is considered and then followed by an assignment for Bible reading.

This book deals with the Bible by periods. The Old Testament may be divided by the happenings of the time into seven distinct periods. These are: the beginning of all things; the Exodus, from Egypt to Canaan; the rule of the judges; the united kingdom; the divided kingdom; the captivity of Judah; and Judah restored. The books of the prophets have been placed in connection with the period during which these men delivered their messages.

The author has sought to bridge the period of about four hundred years between the Old and New Testament in a survey chapter.

The New Testament covers a brief, but very important, period; and because of its nature cannot be divided in the same manner as the Old Testament. There are, however, four distinct divisions: the gospel story, the history of the early church, the epistles, and the prophetic book.

The periods of the Bible are quite different with respect to time and content. As an illustration, the book of Genesis covers a period of more than 2,300 years, while the period of the Exodus deals with a brief time of about 128 years. In these books there is much instruction which is important in understanding the life and death of Jesus Christ. For this reason there is a difference with respect to the material allotted to the various periods and books.

Sincere thanks are due Elder and Mrs. E. E. Andross, Elder Alger F. Johns, Miss Nell Marie Remsberg, for reading the entire manuscript; and to other friends who have read portions of the manuscript, for their helpful suggestions and encouragement in the preparation of this book.

The author also wishes to acknowledge the help and inspiration received from authors of numerous books on the study of the Bible, especially H. Beauchamp's Bible Outlines for the general plan in division of the Scriptures.

May this little volume be an aid in the study of God's eternal purpose, and may it deepen the conviction that God's word is the Book for today.

Rose E. Boose

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The Message of the Book

THE Bible is a book of eternal truth, for it proclaims God's message to humanity. "The grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever." Isaiah 40:7, 8.

Since the world began, God has spoken to man through His prophets and His Son. Acts 3:21; Hebrews 1: 1, 2. In the Bible we hear the divine voice speaking to beings who are hopelessly lost. God tells of His love, which, when accepted by man, brings comfort and hope, forgiveness and salvation.

The Bible is one Book written by about forty writers who lived during a span of some fifteen hundred years. As there is one God and one Holy Spirit, so there is one word of God. Ephesians 4+6; 1 Peter 1:23. To Moses, the first writer of the Sacred Record, God said, "Write this for a memorial in a book." Exodus 17:14. To John, the last of the Bible writers, God said, "What thou sees, write in a book." Revelation 1: 11. In conclusion John, by inspiration, penned these words from the lips of our Lord, I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.... For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book." Revelation 22:16-19.

The Bible is the only book from which we may gain an accurate conception of God. It is the only book that reveals the true origin of man, his final redemption, and his rightful heritage as a son of God. 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:17. The Scriptures promise life after death and the certainty of a reward for every man. It is the only book that satisfies every longing of the human heart.

The word of God can be understood only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent His Spirit into the world to teach the believer and to guide him into all truth. John 14:26; 16:13. "The things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have ... the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Corinthians 2:11, 12.

How shall we get the most help from the Bible? Several methods may be suggested. We should read the Bible in its entirety as we do any other good book. We may read it by books-that is, by taking a book at a time, learning its message and the background of the age in which it was written. We may be benefited greatly by studying the characters of the Bible, and the personal messages sent to each person according to his needs.

As we begin, it is necessary for us to get a vision of the Bible as a whole. The Bible has a single purpose: to reveal God's love and God's will to man. It seeks to bring man back into fellowship and eternal happiness with the family of God. If we would understand this gracious plan of God, it is necessary to travel through many pages covering the history of sin and grace. At times we shall see dark shadows on the pages of history, but there will also be the bright side as we view God's long-suffering and tender mercy to the children of men.

Let us read the Bible carefully and prayerfully. Read it from Genesis to the Revelation, keeping in mind that God is the Creator of all things, Satan, the source of sin and death. The Bible deals with the glorious fact of redemption because, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "The Lord is ... long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. It also reveals the fact that, "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.

Through the gift of the Son we are assured of the final restitution of all things that sin has destroyed. On every page of the Sacred Book we will find evidences of the power of the gospel to save from sin. Saint and sinner walk side by side. All along the way, those who have experienced deliverance from sin through the saving grace of God, are seen inviting others to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8.

The events recorded in Scripture mark off the history of mankind into periods as definitely as the events in secular history mark off the rise, development, and downfall of peoples and nations. The history of the Bible is that of a conflict between holiness and sin. It is well to remember that "the conflict of the ages" began in heaven. "There was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not ... And the great dragon was cast out ... into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:7-9. When Satan was cast out of heaven he did not change his nature or his ambition to be the ruler of the universe. Isaiah 14:12-15. He brought the new theater of war to this earth. It is the same war with the same issues which began in heaven and which has continued to the present time.

If we keep this in mind as we read the Bible we shall see battles fought, with losses and gains on both sides; but there is the definite assurance that the final victory will be won by Jesus Christ.

The first battle on this earth was fought in Eden. To all appearances God's purpose was defeated and Satan gained a decisive victory. God promptly met this issue with a declaration that "the seed of the woman" would deal a death blow to the serpent, the enemy who had tempted man and caused his fall. Genesis 3:15.

Sin increased until "every imagination of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5. Satan seemed to have full control, except with the family of Noah. God checked the tide of lawlessness by sending the Flood. Later the battle raged in Egypt. At that time Satan sought to destroy God's people, and he seemed successful, until by two sudden strokes-the death of the first-born, and the experience at the Red Sea, God delivered His people. Exodus 12:29-33; 14:23-31.

When Jesus died on the cross, all the powers of evil seemed triumphant, but the Son of God came forth from the tomb victorious over death. Satan knew that from that hour he would be fighting a losing battle. His wrath was not subdued, however. Instead, he entered upon a more terrible endeavor to take with him to destruction as many as possible. Revelation 12:12, 17.

Jesus Christ has His army of loyal subjects, which He calls the little flock." Luke 12:32. To the little flock the Captain speaks, saying, In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. . . . He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death." John 16:33; Revelation 2:10,11.

In war, people are often promised "blood and sweat and tears" in exchange for gold and silver, homes, factories, sons and daughters. By such sacrifice men hope to have a few more years of comparative peace. God's loyal subjects will also suffer "blood and sweat and tears;" they too, will give of their gold and silver, their houses and lands, sons and daughters; but in the end they will receive a crown of eternal life. To them will be given a home in God's eternal kingdom. All through the ages there have been in God's army those who have not counted their lives dear unto themselves. Acts 20:24. These are the martyrs who have gone forward joyfully in the face of death in order to "save some" from the horrible wreckage wrought by sin and transgression.

The Beginning of All Things

IN THE beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1. In this simple statement God has chosen to make Himself known to His earthly children. He then gives an account of His work of creation as it was brought forth day by day. On the first day God created light and named it Day, and the darkness He called Night. On the second day God made the firmament, the blue expanse above and around the earth. On the third day all vegetation was brought forth, trees, flowers, and everything growing in the ground. The fourth day the sun, moon, and stars were created. On the fifth day the sea creatures and the fowls were created. The sixth day God made the land animals and man.

Of the creation of the fourth day we read, "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:16-18.

Thus from the beginning of time the sun has ruled our day and the moon the night. A day is composed of darkness and light. These great bodies of light are visible to all peoples on the face of the earth and speak to all of the great works of God. Psalm 19:1-6. The regularity with which they come and go gives assurance that the God who made them, upholds them, and guides them in their course.

The last act of creation was the making of man, and of this we read: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Genesis 1:27, 28, 31.

In the second chapter of Genesis, God gives some details on the work of creation which are not given in the first chapter. He tells how man and the other creatures were made. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7. The breath of life is a gift of God; and when the breath of life was breathed into man, he became a living soul.

The beasts of the field were formed of the dust of the ground. Genesis 2:19. They also have the breath of life from God. Genesis 7:21, 22. Thus all living creatures have their life from the same source. But man is far above the beasts of the field. He alone was made in the image of God, and he was endowed with greater intelligence and knowledge and given power to exercise authority over the lower animals. "Thou made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou has put all things under his feet!" Psalm 8:6.

A home was provided for man in the garden which God planted. This home was called Eden, which means "pleasantness." How beautiful it must have been, for in it grew "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." Genesis 2:9.

God now declared His creation of this earth complete. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." Genesis 2: 1. It must have been a wonderful sight to look upon creation fresh from the Maker's hand. Perfection in everything, with joy and peace among all creatures on this fair earth.

Then, as if God would add one crowning act of glory to His work of creation, He made the Sabbath.

"On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." Genesis 2:2, 3.

God made the Sabbath to be a joy and a blessing to man. Mark 2:27, 28. Man is always to remember his Creator, but in a very special manner he is to worship his Maker on this holy day. As long as time shall last, the seventh day which God made at creation, the day which He blessed and sanctified, will continue to be the Sabbath day to man. It is to be a reminder of God's great and wonderful works of creation. "The works of the Lord are great. ... He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered." Psalm 111:2-4.

Sin and Redemption, Genesis 3-5

God intended that man should live forever to enjoy the beauties of this earth and to have communion with heavenly beings. He intended nothing but joy and happiness to be the portion of man. Now there was an enemy in the universe who was bent on destroying the works of God and causing misery and destruction to all His creatures. God knew that this rebel would come to this earth and tempt Adam and Eve. He warned them of the result that would follow if they should yield to the evil one's suggestions. Obedience to the enemy would result in death.

To make certain of their willingness to obey God, a tree in the Garden of Eden was made the point of testing. Adam and Eve were not to eat of the fruit of this tree. It was a very simple request which God made, for besides this one tree Adam and Eve had for their own use "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." The question was one of great importance, however. Would man who was made in the image of God trust and obey Him, or would he choose to follow the enemy in his rebellion against God?

In Genesis 3 we find the tragic story. The outcome of the test came when Adam and Eve faced this enemy, who came in the form of a serpent. Satan spoke through the serpent. To Eve he contradicted the words of God, saying, "You shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4.

Adam and Eve, who had received nothing but good from the hand of their Creator, "distrusted God's goodness, disbelieved His word, and rejected His authority!" By this act they became sinners and brought sin upon the whole human family. They had chosen to believe the word of the rebel, and by obeying him they came under his power. They sold themselves "for naught" (Isaiah 52:3) and learned to their sorrow that in this one decision their lives were forever changed. Fear was the first evidence of a broken relation with God. Genesis 3: 10. By their disobedience they had exchanged their happiness for misery. Formerly they were free men; now they became slaves. "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Peter 2:19.

God in His great mercy did not leave Adam and Eve in this state of despair. He came into the garden with a message of hope and comfort. They could not escape from the result of their willful transgression. Sorrow and death would follow as a result of disobedience. However, God gave them the assurance that He had provided a ransom by which they might escape eternal destruction. If they chose to return to God and come under His benevolent ruler ship in glad and willing obedience, they would be set free. In the end, Satan, who had tempted them, would be brought to judgment as a rebel.

The ransom for man was the Father's own Son, who would come into the world as the seed of the woman. By His perfect life, and by taking man's penalty of death for sin He would destroy the enemy. Of this we read, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15. This refers to Christ. Read verses 9-18. In another scripture we find these words, "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things; . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." 1 Peter 1: 18, 19. These facts were revealed in the promise given to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15), where God pronounces sentence on Satan, their deceiver, in these words, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel."

Until Christ, the seed of the woman, should come, God gave to man a constant reminder of this wonderful truth in the offering of animal sacrifices. As soon as sin entered the world, God instituted the sacrificial system. The lamb that was offered for man's sins was a reminder to him that Christ, the innocent One, would die in his stead. By taking upon Himself man's transgression and by paying the penalty, which was death, He would free man from the slavery into which he had fallen, and save him from the power of sin and its penalty-eternal death.

The result of transgression is visible all about us. Still man continues to disregard the requirements of God, knowing that such rebellion against God's law will not go unpunished. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. . . . But it shall not be well with the wicked; . . . because he fears not before God." Ecclesiastes 8:11-13.

Adam and His Family, Genesis 4; 5

By their disobedience Adam and Eve forfeited their right to their home in the Garden of Eden. They were sent out into the earth to establish another home. Here they reared their family. Of the first two sons, Cain and Abel, we read that Abel was righteous (Matthew 23:35) and "Cain. . . was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). In this experience we have a dreadful picture of the result of disobedience to God.

Another son was given to Adam and Eve, and they named him Seth. Through Seth and his descendants the knowledge of God and His love and mercy were kept alive in the earth. In the family of Seth one man so fully followed the Lord that he was taken to heaven. Of him we read, "And Enoch walked with God," and "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Genesis 5:22; Hebrews 11:5.

In Genesis chapters 4 and 5 we have a brief account of the family of Adam. Adam lived for 930 years. For more than 1,500 years, two distinct lines of characters can be traced in these chapters. The righteous line of Adam through Seth and the line of the rebellious through Cain. Cain was permitted to live on after killing Abel, but prolonging his life did not benefit him or his descendants. Their sin increased from generation to generation and left untold sorrow and misery in its train.

The characters introduced here are:

God the Creator.

Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah.

Satan the deceiver.

The principal events:

Creation by the word of God in six days.

The making of the Sabbath.

The entrance of sin and its results.

The plan of redemption revealed.

Now read Genesis 1-5.

Noah and His Family, Genesis 6-9

As time went on, wickedness increased. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. . . And it grieved Him at His heart." "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth!" The method God chose in dealing with this crisis was to send a flood of waters upon the earth, "and everything that is in the earth shall die." Genesis 6:5, 6, 13, 17.

Not all had cast their lot with the wicked. Of one man it is said, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "For thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation!" Genesis 6:8; 7:1. God then commanded Noah, saying, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood!" "And thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee." Genesis 6:14, 18. It was not only Noah and his family that were to receive protection in the ark, but some of the beasts of the field were also to be preserved from the destruction soon to be visited upon the earth.

While the ark was being built, Noah preached to the people seeking to turn them from their evil course. 2 Peter 15. Instead of heeding the message, they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." Matthew 24:38. The Flood came and they were not prepared, but perished in the Flood. These godless people were given as an example of those who shall live in the last days. The Scriptures say they "knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be!" Verse 39.

After the Flood, Noah and his family came forth from the ark. The first thing they did was to offer sacrifices unto God. In this manner they acknowledged that God in His mercy had spared their lives and protected them from the fury of the Flood. With Noah and his family God made a covenant never again to destroy the earth with a flood, and as a token of this pledge placed the rainbow in the cloud. Genesis 9:8-17. God also blessed them, and commanded them as He had Adam. and Eve in the beginning. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Verse 1.

The Beginning of Nations, Genesis 10; 11

In course of time we find the family of Noah, through his sons, greatly increased. Nimrod, one of the great grandsons of Noah, began to establish himself as a leader of men and set up the first kingdom. This he did by building Babylon and Nineveh, which later became the capital cities of Assyria and Babylon. Genesis 10:9-11. As the Bible unfolds the history of mankind, more will be read of these two nations.

Another of Noah's great-grandsons, Mizraim, established his kingdom in the territory later known as Egypt. This is the beginning of kingdoms with organized governments and kings. "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood!" Genesis 10:32.

A desire for more power led some of Noah's descendants to build a tower in the land of Shinar. The tower was to reach to heaven, according to their plans. They wanted to centralize instead of scattering over the earth as God had commanded them. The building of the Tower of Babel was under way when God used His own method for scattering the people. He confused their language, and they were forced to scatter. In this manner various languages began to be used.

After this, we find the family tree of Shem, one of Noah's sons, through whom the righteous line of the human race was preserved. Genesis 11:10-32. This record takes us to the time of Abram.

In looking back over these chapters, and comparing the events with the accompanying chart, we find that there was a period of about 1,656 years from creation to the Flood, and that period was spanned by the lives of two men-Adam, and Methuselah, the oldest man that ever lived upon the earth. He lived 969 years. These two men had lived together on the earth about 240 years when Adam died. Noah lived with Methuselah for 600 years, since Noah was 600 years old when the Flood came, and Methuselah died the year of the Flood. Shem was 100 years old when the Flood came, so no doubt he also had talked with Methuselah, who had known Adam. Noah died two years before Abraham was born, but Shem lived to see Isaac grow to manhood. Thus we see that a period of about 2,000 years from the creation of Adam to the death of Shem was covered by the lives of three men, Adam, Methuselah, and Shem. God was not left without witness in the earth. The wonders of His creative works and the experiences in the Garden of Eden were passed on from family to family.

The principal characters in this Period:

Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth; Nimrod and Mizraim.

The principal events:

Building of the ark. The Flood. The beginning of nations. Building the Tower of Babel. The confusion of languages.

Now read Genesis 6-11.

Abraham and His Family, Genesis 12-25

About 350 years after the Flood and while Shem was still living, Abram was born. The time came when God called him to leave his home and kindred and go to a land that He would show him. In obedience to this call, "They went forth. . . from Ur of the Chaldees; . . . and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Genesis 11: 3 1.

After the death of his father, Abram took with him Sarai his wife, Lot his nephew, and the people who had joined themselves to him during the brief sojourn in Haran, and they traveled south and came to the land of Canaan. Here Abram lived and built an altar and worshiped God. Because of a famine in the land, Abram with his household went into Egypt for a time, and on their return to the land of Canaan they came again to Bethel to the place where he had first built the altar. Here Abram and Lot separated because of the difficulty between their servants over pasture lands for their flocks. Abram asked Lot to choose which part of the land he wanted; and seeing the plains, that they were well watered and beautiful "as the garden of the Lord" (Genesis 13:10), Lot chose to settle near Sodom. He no doubt felt he had made a wise choice and would he prospered, but he had failed to reckon with the people of Sodom, of whom God said, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Verse 13. The day soon came when God could tolerate their wickedness no longer, and Sodom was destroyed by fire. Genesis 19:24. Too late Lot learned that he had made a great mistake by his selfish choice, a choice which cost him the loss of all that life holds dear.

Abram continued in the land of Canaan. Because of his unselfish and obedient life, God made wonderful promises to him. He had promised him a son through whom all the world should be blessed, and now He promised to give him the world as an inheritance. Genesis 13:14-17. Of this promise we read, "The promise, that he [Abraham] should be the heir of the world, was through the righteousness of faith." Romans 4:13. In Genesis, chapter 15, God renewed His promise, and added that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and also "thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: . . . and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Genesis 15:13, 14. Of the fulfillment of this promise we shall learn more in the book of Exodus. At the same time God also outlined the earthly possession of Abram and his seed. It was to be from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. Verse 18. The river of Egypt is not the Nile, but a small river at the southern boundary of the land of Canaan.

Abram had waited for the promised son for many years when Ishmael was born, but Ishmael was not the child of promise. God had said: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." Genesis 17:19. When this covenant was made with Abram, God changed his name to Abraham, "for a father of many nations have I made thee." The covenant is the promise of God "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Verse 7. Abraham accepted this promise for himself and his seed, and with a sincere heart wholly devoted to doing the will of God he came into covenant relationship with the Father in heaven.

A year after this covenant was made, Isaac the son of promise was born, and God fulfilled His promise which He had made to Abraham when he left Haran, twenty five years earlier. Genesis 12:1-3.

When Isaac was a young man, God appeared to Abraham one night and said, "Take now thy son, your only son Isaac, whom thou loves, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Genesis 22:2. Abraham took Isaac, and together they went to the place appointed of God. There they made ready the altar and the wood, and at last Isaac, "the only-begotten son," was bound upon the altar. Abraham took the knife to slay his son, and there God stayed his hand. In place of Isaac, God provided a ram. "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son!" Verse 13. Then the Lord spoke again to Abraham, "By Myself have I sworn. . . . for because thou has done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou has obeyed My voice." Verses 16-18.

Here we have an experience which is unequalled in all the Bible. God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Genesis 21:12; 17:21), and yet Abraham was asked to offer him upon the altar. Abraham knew God would fulfill His promise even if He were to raise Isaac up from the ashes of the altar. Hebrews 11:17-19. Abraham was concerned with doing what God asked him to do. When this was done, God revealed to him the mystery of the sacrifice of His only Son.

The principal characters:

Abraham and Sarah, Lot and his family, Hagar and Ishmael, Isaac, Abimelech.

The principal events:

The call of Abraham. and his obedience.

God's promises to Abraham: To multiply his seed as the stars of heaven. To bless all the families of the earth. To give him an inheritance:

This earth for an everlasting inheritance. Genesis 13:14-16; compare with Romans 4:13.
The land of Canaan for an earthly possession to him and his seed. Genesis 15:18-21.
Destruction of Sodom. and Gomorrah.
The birth of Ishmael and Isaac.
God confirmed His covenant with an oath. Genesis 22:15-18; Hebrews 6:13-18.
The marriage of Isaac.
Now read Genesis 12-25.

Isaac and His Family, Genesis 26; 27

“Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife.” Genesis 25:20. Sarah, his mother, had been dead about four years. Abraham sent his trusty servant Eliezer to bring Rebekah from her home in Mesopotamia to Hebron, where Abraham dwelt.

When Isaac was sixty years old, Jacob and Esau were born. Soon after this God renewed His covenant with Isaac. “And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 26:2-4. This covenant was renewed to Isaac with the beautiful tribute to Abraham’s faithfulness. “Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” Verse 5. The same loyalty to God must possess the life of Isaac if he were to receive the covenant blessing promised to him through Abraham.

Isaac was a worshiper of the true God, as Abraham had been. He also built his altar, and through the sacrifices worshiped the God of heaven who had spared his life by providing the ram to be offered in his stead on Mount Moriah.

Isaac dwelt among the heathen as Abraham had done. God sent them there to teach the knowledge of the true God both by their godly lives and by their worship. Their witness was understood, as we learn from the contact with Abimelech, king of Gerar, who said, “God is with thee in all that thou does,” and at a later date he made a similar statement to Isaac, “We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee.” Genesis 21:22; 26:28. The witness of a godly life can never be hidden nor contradicted.

Not much is recorded of the life of Isaac during his 180 years. That he was true to God is very evident since he is always mentioned with his father Abraham as one whom God blessed.

Isaac saw his sons grow to manhood. He saw Esau, his favorite son, choose the way of sin, as Cain had done. This brought great sorrow on his family. Jacob was not perfect, but he did have a desire for God and the right way of life. In course of time God led him through much suffering to teach him lessons of honesty, patience, and obedience. Jacob learned by bitter experiences to trust God, and in his old age he had entered into the fellowship with the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac.

Isaac lived to see Jacob’s family of twelve sons and one daughter, and to know that a reconciliation had been effected between Esau and Jacob. They were both with him in his last days, and “his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.” Genesis 35:29.

The principal characters:

Isaac and Rebekah, Esau and Jacob, Bethuel, Abimelech.

The Principal events:

God renewed His promise to Isaac. Isaac’s patience with respect to the wells. Esau’s marriage. The estrangement of Jacob and Esau. Jacob prepares to leave home.

Read Genesis 26; 27.

Jacob and His Family, Genesis 28-38

Jacob was about seventy-five years old when he entered into a scheme to obtain the blessing of the first-born. The blessing of the first-born was greatly to be desired. It meant a double portion of the family inheritance. Among the people of God it had also great spiritual values in that through the family of Abraham the Messiah was to come, and to be in the family line for the fulfillment of that promise was a great privilege and carried with it great responsibilities. Loyalty and obedience in carrying out the worship of the true God and in keeping the high honor of the family chosen of God, would fall to the one who inherited the blessing of the first-born.

Early in life Esau had chosen the way of sin. He had married two wives of the heathen, and in so doing he had forfeited the right to continue in the line of the chosen family. His life of ease and gratification of self made him unfit to maintain the worship of the true God and to be His representative among the heathen nations.

Jacob desired above all else the spiritual blessings which came with the birthright. Rebekah, having seen the course taken by each of her sons, knew to whom the blessings should go. She remembered the words of God, spoken before the birth of Esau and Jacob, “The elder shall serve the younger.” Genesis 25:23. Isaac was also familiar with these words of God, but he bade Esau bring him venison that he might give him the blessing before his death.

Rebekah, hearing this, undertook to prevent the birthright from going to Esau. She did not trust God to carry out His own purpose. Like many today she forgot God and took upon herself the responsibility of a work too great for her. With the help of Jacob,

her son, the plan of deception was carried out. Jacob received the blessing of the first-born, but at a great cost. This course brought great sorrow to all, and Rebekah had to send her favorite son away to spare him from a bloody death by the hand of his brother. Jacob went to live with his uncle Laban, and Rebekah never saw him again. She died while Jacob was still in a strange land.

As Jacob left home he knew he had brought this sorrow upon himself by deceiving his aged father; and he feared God had forsaken him and that in the end he had lost the blessing he so much desired. One night as he lay down on the plains, with a stone for his pillow, his staff and the stars his only companions, the Lord gave him a dream to assure him that he was not forsaken of his God.

In his dream he beheld a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and angels of God going up and down its shining steps. Above the ladder he saw the Lord standing and speaking to him in these words: I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou lies, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goes, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Genesis 28:13-15. What joy must have filled his soul to know he was not forgotten of God and that He would go with him as he continued his journey into a strange land. The Lord is very merciful, and He is the same gracious God today that He was when He appeared unto Jacob.

This promise given to Jacob was the same promise which had been given to Abraham in Genesis 17 and to Isaac in chapter 26. It was God's covenant promise, and it carried with it the same blessings and obligations. Jacob realized this, and made a vow to be true to God and asked that he might some day return to his father's house in peace.

For twenty years Jacob served Laban. Fourteen years for his wives, Rachel and Leah. It will be remembered that Jacob asked for Rachel only, but by fraud he also received Leah. He then served six years for cattle, and during the twenty years of service Laban changed his wages ten times. Genesis 31:41. God permitted this experience to come to Jacob to teach him precious lessons he had never learned in his younger days. At the end of the twenty years Jacob left Laban, taking with him his family of twelve children, a number of servants, and great herds and much cattle. He was returning to his father's house, from which he had fled with only his staff in his hand.

Esau, hearing of his coming, set out to take revenge for his having got the birthright. This news reached Jacob and caused him great anxiety. After doing all he could to secure the safety of his family, and to appease the wrath of Esau, Jacob was left alone to seek help from God. God sent an angel to Jacob, and here in this night Jacob received victory over his sins and assurance of protection from the wrath of Esau. At this time Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and in later years his descendants were known as "the children of Israel."

When Jacob stood before Pharaoh he summed up the days of his pilgrimage in these words: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Genesis 47:9. Jacob had also had many evidences of God's mercies. A number of times during his pilgrimage God had sent angels to direct and comfort him. His twelve sons became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. He saw Joseph, his favorite son, come to great honor. He saw a partial fulfillment of the promises of God to Abraham and his seed.

The principal characters:

Jacob, Leah, and Rachel; Jacob's twelve sons and their sister Dinah; Laban and his sons; Pharaoh.

The principal events:

Jacob left his father's house because of the wrath of Esau.

Twenty years' sojourn with Laban.

Return to his father's house.

Rachel's death.

The loss of Joseph.

Jacob and his family move to Egypt.

Now read Genesis 28-38.

Joseph, Genesis 39-50

Jacob was about ninety years old when Joseph was born. He was the son of his old age, and the first-born of Rachel. In his youth Joseph had dreams and visions which indicated the high position which he would some day occupy. His brothers were jealous because of his dreams and the special favor which Jacob showed him; one evidence of which was his robe of many colors. Genesis 37:3-11.

When Joseph was a young man his father sent him to find his brothers who were some distance from home feeding their herds and flocks. Mile on this mission his brothers sold him for a slave into Egypt. By this act they thought to put an end to his dreams' coming to pass. Genesis 37:18, 22, 27. After they had sold Joseph they came face to face with the necessity of giving some explanation to their father for his disappearance, and for this purpose they deceived their father by representing that Joseph had been killed by wild beasts. "Joseph is dead, said Jacob, and nothing that his family could do would comfort him. Some years before, Jacob had deceived his father, and while God had forgiven his sin, the seeds sown were bearing fruit. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7. The crime of these wicked men was buried in their hearts for several years, but God's word declares, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23), and this certainly proved true in this case.

A famine came upon the whole country, and want and distress were everywhere. In Egypt there was plenty, and Jacob sent his sons there to buy food. Here Joseph made himself known to them and told them, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Genesis 45:7. He asked them to bring their father, Jacob, and all their families with their herds, and dwell in Egypt where they would be nourished, and receive the good of the land. When Jacob's family moved to Egypt there was fulfilled the words which God spoke to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs." Genesis 15:13. These words and the dreams which Joseph had as a lad were fulfilled at this time. Genesis 37:5-9; 42:6.

He who sees the end from the beginning can bring order out of confusion. To those who put their trust in Him, these experiences should bring great comfort. God does not always lead His people in pleasant places, but He is always with them in the path they must tread. Think of Joseph, on his way to great honor and to being ruler of Egypt as well as lord over his brothers. The way led him into slavery and imprisonment where his "feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him." Psalm 105:18, 19. Joseph was as true to God while he was in prison as when he was made ruler of Egypt. To such a one God reveals His mighty power and trusts him with the highest blessings and privileges.

The glamour of Egypt did not dim Joseph's vision to the promises of God. His last recorded words are a testimony to his faith in these promises. I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from hence." Genesis 50:24, 25.

This request was not forgotten. When God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage as He had promised Abraham (Genesis 15:13, 14), they carried Joseph's bones with them. When they reached the land of Canaan, his bones were buried in Shechem, in the inheritance of the children of Joseph. Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32. Joseph lived to be 110 years old.

The principal characters:

Joseph and his brothers; Potiphar and his wife; the baker, the butler; Pharaoh; Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

The principal events:

Joseph's visions and dreams; sold to Egypt; Joseph in prison, Pharaoh's dream; Joseph ruler of Egypt; makes himself known to his brethren.

In the book of Genesis we have a brief history of more than 2,300 years from creation to the death of Joseph. In this record we have the account of the beginning of all things; not only the material things, but of the spiritual things-the great truths of the word of God. These great facts of faith dealing with God and man, with sin and righteousness, will, through the writings of the prophets, grow and blossom into full significance.

In Genesis we have the history of three families: the family of Adam, the family of Noah, and the family of Abraham as it expands through Isaac and Jacob and Joseph.

When the message of Genesis is understood, it is less difficult to understand the rest of the Bible. So if this message is not clear in your mind by having read it once, read it again until it becomes as familiar to you as the happenings of yesterday. The God who dealt patiently with those of former years is the same merciful God with whom we have to do. Let this be a source of comfort to each one who reads these words.

Now read Genesis 39-50.

The Book of Job

The book of Job gives us no clue as to its author, but it does reveal something of the time when Job lived and passed through his afflictions. It was during the days of the patriarchs. His age itself would place him in that period, for it says: "After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." Job 42:16, 17. We do not know how old he was when the afflictions came to him, but he was a wealthy man and had a large family, and from the record of his life he had varied experiences and responsibilities. Another reason why we may place him in connection with the patriarchs is the fact that he offered sacrifices for his family, acting as priest in his own household, as did Abraham and Jacob.

The afflictions of Job are spoken of in the Scriptures, and Job is always mentioned as a righteous man. Ezekiel 14:20; James 5: 11.

From this book we learn that God does not send suffering and afflictions upon His people. Satan is the one who afflicts, but God permits the affliction for a purpose. In the end, Job gained rich experiences through suffering, and this record has been a comfort to many in all ages.

For the reasons stated above we place the book of Job in connection with the lives of the patriarchs.

Now read Job in these divisions: chapters 1-11; 12-31; 32-37; 38-42.

From Egypt to Canaan

WE NOW come to the second period in the unfolding of the history of mankind, when the children of Israel were delivered from their bondage in Egypt and brought to Canaan, the land promised to their fathers. The books which deal with this period are

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. This period from the birth of Moses to the death of Joshua covers a brief time of about 128 years.

There were about sixty-four years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses, and in that brief time great changes came to Israel. Instead of being honored and protected in the land of Egypt, the children of Israel became slaves, and they were made to serve cruel taskmasters.

Exodus

In Egypt a new king came to the throne, and of him it is said, He “knew not Joseph.” Exodus 1:8. These evil days are vividly described in these words: “When the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose. . . . And evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born!” Acts 7:17-20.

The promise referred to here is the promise to Abraham, in Genesis 15:13, 14, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them: . . . and afterward shall they come out with great substance!”

The time for their deliverance finally came, and Moses and Aaron were sent to Pharaoh with a message from God, “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.” Exodus 5: 1. To this message Pharaoh challenged God with these proud words: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Verse 2. God had warned Pharaoh of the consequences if he refused to let Israel go. If thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.” Exodus 4:23.

Because of this refusal ten plagues were sent on Egypt. The first threatened was the last to be visited upon them. In this experience God showed His mighty power above the false gods of Egypt. Exodus 12:12. Even the magicians had acknowledged the superiority of God during the plagues, and now it was to be revealed to all nations that Israel was not forgotten of their God. They were His chosen people, and God had promised to deliver them from their cruel bondage and reward them with great substance. Genesis 15:13, 14.

On the night of their deliverance God directed that a lamb should be slain and the blood sprinkled on the “side posts and on the upper door post of the houses,” and where the blood was thus sprinkled the destroying angel would not enter.

The sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb was the sign of faith in God’s promise. “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt. . . . And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Exodus 12:12, 13.

In this experience, God once more revealed His plan of redemption through the death of another, as He had done to Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Of the true Passover we read, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” 1 Corinthians 5:7. As the sprinkled blood of the lamb protected the first-born of Israel, so the blood of Christ, representing His death for us, when received by faith is the only protection against the final destruction which will come upon the impenitent.

When Israel went into Egypt they numbered seventy persons. Joseph was already in Egypt. God had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that He would multiply their seed. To Abraham He had said: “I will make of thee a great nation.” Genesis 12:2. At the time of the Exodus Israel numbered “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.” The women were not counted. In this wonderful growth, another of God’s promises was fulfilled.

As this mighty host of the Lord left Egypt, their travels were directed of the Lord by the pillar of a cloud by day and of fire by night. This was their protection by day and by night. Exodus 13:20-22; Numbers 9:15-23.

They had not traveled many days when they found themselves at the Red Sea, the Egyptians following them with the intention of returning them to Egypt. In their distress they cried unto God, and He opened the Red Sea so that they passed over on “dry ground” and escaped from their enemies. The waters which were parted for Israel sent the Egyptians to their destruction when they sought to cross by the same path. Then followed the song of praise and thanksgiving for their deliverance.

After this God put them to a test on their willingness to obey His law. Exodus 16:4. The Sabbath, which God had made for man’s spiritual development at the end of creation week, was still the holy day which God had blessed and sanctified. God still wanted His people to remember to keep that day holy and apart from the six working days, and in the giving of the manna He sought to impress this important truth more firmly upon their minds.

Soon after leaving Egypt the vast host of Israel was organized into companies. “Thou shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens!” Exodus 18:21. Moses was to remain the head of the organization, as God had chosen him to be the visible leader of the people. He was to administer the laws given by God. At a later time God chose seventy men, who were called elders, and these were to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Numbers 11:16,17. The organization was as follows: The Lord, Himself, was the true Leader of Israel. Exodus 13:20-22; Numbers 9:15-23. Moses, with seventy elders to assist him, was the visible leader; then the rulers over various groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

Not only was the congregation organized, but the arrangement of the camp was by command of the Lord. Each tribe and family had his definite place assigned in the camp, and the order of march was also according to laws given by God through Moses. See Numbers 2 and 10:11-28.

There is law and order in all the works and government of God, and here we see that the same principle holds true with respect to His church. The children of Israel during their sojourn in the wilderness are spoken of as the church. Speaking of Moses,

Stephen said, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us." Acts 7:38.

The principal characters in this section are:

Moses and Aaron and Miriam and Zipporah. Jethro and Pharaoh.

The principal events: The affliction of Israel, the birth of Moses. His flight to Midian, his call, the plagues, the Passover, deliverance at the Red Sea, the encampment at Sinai, organization of the camp.

Now read Exodus 1-19.

The Law and Covenant

In the third month after leaving Egypt they came to Mount Sinai, and there they camped for about a year. Here God began to prepare them for their new home in the land of Canaan, with its privileges and responsibilities. He gave them laws and commandments, statutes and judgments, the purpose of which are expressed in the following statement: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day." You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess." Deuteronomy 6:24; 5:33.

The law of God had grown out of man's relationship to his Creator, and men's relationship to each other. These principles had existed from the beginning and had been recognized as the standard of right. When Adam and Eve sinned they violated the greatest commandment, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and when Cain killed his brother, he violated the second commandment, "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." Matthew 22:37, 39.

Of Abraham it was said, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. Before Israel came to Mount Sinai, God proved "them, whether they will walk in My law, or no." Exodus 16:4. This He did by giving the manna on six days and setting apart the seventh day, which is the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. For many years Israel had been in slavery to the Egyptians. They had been cruelly oppressed and in their affliction had almost forgotten God and His righteous law, and for this reason God at Sinai revealed His glory and His greatness in giving the Ten Commandments in an audible voice. The people "heard His voice out of the midst of the fire." Deuteronomy 5:24. Moses said, "God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin not." Exodus 20:20.

This law of Ten Commandments spoken by God on Mount Sinai, and recorded in Exodus 20:1-17, is the fundamental law of God's government, and as such it is binding on God's people in all times and in all places. Since Israel had been called to be a "holy nation" occupying a unique place among the nations of the earth, God here gave them His holy law in flaming fire that they might be conscious of its importance.

The promises of God to Israel were conditioned on their obedience to this law. The Ten Commandments were written by God, engraved on two tables of stone and delivered to Moses when he was in the mountain with God. See Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15, 16. (NOTE: The first tables were broken by Moses because Israel had broken the law. Exodus 32:17-19. God once again wrote the law on tables of stone, and these tables were preserved in the ark. Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 10: 1-5.)

God gave other laws in addition to this fundamental law. These laws grew out of God's fundamental law-the Ten Commandments-and are all based on the great law of love, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40.

These other laws were delivered to Moses, who wrote them in a book and gave them to the priests, who were to teach them to the people. Deuteronomy 31:24-30.

These laws established the plan of organization for Israel, regulated their inheritance in the land of Canaan, and specified their relation toward the nations about them. Leviticus 20:23; Numbers 34-36; Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

There were laws which regulated all social life, such as marriages (Leviticus 18), children's duty to parents (Leviticus 19:3; 20:9), the care of widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22-24), the relation of master and servant (Exodus 21:1-6; Deuteronomy 15:12-18; 24:14,15). Neighbors, strangers, the poor and infirm, were all protected by just laws. Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33, 34.

Punishment for crime such as maiming of another's person, destruction of his goods, stealing, kidnapping, murder, etc., were all included in the just laws of Israel. See Leviticus 19: 11; Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7; Exodus 21:26-36; 22:1-15; 21:14, 15.

God also gave laws to regulate the business world. He required just weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-37), prompt payment of wages (Leviticus 19:13), safety regulations in building (Deuteronomy 22:8), and many kindred matters. There were health laws, giving instruction on diet (Leviticus 11) and sanitation (Deuteronomy 23:13), as well as segregation for diseases which would affect the well-being of others (Leviticus 13-15).

As we read of God's care for His people we can better appreciate the words of Moses when he said, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh

unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

After the law had been given, the people entered into a solemn promise or covenant to keep the law: "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Exodus 24:3. Three times they had made this promise—once before the law was spoken (Exodus 19:8) and twice after they had heard God's requirements (Exodus 24:3, 7). After hearing their promise of obedience, "Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Exodus 24:8. By this act the covenant was now ratified or sealed, and no change could be made. The blood that was sprinkled signified the death of the one who made the promise, and of this Paul says, "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto." Galatians 3:15. And, again, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives." Hebrews 9:16, 17.

Thus when Israel made promises at Sinai they bound themselves to obedience to God's requirements or to the penalty for violation of God's holy law. That penalty is death.

How faulty human beings are when they trust to themselves is revealed here when in a few weeks from this time they were worshipping the golden calf and preparing to return to Egypt. "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel.... They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea." Psalm 106:13-22.

The justice of God cried, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Exodus 32:10). But here again in answer to the prayer of Moses, "mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13), and because our God is "merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" He forgave their iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6, 7). It must never be forgotten that in the same connection, God also said, He "will by no means clear the guilty." The leaders in this rebellion were destroyed. Exodus 32:27. Those who were left repented and sought God's mercy in forgiveness, and God forgave them and promised to be with them as they went on toward the land of Canaan. Exodus 33.

The favors and blessings which came to Israel after this experience did not result from the covenant relationship entered into at Sinai, for they had broken that covenant by their disobedience and it was of no more value. It became known as the old covenant. All the blessings and favors they would enjoy from this time would come to them under the covenant which God had made with Abraham and his seed. This covenant had not yet been ratified or sealed with blood, which was necessary in order to make it sure. It could not be ratified or sealed until Christ should come and die for the sins of the world. His blood would seal the covenant of mercy made when sin came into the world. This covenant was reaffirmed to Abraham and to his seed. In this covenant God extends the mercy and forgiveness which poor sinners need. In that covenant God calls man into fellowship with Himself. "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will. . . be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Genesis 17:1-7; see also Genesis 22:15-18.

Because this covenant was ratified or sealed at a much later date, when Christ died on the cross, it is called the "new covenant." Christ made mention of this on the night of His betrayal, when "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:27, 28.

The plan of redemption has been the same in all ages, and was made known to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:15. Through the mercy of God He gave His Son to die in man's place. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8. From earliest times God has entreated man to turn from his evil ways, to return to Him by confession and forsaking of sin, and by faith in Jesus Christ who died for him, and God has promised forgiveness and cleansing from all sin. This cleansing is made possible through the blood of Christ. 1 John 1:7, 9; Hosea 14:1, 2.

More than this, He promises to give a new heart and a new spirit in exchange for the old heart which we are told is "deceitful. . . . and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9; Ezekiel 36:26.

This work of grace is implied in the covenant or promise made to Adam and Abraham and renewed to Israel. Genesis 3:15; 17:1-7; Exodus 33:14-16; 34:1-17.

As you have read these brief notes on the laws given by God you have noticed that these laws are not all given in one book. They are interspersed with other instruction. Now read Exodus 19-24.

The Sanctuary

When Moses went into the mountain to receive the law (Exodus 24:12-18), God also gave him instruction concerning the building of a sanctuary as a central place for worship, and from which they might learn more concerning the plan of redemption. God said, "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8.

God showed Moses a pattern and gave commandment that "according to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." Exodus 25:9.

The description of the sanctuary follows. The furniture consisted of the ark with its cover, or lid, which was called "mercy seat;" the table of show bread; the golden candlestick; and the altar of incense which is described in Exodus 30:1-10.

The ark was a chest about three feet nine inches long, two feet wide, and two feet high. The mercy seat, or cover for the ark, was made of pure gold, and at either end of the mercy seat was the figure of an angel, also of pure gold. Of all the articles of furniture in the sanctuary, the ark was the most sacred, because in it was the law of God, the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy 10:1-5. Upon

the table was the show bread, which was put on fresh every Sabbath. Leviticus 24:5-9; 1 Chronicles 9:32. In the lamps of the candlestick there was to be "pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. Exodus 27:20. Upon the golden altar, incense was to burn always. Exodus 30:7, 8, 22-38.

In chapter 26 the tabernacle structure is described. Three sides were made of boards overlaid with gold. The boards, "standing up," were fitted into silver sockets and held in place by rods or bars passed through rings in each board.

Four layers of curtains covered the tabernacle. The curtains were made in sections and fastened together by fifty golden pins passed through loops in the edge of the curtains. These pins are called "taches." Each curtain was of a different material.

At the entrance of the tabernacle was a beautiful curtain, and another curtain of like material made the partition between the two apartments, which are called "the holy" and "the most holy place." In the inner apartment, the most holy place, was the ark of the testimony, with the mercy seat covering the top. In the holy place was the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of show bread.

The tabernacle was surrounded by a court made of linen hangings on brass pillars which were fastened in silver sockets. The court had a large gate or entrance, at which was a beautiful curtain like the one at the entrance of the tabernacle itself. Exodus 27:9-19. In the court were two pieces of furniture. First the altar of burnt offering, which was made of brass, and between the altar and the tabernacle was the laver—a brass basin containing water. It was the fountain for cleansing. Exodus 27:1-8; 30:17-21.

The sacrifices were offered upon the altar of 'burnt offering in the court, and the fire upon this altar was kindled by God and was never to go out. See Leviticus 9:22-24; 6:12, 13.

The gifts for the erection of this beautiful structure were to be freewill offerings given "willingly with his heart," and the response was most gratifying. In fact the people were restrained from bringing all they wanted to. Exodus 25:1-8; 35:29; 36:5-7.

When the materials for the building and all the furniture were made, Moses assembled them and placed the furniture as God had directed. The entire sanctuary with its furnishings were then anointed with holy oil. "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Exodus 40:33, 34. After this the glory of the Lord was always above the mercy seat between the cherubim. Exodus 25:22. The presence of God was also visible to the people in the cloud by day and the fire by night which was over and above the tabernacle. Numbers 9:15-23.

This structure was known as the sanctuary, the tabernacle, the tent of the congregation, and the tent of the testimony. The latter term was given it because it contained "the ark of the testimony," and that name was given to the ark because in it was the law of God, the Ten Commandments.

Priests

The sanctuary was erected for a definite purpose. "That I may dwell among them," said God. After the tabernacle was dedicated, Aaron and his four sons, whom God had chosen to minister in the sanctuary, were set apart for their sacred office. They were to minister 'between God and the people.

Splendid garments had been prepared for them according to God's instructions. The garments were symbolic of their holy office and work. At the time of the consecration of the priests they were anointed with holy oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 133. Seven days were spent in solemn dedication to God, setting the priests apart to be holy unto the Lord. At the end of that period, Aaron offered the first offering in the capacity of the high priest. It was his first offering in behalf of the people. God accepted this consecration and this offering and showed his acceptance by sending fire to consume the offering. Leviticus 9:1-6, 22-24.

The garments of the priests are described in Exodus 28, the consecration service in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, the first offering in Leviticus 9. The fire kindled by God at that time was sacred fire and the only fire to be used in connection with the sanctuary services. All the fires in the various sanctuary services were kindled from the original flame.

When the sanctuary and the priesthood had been established, the people assembled daily before the entrance of the sanctuary for their morning and evening worship. There God met with them to extend His blessing as they came into His presence.

It will be seen from a study of the services of this sanctuary that they were to continue till the time of Christ. He was the true Lamb of God who was to die for the sins of the world, and all the offerings of the earthly sanctuary pointed to the cross. Now read Exodus 25-40.

Leviticus

This book is a continuation of instruction and legislation which God gave through Moses. The larger portion of the book deals with various sacrifices and offerings and the priesthood which centers in the sanctuary.

The first seven chapters deal with laws concerning specific offerings, such as burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings.

There are three chapters which deal with the priests, their consecration, the time of service in the sanctuary, and the penalty for violating their sacred vows. They are chapters 8-10.

Chapters 11-15 deal with health laws. These begin with instruction on diet, the clean and unclean foods. Some flesh may be eaten and the flesh of other animals may not be eaten; it is unclean. This distinction between the clean and unclean animals was not a new order of things. This had been regulated by God from the earliest times. At the time of the Flood, Noah was commanded, "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female." Genesis 7:1

The reason for this is given in these words: “You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby. For I am the Lord your God: you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. For I am the Lord that brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” Leviticus 11:43-45.

The remainder of the book deals with divers laws and ordinances for the people and for the priests. Chapters 23, 25 tell of certain days which are set apart as holy days. Some of these feasts were commemorative, and others were prophetic of the events in the gospel plan.

There are two chapters in this book which we need to study very carefully. They are chapters 4 and 16. These contain great truths regarding the plan of redemption and show us how God deals with sin. In chapter 4 we have instruction on the sin offering, and we find that sin is the transgression of the law then, as now. Leviticus 4:1, 2; 1 John 3:4.

If the priest sinned, he was to bring a ‘bullock for a sin offering. He then placed his hand upon the head of the animal, confessing his sin, and by confession the sin was imputed to the animal, which died instead of the priest who had committed the sin. Some of the blood was then taken into the tabernacle and sprinkled before the veil. The blood represented the life of the victim, and God accepted this sacrifice as a type of the blood of Christ which would be shed for the sins of the world. Of the atonement by blood we read: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls.” Leviticus 17:11. The body of the bullock was then taken outside the camp and burned. Leviticus 4:1-12. This also was a type of the sacrifice of Christ, who “suffered without the gate!” Hebrews 13:12.

If the whole congregation sinned, the sacrifice and service were the same as for the priests. Leviticus 4:13-21.

When the ruler sinned he brought a male of the goats and confessed his sin upon the head of the goat. He then slew the animal, and the priest sprinkled the blood upon the altar of burnt offering. None of the blood of the goat was taken into the tabernacle to make atonement. The priest who offered this sacrifice was to eat a portion of the flesh, thus taking into his own body the sin of the penitent ruler, and he went in before the Lord and made the atonement. Leviticus 4:22-26; 6:24-30.

The promise is, “And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.” Leviticus 4:26. Here we see that the priest, as well as the animal which was sacrificed, was a type of Christ. For of Him we read, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.” 1 Peter 2:24.

Of the offering for the common people it is stated a female of the goats was to be brought, but the services in making the atonement were accomplished in the same manner as for the ruler. Leviticus 4:27-35.

These are the facts revealed in this chapter: Sin is the transgression of the law. When sin came to the knowledge, the offering was to be made. Leviticus 4:23. The animal was brought before the door of the tabernacle, the sin was confessed, the animal was slain at the altar, and the atonement was made by the priest in the tabernacle before the Lord. The slain animal was the means by which the atonement was made whether it was made by sprinkling of the blood in the holy place, or by the priest who bore the sins of the people in his own body, and presented them before God. When the atonement had been made, the Lord’s promise was that the sinner was forgiven.

In chapter 16 we read of another service closely connected with the service of the sin offerings and atonement which was carried out daily. This other service came only once a year, and on a specific day, the tenth day of the seventh month. Of this we read: “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. . . . And he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.” Leviticus 16:30-33.

This day was called the “Day of Atonement” and also the day of cleansing the sanctuary, because it will be noticed that the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar are all mentioned as needing to be cleansed, together with the priests and the people. The sanctuary and the altar had been polluted by the sins of the people, and on this day the cleansing work was to take place.

In reading Leviticus 16:1-14 we see that the priest must first make an atonement for himself and his household before he could minister before God on behalf of the people. On this day he was to enter within the veil into the very presence of God, and sins must be put away before he could stand in His presence.

After his own offering had been presented, the priest was to select two goats and cast lots upon them, one goat for the Lord to make an atonement with Him; and the other goat is called the scapegoat. It is very evident that the second goat was not for the Lord, for it says “one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” Leviticus 16:8. Again we read, “And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.” Therefore it is clear that only the one goat was a type of Christ, and not both the goats. The Lord’s goat was to be slain and the blood of that goat taken into the most holy Place of the tabernacle and sprinkled before the mercy seat. In the ark, under the mercy seat, was the law of God which the sinner had broken and the penalty for transgression was death. But God had declared Himself to be “merciful and gracious, . . . forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exodus 34:6, 7), and of this fact the mercy seat was a symbol. As the blood was sprinkled before the mercy seat, the complete atonement and cleansing were effected for the sinner and the tabernacle and all that pertained to the service. Then the priest left the presence of God, and as he passed out into the holy place, the first apartment, he sprinkled the blood on the altar of incense and in the first apartment and so went out into the court. Here the scapegoat was brought before the priest, and we read, “And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. And

Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” Leviticus 16:20-22.

The two principal beings in this tragic drama of the universe are: Satan in whom sin originated (1 John 3:8; Ezekiel 28:15) and our Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer from sin (Matthew 1:21; Titus 2:14). Both are represented in this service. The Lord’s goat, whose blood cleansed the sanctuary, represented Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, whose blood “cleanses us from all sin!” 1 John 1:7. The scapegoat represented Satan, the one who is responsible for all sin. John 8:44.

Men the sanctuary had been cleansed and the reconciliation had been made by the blood of the Lord’s goat, the scapegoat is brought forth, and upon his head are placed all the sins which had been confessed and forgiven through the year just past. The, priest who had made the atonement for the people, now in symbol returns the sins to the originator of sin, and the scapegoat is then removed from the camp of Israel. Of this it is said, “His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own plate.” Psalm 7:16. All who had complied with the requirements of God in the confession of their sins and had brought their sacrifices to the priests were now as clean before God as if they had not sinned. Those who had not confessed their sins and brought their offerings by which the atonement could be made for them, were cut off from among Israel. Leviticus 23:29. It was a solemn day, a day of life and death to all. A day of judgment which no man could escape. On that day there was a “remembrance again made of sins every year.” Hebrews 10:1 But for all who followed God’s requirement there was also the promise, “On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you. . . . that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord!” Leviticus 16:30.

Now read Leviticus in this order: chapters 1-7; 8-10; 11-15; 16-22; 23-27.

Numbers

The book of Numbers is likely so named because here is recorded the numbering of Israel, first while they were still at Sinai, and the second numbering took place at the end of their thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness. Numbers 1:1,2; 26:1, 2.

In the second numbering it was revealed that the older generation, the adults who left Egypt, had died in the wilderness. This they had requested when they met with hardships, and God had said: “As truly as I live. . . . as you have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. . . . But your little ones... . them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.” Numbers 14:28-31. The final result was: “There was not left a man of them, save Caleb. . . . and Joshua.” Numbers 26:65.

In the book of Numbers we find the record of most of the rebellions which took place between Egypt and Canaan. While God did not clear the guilty, He was very merciful and long-suffering with Israel, remembering His promise to Abraham that his seed should inherit Canaan.

The principal characters:

Moses and Aaron; Caleb and Joshua; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; Balak and Balaam.

The principal events:

Numbering of Israel. Spies sent to Canaan. Murmuring of the people. Rebellion of Korah. Prophecies of Balaam.

Sin of Israel at Baal-peor.

Note: In connection with the rebellion of Korah see Numbers 26: 11; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6.

Now read Numbers in three sittings: chapters 1- 12; 13-24; 25-36.

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a book of reviews, as its name indicates. Here Moses rehearses the experiences of Israel from the time they left Egypt till, at the end of forty years, they are on the borders of the promised land. After this review had been given, the covenant was renewed with the new generation. They were children when they left Egypt, and now they were men upon whom rested the responsibility of carrying out God’s instructions regarding the land of Canaan. It was necessary that they should be reminded of God’s purpose and that they should enter into covenant with God to carry out His requirements. Deuteronomy 29-33.

When Moses had given his last instructions, warnings, and admonitions he went alone into Mount Nebo, and there he died at the age of 120 years. The life of Moses was divided by three distinct experiences of forty years each. Forty years he was the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; forty years he was a shepherd in the land of Midian; and forty years he was the leader of Israel. Acts 7:23,30; Deuteronomy 34:7. Of him it is said, “Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.” Hebrews 3:5.

Now read Deuteronomy in these three divisions: chapters 1-13; 14-26; 27-34.

Joshua

Before the death of Moses, God spoke unto him saying: “Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge.” “And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee.” Deuteronomy 31:14, 23.

In harmony with this charge the book of Joshua opens with these words: “Now after the death of Moses... the Lord spoke unto Joshua; . . . Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people. . . . Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper whither so ever thou goes.” Joshua 1: 1-7.

In preparation for their crossing the Jordan, Joshua sent two spies, saying, “Go view the land, even Jericho.” Joshua 2: 1. On their return, “They said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.” Verse 24. Preparations were made, and the Jordan was crossed and Israel camped in Gilgal. Here they kept the Passover; here the manna ceased after forty years; and it was at Gilgal that “the Captain of the Lord’s host” met Joshua and assured him of divine guidance in the great undertaking of possessing the land. Joshua 5:13-15.

In this book we find the record of the conquest of the land of Canaan and the division of the land among the twelve tribes. The tribe of Levi received no land, but cities were allotted for them to dwell in with land for pastures, and the tithe belonged to the tribe of Levi. Numbers 18:20-28. The tribe of Levi was to serve in the sanctuary with Aaron and his sons, and were to be teachers among the people. Six of the cities allotted to the priests were designated “cities of refuge.” This provision had been commanded through Moses and was now put into practice. Numbers 35.

The work begun by Moses is to a large extent finished under Joshua. This was in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham more than 450 years earlier, when God had said, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” Genesis 15:18. At that time God also named the tribes which were to give way to the seed of Abraham, and now God had brought Abraham’s seed into their rightful heritage under the leadership of Joshua.

The book of Joshua closes in a similar manner as the writings of Moses. As Moses had called the people together and set before them the facts of life and death (Deuteronomy 30:15-20), so Joshua now called the elders of the people together and delivered to them his last charge and admonished them to loyalty to God and obedience to all His commandments.

“I am old and stricken in age,” he said, “and you have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is He that hath fought for you.” Joshua 23:2, 3. He then reminds them of the mighty works of God, and His promises and leading since the days of Abraham and calls them to a solemn pledge of loyalty to the true God. Joshua 24:14-23. In witness to their promise, he erected a stone in Shechem. When Joshua had finished his instruction he wrote the words in the book of the law of God and encouraged the people by these words: “Be you therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.” Joshua 23:6. “And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.” Joshua 24:29.

This is the sixth book of the written word of God, giving instruction concerning God’s purpose, and laws to govern the lives of His chosen people who were called to be a blessing to nations about them. More than 2,500 years have now passed since creation to the death of Joshua.

The principal characters in this book are: Joshua and Caleb, Rahab, Achan.

The principal events:

Crossing the Jordan, fall of Jericho, Achan’s sin, deception of the Gibeonites, division of the land, Joshua’s charge and death.

Now read Joshua in two sittings: chapters 1-11; 12-24.

The Rule Of The Judges

Judges

WE NOW come to a new experience in the history of Israel. The books which deal with this period are: judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel chapters 1-9. The men who had left Egypt under Moses died in the wilderness, and another generation entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Now Joshua had died, and there was no visible leader as Israel had been accustomed to for many years. Before the death of Moses, God had promised to be with them and they were admonished to put their trust in Him and seek His guidance. Deuteronomy 20:1-4.

Israel had come into her possession, and the land had been divided among the tribes; each tribe knew the boundary of its territory. They were now to complete the work of taking full possession, and for this purpose God had promised, “Mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites,

and I will cut them off. . . . And I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs unto thee.” Exodus 23:23-27.

Not only did God give them the land, but He made provision for preserving this inheritance to the separate tribes and families: “The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.” Leviticus 25:23.

To Joshua, God had said, “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. . . . Only be thou strong and very ,courageous, that thou may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper whither so ever thou goes.” Joshua 1:5-7.

In the last council which Joshua had with the elders of Israel they had promised, “The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.” Joshua 24:24. In harmony with this promise the book of Judges opens with their asking counsel of the Lord, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.” Judges 1: 1, 2.

Some may wonder why the nations which have been named were to be driven out from before the Israelites. God gives the answer: “The land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants.” Leviticus 18:25.

Israel had been warned of the evil results which would follow if they failed to carry out the instructions of the Lord: “But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you. Then it shall come to pass, that those which you let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein you dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.” Numbers 33:55, 56.

It is well to keep these things in mind as we read the book of Judges. There is another important thing to remember; the book of Judges is not a complete history of this period. Paul tells us that the time when Israel was ruled by judges was “about the space of four hundred and fifty years.” Acts 13:20. It is very evident that much time elapsed between the incidents which are recorded, and of that time we know nothing of existing conditions. It is difficult for us to get a correct estimate of time in this period, because the exact number of years of bondage and peace are not always given. It is the message of the book which is important. We are to take warning from their mistakes and willful disobedience, and find comfort and hope in the long-suffering and tender mercies of God.

From the first chapter of Judges we learn that Israel soon forgot the solemn promise made to God, and we read: “Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem.” “Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns.. . . Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer.... Neither did Zebulum drive out the inhabitants of Kitron Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh.” Judges 1:21, 27-33. Here we have the secret of the dark picture which follows in the book of Judges. Here is recorded in very vivid words the result of disobedience to God’s commandments. This is the darkest period in the history of Israel, and stands as a warning to all who follow a similar course. The inhabitants whom they failed to drive out did become a snare and a curse to them, leading them into sin and idolatry. Men Israel departed from God, His protection was removed from them and they became an easy prey to their enemies, who oppressed them and made their lives bitter.

During the days of Moses and Joshua, Israel had failed to learn the precious lessons of trust in God and wholehearted obedience to His requirements. Now that they were without a visible leader to call them to strict account before God, and to execute His judgments, each tribe followed its own course to a very large extent.

In the book of Judges we have recorded seven specific periods in which Israel was oppressed and made to serve heathen kings. In each instance when they turned to the Lord and from their evil ways, God raised up a deliverer. These men, through whom God wrought for His people, stand out as great lights in this darkness.

There were fifteen judges in Israel. Othniel was the first and Samuel the last and greatest of the judges. Eli served as priest and judge and his rule followed that of Samson. During his reign of forty years the tabernacle of God was in Shiloh. Samuel was a prophet of the Lord as well as judge.

The book of Judges divides itself into two parts. Chapters 1-16 tell of the departures from God at intervals, as well as their repentance and deliverance. Chapters 17-21 give a sad account of the low level to which sin and rebellion had brought the nation, and closes with these words: In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” Judges 21:25. The principal characters are: Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The principal events are hereby connected with the lives of these individuals. Now read judges in two sittings: chapters 1-16. 17-21.

Ruth

It was during the days of the Judges that the family of Elimelech sought refuge in the land of Moab. From this land came Ruth, and the story of Ruth is one of the most beautiful stories of the Bible.

We learn from this book that God is not unmindful of the least of His children, but in the midst of famine and sorrow He overrules the affairs of men, and in His own time rewards devotion and trust in Him. Here we see one, who was a stranger, become as “one that is born in the land” (Exodus 12:48), and finding her place among the women who were especially blessed in being in the ancestral line through which the Messiah should come.

It Was according to the law in Israel that the stranger might glean in the fields, and that the one nearest of kin redeem the possessions of any of his brethren who because of misfortune had sold his inheritance. Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22; 25:23-28. Now read the book of Ruth.

Samuel

Samuel, the last of the judges, was given as a direct answer to the prayer of his mother, and Hannah kept her promise to give him to the Lord to serve Him “as long as he lives.” Hannah’s song of thanksgiving is in some respects similar to the song of praise uttered by Mary before the birth of Christ. Compare 1 Samuel 2: 1-10 with Luke 1:46-55.

Samuel was but a child when God revealed Himself to him, and through him sent a message of stern rebuke to Eli and his house. To this message Eli replied, It is the Lord: let Him do what seems Him good.” 1 Samuel 3:18.

The account of his early life is very brief, but a beautiful tribute to so young a man. See 1 Samuel 3:19, 20.

During the early days of Samuel’s prophetic office there was a battle with the Philistines. Eli’s two sons were slain, and the ark of God was taken by the enemy. On hearing of this, Eli fell dead, and the responsibility of the nation rested upon Samuel.

Samuel ruled over Israel for about forty years. He sought to restore the nation to its original purpose of a spiritual kingdom, and saw some results of his effort during the assembly at Mizpah, where the children of Israel humbled themselves and confessed their sins before God. During his rule Israel was free from invasion by heathen nations. Samuel made a yearly circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah to judge and to teach the people. His home was in Ramah. It appears certain that he established schools of the prophets in Ramah and Kirjath-jearim. 1 Samuel 7:15-17; 19:20.

The principal characters are: Elkanah and Harnah, Samuel, Eli and his sons.

The Principal events: The birth of Samuel and his dedication to the Lord. Samuel’s first vision. Battle of the Philistines, the ark taken. God’s protection over the ark. Israel asks a king.

Now read 1 Samuel 1-9. This marks the end of the reign of the judges.

The Kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon

“AND it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.” “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” “And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.” 1 Samuel 8:1, 4, 5, 22. This brings us to the next great change in the experience of Israel, as recorded in 1 Samuel chapters 10-31; 2 Samuel; 1 Kings chapters 1-11.

Before the king was granted, God wanted them to know of the hardship which this change of administration would bring, but the people were unwilling to take the warning uttered by their prophet, and God gave them their choice and granted them a king to judge them like all the nations. 1 Samuel 8:7-18.

Knowing that the time would come when Israel would demand a king to rule over them like other nations, God had given instruction by Moses regarding the king and his manner of ruling the people. “When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, and shall possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me; . . . thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shall thou set king over thee: thou may not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.” A copy of the law of God was to be given him, and he was to study it diligently and govern Israel according to its precepts. Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

Saul

Saul, the son of Kish, was the first king of Israel. During the early years of his reign two experiences of disobedience made it evident that he could not be trusted with the responsibility of leading the people of God. The first transgression was in offering sacrifices when he should have waited for the arrival of Samuel, who had promised to come to him. Following this, the word of the Lord came unto him through Samuel, “Thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou has not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.” 1 Samuel 13:14.

The second act of disobedience came about when God sent him to destroy the Amalekites. The Amalekites were enemies of Israel and the first nation to attack as she was journeying from Egypt to the land of Canaan. For this reason, God said they were to be destroyed. See Exodus 17:8-14; Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

Saul saved the king alive, as well as the best of the sheep and oxen. For this transgression against a direct command of God, Saul was finally rejected from being king. The sentence was, “Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.” 1 Samuel 15:23.

From this time the Spirit of the Lord left him, and Saul had no peace. His life was filled with hatred and jealousy, and murder was in his heart. He died by his own hand rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines. He had witnessed to his complete separation from God in his visit to the woman of Endor, who had “a familiar spirit!” The message was sent to him, “Because thou obeyed not the voice of the Lord, nor executes His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day.” “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it. And inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.” 1 Samuel 28:18; 1 Chronicles 10: 13, 14.

Saul reigned over Israel for forty years. Acts 13:21. The record of his life testifies once again that “The way of transgressors is hard!” Proverbs 13:15.

The principal characters: Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, David, Goliath.

The principal events: Saul anointed the first king of Israel; his disobedience. David anointed king by Samuel. Jonathan yields the kingdom to David. David's victory over Goliath. Saul seeks David's life. Saul consults an evil spirit. Saul's death.

Now read 1 Samuel 9-18; 19-24; 25-31.

David

David was the second and greatest king of Israel. After the second transgression of Saul, God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, saying, "I have provided Me a king among his sons." 1 Samuel 16: 1. Samuel went to Bethlehem and called Jesse to sacrifice. Seven of his sons passed before Samuel, and the Lord chose none of them. When, at the request of Samuel, David was called from the fields, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." Verse 12. Thus David came to the throne by direct appointment of God. Being called in his youth, he spent his early life in a period of training for the responsibilities which he would carry in later years when the kingdom should be given to him.

His first contact with the court was while playing the harp before Saul. From this he returned to his father's house. His next contact, so far as the record goes, was in his victory over Goliath. After this experience we read, "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul." 1 Samuel 18:12. From this time Saul sought to destroy David, and he became a fugitive for several years.

After the death of Saul the word of God directed David to Hebron, and there the men of Judah met him and anointed him king. 2 Samuel 2:14. Here he reigned over the tribe of Judah for seven years and six months. 2 Samuel 5:5. After the death of Ish-bosheth Saul's son." All the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron: . . . and they anointed David king over Israel." David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, and it became the permanent seat of government and the center of worship for all Israel.

During his reign, David subdued the warring enemies of Israel, and God promised to establish the kingdom to David and his seed forever. 2 Samuel 7:12,13; Psalm 89:20-37. This promise will find its complete fulfillment when Christ shall take the throne of His father David and reign forever. Luke 1:31-33.

David made mistakes during his life and committed grievous sins; but when God reproved him he repented and confessed his sins. According to God's promise, forgiveness followed. 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13. His deep remorse is expressed in the fifty-first psalm. The sacred record sums up the life of David in these words: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." 1 Kings 15:5. David reigned over the house of Israel forty years. His experiences are recorded in the second book of Samuel.

The principal characters are:

David, Bath-sheba, Absalom, Nathan the prophet, Uriah, Joab, Abner, Zadok the priest.

The principal events:

David anointed king of Israel. Capital moved to Jerusalem. God's covenant with David. David's sin. Absalom's rebellion. David numbered Israel and was punished.

Now read 2 Samuel in three sittings: chapters 1-7; 8-19; 20-24.

Psalms

In this connection we have the Psalms, most of which were written by David. The Psalms are a collection of poems which were set to music and used in the worship of God. In these hymns are expressed the varied experiences of the human heart. The introduction or title of many of the psalms tells us by whom they were written and the circumstance or experience which caused them to be written for all generations. The reading of these titles will aid in the understanding of the message of each psalm. Read the Psalms according to your own inclination, but read them carefully and prayerfully.

Solomon

Solomon was the third and last king to reign over the twelve tribes of Israel. From his birth he was called the "beloved of the Lord." 2 Samuel 12:22, 25, margin. Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest anointed Solomon to be king over Israel before the death of David. While David was very feeble and unable to deal with the problems of the nation, he did give Solomon instruction regarding the kingdom and the judgments to be meted out to certain individuals who were a menace to the stability of the nation.

When Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, the Lord appeared unto him and said, "Ask what I shall give thee," and because he made the humble and wise request for an understanding heart to judge the people, God gave him wisdom and discernment in judgment, and added riches and honor. With this promise came admonition, "If thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days." 1 Kings 3:14.

Solomon soon undertook the building of the temple, which David had desired to build. Because of the many wars with which he had been involved, God did not permit David to build the temple of the Lord, but he did assemble the materials and he also made liberal offerings for the house of God. 1 Kings 5:2,3; 1 Chronicles 28; 29. When the building was completed, the temple was dedicated at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. 1 Kings 8:63. After this the Lord again appeared unto Solomon, urging faithfulness in obedience to the commandments of God. 1 Kings 9:1-9. He foretold the terrible consequences which would result if Solomon did not follow in the counsel of God. Solomon prospered for a time, and his fame was known throughout all the earth. The respect which the other nations had for him is expressed in these words: "So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart." 1 Kings 10:23, 24.

In later years Solomon departed from the commandments of the Lord and married heathen wives, and they "turned away his heart" from the Lord. Because of this the kingdom was taken from him. The Lord permitted him to remain on the throne during his lifetime, but dark shadows hung over the latter part of the life and reign of Solomon. He reigned over Israel for forty years. God had given him riches and wisdom and opportunities above all others; but, because of disobedience, his own life, as well as the prosperity and the unity of the nation, was ruined.

The principal characters are: Solomon, Queen of Sheba, and Hiram. The principal events:

Solomon anointed king. Death of David. Building of the temple. Its dedication. Visits from the kings of the earth. Solomon drawn into idolatry. His last years.

Now read 1 Kings 1 - 11.

In connection with the life of Solomon, the writings from his pen should be read. These books are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Proverbs

Webster says a proverb is "An old and common saying." In the Proverbs of Solomon we have great truths expressed in a few pointed words which are easy to understand and remember. That it was the purpose of the writer to instruct in right living is evident from these words: "Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; and that thou might answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" Proverbs 22:20, 21. The book of Proverbs may easily be read in two sittings. Chapters 1-15 and 16-31.

Ecclesiastes

In this book the writer shows that everything of this earth, apart from God, is empty. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Ecclesiastes 1:2. The things of this earth will vanish away. Abiding satisfaction can be found only in the way of God, therefore he admonishes, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and sums up his observations in these words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13,14. This book contains much vital truth, and should be read carefully.

Song of Solomon

This is a sacred poem depicting the love of Christ for His church, and the yearning of the church for her Lord. It is written in the style of the Orient.

Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon may be read at one sitting.

The Kingdom Divided

"AND the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou has not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." 1 Kings 11:9-11.

After the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided. His son Rehoboam reigned over the southern part of the kingdom occupied by the tribes of Judah and part of Benjamin. This became the kingdom of Judah, and Jerusalem was the capital of the nation.

Jerusalem was also to remain the center of worship for all the tribes. During the days of Moses, the Lord had commanded them to establish a central place of worship. "When you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit; . . . then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall you bring all that I command you." Deuteronomy 12: 10, 11.

To David God had said, ‘When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shall sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee. . . . He shall build an house for My name.’ 2 Samuel 7:12,13. Concerning God’s regard for Jerusalem, we read, “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.” Jeremiah 3:17. The temple in Jerusalem was established by God. His name was there, as is stated many times in the Scriptures.

Israel

The ten tribes to the north became known as the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel. He built the city of Shechem and established the seat of government there. Later he moved the capital to Tirzah. When Omri came to the throne, he built the city of Samaria and it became the capital of Israel during her existence as a nation. See 1 Kings 12:25; 14:17; 15:21; 16:23, 24. The kingdom of Israel lasted for some 250 years. Israel had nineteen kings, if Zimri, who reigned only seven days, is included in the number.

Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel, departed from the commandment of the Lord and led the people into idolatry. God had commanded all Israel to worship in Jerusalem. Jeroboam reasoned that if his people went to Jerusalem to worship they would be inclined to follow the king of Judah, and thus the northern kingdom would be weakened. To prevent this he set up two golden calves, one in Dan, the northern part of his dominion, and one in Bethel, the southern part. There he called the people to worship, not the true God, but the calves. Of the nineteen kings in Israel all followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam to do evil. Of Omri and Ahab it is said that they did worse than Jeroboam. Jeroboam II reigned for forty-one years, the longest reign by any one king. The last king of Israel was Hoshea, who was carried captive and placed in prison by the Assyrian king.

Because of the sins of Jeroboam and those who followed his example, the protection of God was removed, and His judgments were visited upon the nation. The Assyrians invaded the land and made a speedy end to all the kingdom. We read, “For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.” 2 Kings 17:22, 23. After removing Israel from their own land, the king of Assyria brought people of other nations to dwell in the land of Israel, and idolatry continued to curse the country. 2 Kings 17:24-33.

The principal characters in the history of Israel are:

Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel. Ahab and Jezebel; Jehu; and Hoshea, the last king. Elijah, Elisha, Naaman, Hosea, Amos, and Jonah.

The principal events:

Jeroboam establishes idolatry. Disobedient prophet slain. Ahab’s wicked reign. Drought for three years and a half. Victory on Mount Carmel. Elijah translated. Healing of Naaman the Syrian. Israel taken captive by the Assyrians. Their land peopled by the heathen. Idolatry continued.

NOTE: The narrative covered in this section is so closely interwoven with Israel and Judah and the nations about them, that it is difficult to give assignment for reading on each separate section, since it would be necessary to divide chapters and sometimes verses. The history of Israel is covered in the portion of Scripture from 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17.

The assignment for reading will be found on page 93.

Elijah

Elijah was one of the prophets of God to Israel. He prophesied during the reigns of Ahab and his son Ahaziah. Elijah’s messages were a stern rebuke against the sins of the king and the people and a call to return to the worship of the true God. It was during his day that God sent a drought, followed by famine, in an effort to turn Israel from the worship of idols, and call her to repentance. The test as to who was the true God came on Mount Cannel, and for a time the people humbled themselves. See 1 Kings 17-19. Elijah also sent a message of warning to Jehoram, king of Judah. See 2 Chronicles 21:12-19. Elijah was taken to heaven without seeing death, and God called Elisha to continue the work begun by Elijah. 2 Kings 2:1-11.

Elisha

Elisha followed Elijah in the prophetic office. Not only did he warn the nation of the judgments of God to be visited upon them, but he did much to strengthen the schools of the prophets, and to teach the people the knowledge of God. During his ministry many miracles were performed, the most familiar of which is the healing of Naaman the Syrian. 2 Kings 5:1-19. The story of his mission is recorded in 2 Kings 2-13.

Hosea

Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. In his book we find a graphic picture of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. This departure of Israel was vividly illustrated in the experience of Hosea with his unfaithful wife, Comer. Israel had left their God, whom they had pledged to obey, and were worshipping the idols of the heathen nations about them. God reminded them that He

had blessed them abundantly, but He charged, “As they were increased, so they sinned against Me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.” Hosea 4:7.

How earnestly God yearned for Israel, and how He sought to win them from their evil ways, may be seen from reading these statements: “O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself, but in Me is your help.” “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou has fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” God then adds, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him.” Hosea 13:9; 14:1, 2, 4.

When there was no repentance from Israel, God revealed His deep longing for His people in these words, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?” Hosea 11:8. At last the decision was made on the part of Israel, and God says, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” Hosea 4:17. When Israel was let alone the Assyrians came and carried them into captivity. This was in 721 B. C.

Jonah

Jonah also prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. His ministry was very brief. Jonah was sent by God to the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with a message declaring that the city would be destroyed in forty days. The inhabitants of the city repented, and God stayed the judgment. This is another evidence that God takes no delight in the death of the wicked. Ezekiel 18:23. Israel should have learned from this experience that God is very merciful. If they had turned from their evil ways in true repentance, God’s judgments would have been stayed, and they could have been restored to His blessing and favor. Here is an example of God’s faithfulness, for He has said, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7.

Amos

Amos was from Tekoa, a city in the kingdom of Judah, but he was sent with a message to Israel. He utters judgments against Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel.

After reminding Israel of God’s care since the days of Egypt, he tells them that in spite of this care and blessing they had transgressed against their God in worshiping idols in Bethel and Gilgal. God’s judgments of drought and pestilence had not caused them to return to Him. Amos admonishes, “Seek you Me, and you shall live. I hate, I despise your feast days. I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve.” “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!”

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come!” 1 Corinthians 10:11.

While Israel as a nation departed from God, not all the people of Israel forsook the true God and His worship. We read that when Jeroboam I established idolatry in Israel, at Dan and Bethel, the tribe of Levi and many in Israel moved into the land of Judah. 1 Kings 12:26-33.

In speaking of the early days of Rehoboam’s reign the record says, “And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest’s office unto the Lord. . . . And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel.” 2 Chronicles 11:13-16.

During the reign of Asa, king of Judah, we read, “And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.” 2 Chronicles 15:9. Again, in the days of Hezekiah, “Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.” 2 Chronicles 30: 11. “For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it is written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon everyone.” Verse 18.

Here we have several tribes mentioned, some of which joined themselves to Judah. They came “out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel.” While portions of all the tribes lived in Judah, they retained their tribal distinctions and thus the twelve tribes were represented in the one nation and at their religious worship.

Now read Hosea at one sitting; Amos and Jonah at another time.

Judah

The kingdom of Judah remained loyal to the house of David. God had promised Solomon, I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake which I have chosen.” 1 Kings 11:13.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was the first king. Like Israel, Judah had nineteen rulers. Five of these were good kings, and walked in the commandments of the Lord and strengthened His worship among the people. Other kings followed the Lord during a part of their reign.

Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was the most wicked king, and he did more to lead Judah astray than did any other king of that nation. When affliction came upon him, and he was in chains in the prison of the king of Babylon, he repented and turned to the Lord. He was restored to his kingdom in Jerusalem. There he sought to lead the people back to God, but was unable to check the

wickedness he had set in motion in former years. See 2 Chronicles 33:1-17. Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, the longest period of any of the kings of Judah.

Azariah, who is also called Uzziah, reigned for fifty one years. During the early part of his reign he did that which was right, “but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” 2 Chronicles 26:16. The Lord had assigned this sacred work to the priests. When they remonstrated with Uzziah, he became angry. The Lord protected His ordinance by smiting him with leprosy, and at the same time there was an earthquake, and Uzziah fled from the temple. This earthquake is mentioned in Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5.

Hezekiah was king of Judah when Israel was taken captive, and seven kings followed his reign before Judah went into captivity. On the captivity of Israel, God had said, “Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight.” 2 Kings 17:18-20.

Through Isaiah the prophet, God had foretold that the time would come when Judah should be carried to Babylon. 2 Kings 20:17, 18. Jeremiah gave them warning after warning that if they continued in their sins, they would surely go into captivity as Israel had done. The captivity of Judah would be limited to a period of seventy years, after which they would return to their own land. Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29: 10.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came against Jerusalem three times. First he placed the king under tribute. 2 Kings 24: 1. The second time he took 10,000 captives and carried away all the treasures of the temple and of the king’s house and took them to Babylon. 2 Kings 24: 10-15. At that time Zedekiah was made king over those who were left in Judah. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon, and in his ninth year Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and this time “he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man’s house burnt he with fire.” 2 Kings 25:9.

The portion of Scripture which covers the period of the divided kingdom is 1 Kings 12, to the end of 2 Kings.

The principal characters of Judah:

Rehoboam, the first king of Judah. Jehoshaphat, Ahaz, Asa, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, and other kings
Jehoiakim, in whose reign the captivity began. The eight prophets.

The principal events:

Rehoboam’s cruel reign. Migration of many from Israel to Judah. Reforms of Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah. Assyrian invasion. Sennacherib’s army smitten by God. Judah taken captive to Babylon.

Now read 1 Kings 12-16; 17 to 2 Kings 2; 3-13 14-17; 18-25.

THE PROPHETS OF JUDAH

The messages of the prophets were not given till sin had made great inroads on the national life, and decay was apparent. For this reason we read of the sinfulness of the people; and warnings of certain destruction if they persisted in their evil course.

Messages were sent not only to Israel and Judah, but to the nations about them. Isaiah sent messages to Babylon, Damascus, Moab, Egypt, and Tyre. This is also true of the writings of Jeremiah and others of the prophets. If we keep these things in mind, the messages of these books will be read with greater interest and profit.

Isaiah

Isaiah is often referred to as the “gospel prophet!” The entire book deals with God’s effort for the salvation of His people. The book opens with a picture of Judah as a sinful and rebellious people, and the call of God to repentance, with promises of acceptance and restoration. If sin is not renounced, judgment is certain. “There is no peace, said the Lord, unto the wicked.” Isaiah 48:22.

Peace will be established, but it will come in God’s own way, through Christ the Prince of Peace; and His kingdom will be established in the new earth.

There are many prophecies concerning Christ and His mission. He was to be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14); and He was to reign upon the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6, 7). His forerunner is mentioned (Isaiah 40:1-9, compared with Luke 1:15-17; John 1:23). His quiet ministry is described (Isaiah 42:1-7). His rejection and suffering, His death for the iniquity of others will result in the saving of many (Isaiah 53). His anointing and ministry were foretold (Isaiah 61:1-3, compared with Luke 4:16-21); as were the growth and expansion of the church and the sending of the gospel to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 54). The book closes with a vision of the new heaven and the new earth.

Now read Isaiah 1-23; 24-35; 36-39 (compare with 2 Kings 18-20); 40-52; 53-66.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is often referred to as the “weeping prophet” or the prophet of doom. He prophesied a number of years later than Isaiah, during the last years of Judah’s independence. For about forty years he prophesied and delivered the messages which God put

in his mouth. Jeremiah 1:9. He ministered to a people who had forsaken their God, and because they had forsaken God they rejected His message and persecuted His messenger.

The men of Anathoth, his own city, were the first to oppose Jeremiah. From there the opposition spread and became general. God had told him that this would be so, and of this we read, “And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, said the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.” Jeremiah 15:20, 21. Jeremiah was put in stocks, and in prison, and finally in a dungeon to die. He was delivered, and he witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 22:1-3; 37:1-21.

Through him, God foretold the captivity of the people of Judah, but He also said that at the end of seventy years they would be brought back to their own land. To show his faith in that prediction Jeremiah purchased a piece of land. Jeremiah 32:6-11. His predictions went beyond the restoration of Judah from Babylon. He foretold the complete breakup of the Jews as a nation and their scattering among many nations so that they would never be put together again. Jeremiah 19:1-15.

Jeremiah reproved the inhabitants of Judah for their sinfulness and persistent disregard for God and His law. Two specific sins are pointed out, idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. Jeremiah 17:27; 44:23. Intermingled with the reproofs are earnest entreaties to return to the Lord, with the assurance that He will receive them graciously when they turn from their evil ways.

Like Isaiah, Jeremiah sent messages to the nations about Judah. At one time he made his messages very real and effective by sending yokes to the various kings and telling them they should submit to the king of Babylon. See Jeremiah 27.

When Jerusalem was finally taken and destroyed by the Babylonian armies, Jeremiah was treated kindly and given his choice of residence. Jeremiah 40:4, 5. When the remnant of Judah went into Egypt, Jeremiah protested against the move, but when they persisted in going, and disregarded his message, Jeremiah accompanied them and gave his last messages from Egypt. He foretold the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of Judah.

Lamentations

In this brief book, the prophet laments the desolation of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people. At the same time he acknowledges that this affliction is caused by their transgressions. In the time of their distress, their trust is in the mercies of God and of this the prophet says, It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fail not.” Lamentations 3:22.

Now read Jeremiah 1-15; 16-23; 24-31; 32-39; 40-49; 50, 51, and the book of Lamentations.

Joel

In Joel we have a picture of great distress and judgments which are prophetic of the final judgments to come upon the world. There is a call to repentance; blessings are assured if the warning is heeded. The blessings are principally spiritual. The early and the latter rain are promised in abundance. This promise will be fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.

The book closes with the final judgment upon all nations and the establishing of Zion forever, with God dwelling in the midst of her.

Obadiah

A message to Edom, which was the name given to Esau. Genesis 25:30; 32:3. Edom is rebuked because he was a party with other nations in the desolation of Jerusalem, and rejoiced at the calamities which befell her. God will visit upon Edom as he had done to Jacob (Judah) and the day will come when God will deliver Zion.

Micah

Micah tells the time of his prophecy, as a number of the other prophets also do. His message is addressed to Samaria (Israel) and Judah. He declares the wound of Samaria is incurable, as was also stated in the prophecy of Hosea. There is nothing more God can do for her.

Of Judah it is declared that Mount Zion shall be plowed as a field because of her transgression in departing from God. It will be remembered that the temple in Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion; therefore this expression predicts the destruction of the temple.

Promises of the Messiah are given in chapters 4 and 5. The first dominion shall return to the “Tower of the flock.” The birthplace of the Messiah is said to be in Bethlehem, and this statement was given as evidence as to the place where Christ should be born. See Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3-6.

God requires His people to “do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” The book closes with a beautiful tribute to the true God who delights in mercy and who will perform His covenant which He swore to Abraham.

Nahum

A burden to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The message of Jonah brought repentance to Nineveh, but the reformation was not lasting, as is evident from the message of Nahum. There seems to have been about sixty years between the message of Jonah and that of Nahum.

God has shown His mercy to them, but He will as surely take vengeance upon His adversaries, who persist in their rebellion against Him.

Habakkuk

The prophet cries to God because of the iniquities all about him. The wicked seem to be in control, and the law of the Lord is forgotten. God says He will raise up the Chaldeans to punish the guilty. The prophecy closes with a prayer to God, showing the prophet's firm faith in the final triumph of right.

Zephaniah

A message of universal judgment and a call to repentance before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. From the nations doomed to destruction, God will gather a remnant. Among these God will dwell, and no evil shall befall them.

The Captivity of Judah

THIS is the captivity of Judah to Babylon, which was mentioned in the previous chapter. When through Jeremiah the captivity was foretold, the promise was also given that after seventy years the Jews would return to their own land. Of this we read, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." Jeremiah 29: 10.

In the 137th psalm we learn of the sorrow which the Jews experienced while in exile. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." Psalm 137:1-3.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah gives another picture of the sufferings and hardships which came to the Jews because they had forsaken the Lord. God had given them instruction as to their conduct in the land of their captivity. He told them that the captivity would be long, and they were to "seek the peace of the city, and pray unto the Lord for it." Jeremiah 29:4-7.

Among the captives were Ezekiel and Daniel with his three companions. The book of Daniel opens with these words: In the third year of the reign of Johoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it." Daniel 1:1. This was in the year 606 BC, when many of the Jews were taken captive to Babylon.

The book of Ezekiel opens with the statement, "Now it came to pass. . . . as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God!" Ezekiel 1: 1. Ezekiel's message was written in Babylon and sent to the remnant of Judah. Ezekiel was among the first group of captives, and Jerusalem was still standing and pursuing its daily routine when he began to write.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel sees a vision of God on His throne, and His hand upholding and guiding in the affairs of nations. He has a vision of the temple at Jerusalem and sees the iniquity carried on in the very temple courts. Then he beholds the glory of God leaving the temple, moving first from between the cherubims to the threshold of the temple and finally departing from Jerusalem. It is seen on the mountain to the east of the city. From there the glory of God never returned to the temple. God had left Judah to her own course. Ezekiel 10:4, 18; 11:23.

Ezekiel had a clear vision of the sins committed in Jerusalem, and he reported them in order to bring about a reformation. He reviews the history of Israel from the day when God brought them from out of bondage under the Egyptians, and reminds them of how God nourished them till they became a great and strong nation, and then how they forgot God. The prophet charges them with unfaithfulness to their God.

Ezekiel uses some parables in presenting his messages. He charges the leaders of the people with seeking their own ease and interest and neglecting to feed the flock. He reasons with the people on the justice of God in His dealings with mankind. Ezekiel 18:23-32. He promises restoration and illustrates his teachings by the vision of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel 37:1-4. He rebukes Tyre for laughing at the calamity of Judah.

The book closes with a vision of what God desires to do for His people in the days when they should return to their own land.

Now read Ezekiel in these divisions: Chapters 1 - 11; 12-17; 18-32; 33-39; 40-48.

Daniel

This is a prophetic book, giving a clear presentation of the history of the world from the days of Daniel till the kingdom of God is established on this earth.

The first outline of history is recorded in the second chapter. God gave a dream to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in which he saw an image of a man, composed of various metals; gold, silver, brass, and iron. The feet of the image were a mixture of iron and clay. Nebuchadnezzar saw this image completely destroyed by a stone smiting it on the feet and grinding it to pieces, and the wind carried it away as chaff from the threshing floors.

In his interpretation, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, "Thou art this head of gold." The other metals represented other kingdoms which were to follow. Daniel 2:37-42. This statement by Daniel gives us a definite starting point in understanding this dream. "Thou art this head of gold" serves as a key to unlock the mysteries of the prophecies which follow.

However, we are not left without further help in understanding the vision. "After thee shall arise another kingdom," said Daniel. In Daniel 5:28-31 we read that Media and Persia overthrew Babylon, and became the rulers of the world. They are the kingdom represented by the breast and arms of silver. Daniel continues, "And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." In Daniel 8:20, 21 we are told that Media and Persia would be succeeded by Greece. This then, is the kingdom of brass. We read again, "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron." This kingdom was to be divided, and was to remain in its divided state till the image was destroyed by the stone. The iron kingdom was the Roman empire, which followed Greece, and which was divided, never to be united again.

The stone which smites the image, we are told, represents the kingdom of God which shall eventually destroy the kingdoms of this world, "and it shall stand forever," and fill "the whole earth." Daniel 2:44, 35.

Here we have a broad outline of the history of the kingdoms of this world, to be followed by the kingdom of God. The other lines of prophecy presented in the book of Daniel all fit into this broad outline, but each of the following prophecies reveals new features not mentioned in Daniel 2.

In chapter 7 we have other symbols representing the same kingdoms. The lion represents Babylon; the bear, Media and Persia; the leopard, Greece; and the terrible beast, Rome. Following the four beasts, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High!" Daniel 7:27.

In this line of prophecy we learn that the fourth kingdom is divided into ten parts, symbolized by the ten horns. After this division another "little horn" appears among the ten, but is different from the rest. This little horn represents the Papacy. This horn is different, because it exercises both civil and religious power. This little horn was to continue in power for "a time and times and the dividing of time," which was for 1260 years. Daniel 7:25. This period is also mentioned in Daniel 12:7 and in several places in the book of Revelation, as 1040 and two months;" "1260 daystime, and times, and half a time" (see Revelation 11:2; 11:6, 14; 13:5). These expressions all refer to the same power and the same events.

In Daniel 8 and 9, three of the kingdoms are brought to view again: Media and Persia, Grecia, and Rome in her pagan and papal forms. We find also an additional feature here, the time for the opening of the great judgment of God. The period of the 2300 days is well defined. It was to begin with a decree "to restore and to build Jerusalem!" Daniel 9:25. This decree was given by Artaxerxes, and recorded in Ezra 7:11-26. At the end of the 2300 days we are told, "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed!" Daniel 8:14. This marks the beginning of the judgment, which is also mentioned in Daniel 7:9, 10. (Note: Read again the chapter on Leviticus 16, on the "cleansing of the sanctuary.") As the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary constituted a day of cleansing of the sanctuary and the people, and was a day of judgment; so the cleansing to begin at the end of the 2300 days constitutes a cleansing or judgment of the only sanctuary existing-the heavenly.

In chapters 10 to 12, the changes in the nations of the earth are again brought before us, and the prophecy closes with these words: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which stands for the children of thy people." Next the resurrection is mentioned, which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ. Concerning the book of Daniel Christ said, "Who reads, let him understand." Matthew 24:15.

Now read Daniel in one sitting. (NOTE: For those who desire a complete exposition of these prophecies, we would recommend the book, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, by Uriah Smith.)

Esther

The events of this book belong during the captivity of Judah, and in the reign of Ahasuerus, king of Persia. His dominion extended over 127 provinces. Esther 1:1.

Mordecai was employed in the palace of the king. After Haman, the Agagite, was promoted by the king, Mordecai came to his notice. Haman was an enemy of the Jews, and this fact is mentioned several times in the remainder of the story.

Haman, the Agagite, is believed by some good authorities to have been an Amalekite of the royal line. Agag was a title of kings of the Amalekites, as Pharaoh was a royal title of the kings of Egypt. This may account for the enmity which Haman had toward the Jews, and not just toward one person. For the connection between the two nations read the following passages: Exodus 17:8-14; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Numbers 24:20; 1 Samuel 15:1-3.

Haman, seeking to destroy all the Jews because of wounded pride as well as because of the hatred handed down through his ancestors, found himself receiving the just retribution of his plotting.

When the Jews were given liberty to defend themselves against their enemies, it seems not to have been against the Persians in whose country they dwelt, but no doubt against the Amalekites who had also been dwelling in Persia. It is stated that many of the people of the land became Jews when they saw how God cared for them in this experience. See Esther 8:16, 17. By the "People of the land" is meant the Persians.

Esther was a cousin of Mordecai; she was an orphan and had been reared by him. She was the means of bringing deliverance to her people, and the story centers around the question addressed to her by Mordecai, "Who knows whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.

Now read the book of Esther. The principal characters in this section:

Ezekiel, Daniel and his companions. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, kings of Babylon. Ahasuerus` king of Persia (the Xerxes of profane history). Mordecai and Queen Esther.

The principal events: Loyalty of Daniel and his companions. Nebuchadnezzar's two dreams. The fiery furnace. Belshazzar's feast. Babylonian kingdom overthrown. The lion's den. Daniel's visions. Esther made queen of Persia. (NOTE: The events recorded in the book of Esther took place after the decree of Cyrus [Ezra 1: 1-4] which gave permission for the Jews to return to Jerusalem; but seemingly before the decrees of Darius and Artaxerxes, which completed the provision for the restoration as predicted by Daniel the prophet. Daniel 9:25. For this reason the book of Esther is placed in this section. Mention is made of a King Ahasuerus in Ezra, 4:6; the decree of Darius in chapter 6 and of Artaxerxes in chapter 7.)

Judah Restored

ACCORDING to the word of the Lord by Jeremiah, the Jews were to return to Jerusalem after seventy years, and the Lord now makes possible the necessary steps for their return.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing." Ezra 1:1.

The proclamation was to the Jews who were in captivity, asking who would be willing to return to Jerusalem, for, said Cyrus, "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." Ezra 1:2.

In response to this call, 49,697 of the Jews returned to Jerusalem, under the leadership of Ezra. Among them were Joshua, the high priest, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, with Zerubbabel as governor. The first thing they undertook to do was to build the altar of the Lord and establish the worship of the true God. Then in the seventh month they gathered all the children of Israel and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. This was definitely a home-coming feast and an occasion of rejoicing.

When the foundation of the temple was laid, "the adversaries of Judah" sought to stop the building, and sent letters to this effect to the king of Persia; and the work was stopped.

Haggai

In Ezra 4:24 we are told, "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." The prophet Haggai tells us it was in this same year-the second year of Darius-that the word of the Lord came to him. The message was, 'Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, said the Lord." Haggai 1: 8. The Lord encouraged Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, to be strong, "and work: for I am with you, said the Lord of hosts." Then God promised, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, said the Lord of hosts." The greater glory would be realized when Messiah would visit the temple and teach within its gates.

When this message of encouragement came, the people under their leaders began to build the temple, and a letter was sent to Darius, the king, for his approval.

Ezra

In Ezra 6 we learn that Darius issued the second decree for the building of the temple, and they finished it "on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king." Ezra 6:14-16. Only the temple was finished at this time.

1 During the captivity, Daniel had prophesied that a decree would be issued "to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25), and such a decree was issued later by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, in the seventh year of his reign, which corresponds to the year 457 BC.

This decree meets the prophetic specifications. The decree was to permit the Jews to build the city and restore the worship and the government as it had been before the captivity. See Ezra 7. When this decree was issued Ezra, led a company of more than seventeen hundred men, besides women and children, to Jerusalem. On his arrival he instituted moral reforms among the people.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was still in the service of the king of Persia when Ezra went up to Jerusalem. Word came to him of the hardships of the Jews who had returned, and he asked permission of the king to go to their aid. This the king granted, and Nehemiah labored untiringly for the building of the city. Daniel had prophesied, “the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” Daniel 9:25. Just how hard the times were in which the city was built we find in the writings of Nehemiah. For twelve years he served as governor, and under his administration the city was built and order restored.

During one of the general gatherings of Israel, the Levites read in the hearing of the people the history of Israel and the gracious leadership of their God. Sins were confessed and the congregation entered into a solemn covenant with God, to which the heads of families affixed their names. The book closes with a review of the reforms instituted by Nehemiah.

Now read Ezra 1-4 and Haggai; Ezra 5 -10; Nehemiah 1-7; 8-13.

Zechariah

This book opens with eight brief visions in which the Jews are given assurance that the temple and the city shall be built. Though the earthly priests are defiled by sin, as revealed in chapter 3, and are as brands plucked from the burning, there is help in God. The earthly priests stand as a type of the true Priest of God, the Messiah who shall be crowned, and shall sit upon His throne and take the ruler ship. Zechariah 6:12, 13.

Though the church seems feeble, God has provided the oil for her light, coming from the living olive trees standing in the presence of the Lord.

Through His prophet, God makes clear that obedience to Him and showing mercy toward one's fellow men is more acceptable than are fasting and tears. If the admonition sent is heeded, “It shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing.” Zechariah 8:13.

The early and the latter rain are again promised. Upon the house of David will be poured “The spirit of grace and of supplications.” Zechariah 12: 10. A fountain for sin and uncleanness is promised; God's people will be restored to their own inheritance, and God will dwell with them.

Now read Zechariah at one sitting.

Malachi

In the book of Malachi, the last message to Israel, God reminds them of the “godly seed” (Malachi 2:15) which He had promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:15. The coming of that Seed was the only hope for the redemption of the human race. This truth had been declared through all the prophets “since the world began.” Luke 1: 70.

Israel had been called of God to be the human instrument in making this truth known in the earth. Their father Abraham had responded to this call, and because of his faithfulness, the promise was given that through his seed God's promises would be fulfilled. As a nation Israel had failed to fulfill God's purpose, but there was a remnant still true, and in this message God is seeking to bring others back to righteousness.

That God has shown his special love for Jacob (Israel) is the message from this prophet. He charges that Israel has not returned this love. They have manifested their indifference by bringing the lame and the sick animals as offerings to God; a gift which their governor would not accept. They had exacted pay for the least service rendered in the temple. For this attitude of contempt, God would send a curse upon them.

The prophet warns of judgment to come when God “shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Malachi 3:1

He charges them with robbing God in tithes and offerings which are His. Leviticus 27:30. God calls for a reform, and promises rich blessings in return. In the final day of reckoning the difference will be seen between those who serve God and those who do not. Fire will consume the ungodly, and the righteous will triumph.

In conclusion the prophet says, “Remember you the law of Moses MY servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” Malachi 4:4, 5. Of the Elijah that was to come, Christ said plainly that John the Baptist was he. See Matthew 17:10-13.

Now read Malachi. The principal characters in this section are: Cyrus, Darius Hystaspes, Artaxerxes Longimanus, kings of Persia. Ezra; Nehemiah; Joshua, the high priest; Zerubbabel, the governor. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, prophets.

The Principal events are: The decree by Cyrus and Darius to build the temple in Jerusalem. Artaxerxes' decree to restore and build Jerusalem. Opposition from their enemies. The work completed.

Chronicles

One ancient writer has described these two books to be “a chronicle of the whole of sacred history.” The history of the human family begins with Adam, and this record closes with recording some of the names of those who returned from the Babylonian captivity. For this reason it seems best to place these books here. In these books is given a list of the genealogy of the families from

Adam to Christ. If one will compare the names of the family tree of Christ as recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, with the first part of Chronicles, it is evident that God had a purpose in recording these names and family records.

After the genealogies, there is a history of Israel from the days of David to the final overthrow of Judah. This history is given in the books of Samuel and Kings, but here we shall find many interesting sidelights not recorded in the other records. For easy reading use the following divisions: 1 Chronicles 1-10; 11-19; 20-29; 2 Chronicles 1-9; 10-21; 22-31; 32-36. This finishes the reading of the Old Testament.

A Period of Silence

IN THE last Chapter of the Old Testament, Malachi admonishes his readers to "Remember you the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments!" Malachi 4:4. And then he calls to a forward look with these words: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet," which according to Christ's own words, refers to John the Baptist. Matthew 17:10-13.

Between these last words of Malachi and the coming of John the Baptist, there were about four hundred years of silence, as far as the word of God is concerned. Israel had the written word to guide them if they would take heed to the instruction which God had sent them through his prophets. They had not valued the living messengers as they should, so God had removed them. The words of the psalmist were fulfilled, "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knows how long." Psalm 74:9.

Some of the history of this period is covered in the book of Maccabees, which belongs to the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha is a collection of fourteen books, of which 1 and 2 Maccabees form the larger part, and gives us the best brief account of the experiences of the Jews during the reign of Greece and the early part of the Roman Empire. These books are not inspired. The writers themselves declare that they have written to the best of their ability, but do not claim that God spoke through them. The writer of the Maccabees says, "And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto. For as it is hurtful to drink wine or water alone; and as wine mingled with water is pleasant, and delights the taste: even so speech finely framed delights the ears of them that read the story. And here shall be an end." 2 Maccabees 15:38, 39. Twice this writer declares they had no prophet at that time. 1 Maccabees 4:46; 9:27.

Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in the time of the apostles, AD 37-95, gives us the complete history of the Jews up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In his writings we find some interesting accounts in connection with Judah and Jerusalem, two of which we record here, as they will be of interest and help in spanning the time between the Old and the New Testaments.

It was during the reign of the Persian kings that the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, and were assisted in rebuilding Jerusalem, and were granted freedom to enjoy the laws and worship of their forefathers.

In 331 BC the Persian Empire was overthrown by Alexander, the first king of the Greeks, and the kingdom thus passed to Greece, in fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel that the "he-goat" would destroy the "ram." In the same chapter Alexander, the first king of the Greeks, had been pointed out as the "notable horn" on the he-goat. Daniel 8:3-7, 20-22. While Alexander was waging war against the Persians, we have our first interesting account of God's care over His people during this period.

Alexander went into Syria and took Damascus, and passed on to Tyre. While preparing to take this city, he sent word to the high priest in Jerusalem to send him reinforcements and provisions for his army. The high priest answered the messengers that the Jews had given their oath to Darius, king of Persia, not to bear arms against him, and they would not violate their oath as long as Darius lived. This answer made Alexander very angry and he threatened the Jews with severe punishment. On hearing this, the high priest called the people together and they fasted and offered sacrifices to God, entreating Him to deliver them from the wrath of Alexander. Following this, God gave the high priest a dream, and the Jews took courage and acted upon the dream.

They were instructed to adorn the city and open the gates; the people were to dress in white garments, the priests in their priestly robes, and the high priest in his purple and scarlet robes; and when the Greek armies came within sight of Jerusalem, this splendid procession headed by the high priest was to go out and meet Alexander.

When Alexander saw this great multitude, he came forward and saluted the high priest, and the multitude of the Jews with one great shout saluted Alexander. On seeing this demonstration his armies thought their commander had become "disordered in his mind." When one of his officers ventured to ask his reason for this sudden change in attitude toward the Jews, Alexander said:

I did not adore him, but that God who bath honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is that, having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the Divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind." - Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, b. 11, chapter 8, paragraph 45.

Alexander was then conducted into the city and went to the temple and worshiped. There the priests showed him the book of Daniel, where he read that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians. Daniel 8:3-8, 20-22. Alexander gave the Jews permission to enjoy their own laws and be exempt from paying tribute in the seventh year, when the land was to rest. Leviticus 25:1-7.

When Alexander died, the kingdom was divided into four parts. Daniel 8:22. Egypt was one part of the kingdom, and Syria formed another division. In these two divisions lived most of the Jews. Great affliction came to them through some of the Syrian kings, and especially did Antiochus Epiphanes cruelly oppress them.

An interesting account of the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures comes to us from Egypt. During the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the second to reign in Egypt after the division of the Greek Empire, the king's librarian had been ordered to collect copies of all the books in the inhabited world. On one occasion when the king asked how many books he had, the answer was 200,000. He then informed the king that the Jews had many valuable books on their religion and on laws which would be worth having, but were difficult to get because of the religious prejudice of the Jews, and they were in a language different from theirs, and would need to be translated. The king ordered that efforts be put forth to secure copies of the books. At that time there were over 120,000 Jewish slaves in Egypt, and the king's most intimate friend suggested that if the king would liberate these slaves, paying for their release from the king's treasury, it would leave a favorable impression on the Jews in Jerusalem and make it easier to secure their consent for a translation of their sacred writings. This was done, and the king sent messengers with costly gifts and a letter to the high priest in Jerusalem, asking him to select "men of good character who are elders in age, and six in number out of each tribe. These by their age must be skillful in the laws, and of ability to make an accurate interpretation of them."

In harmony with this request seventy-two men were chosen, and when this venerable company reached Alexandria, Egypt, the king entertained them royally for twelve days, and asked them "philosophical questions." At the end of these days they were conducted over a bridge to a small island, where the king had built a house for them, in which they would be undisturbed while translating the Old Testament Scriptures into the Greek language. This was the first time the Hebrew Scriptures had been put into a foreign language. This version is known as the Septuagint, usually designated by the Roman numerals M, after the seventy elders who translated for Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt. This translation was made sometime between 285 and 250 BC. See Josephus, Antiquities, of the Jews, book 12, chapter 2.

In 168 BC Rome overthrew the Greek empire. Rome is referred to in prophecy as the "legs of iron" (Daniel 2); the terrible beast (Daniel 7); and "a little horn, which waxed exceeding great" (Daniel 8). Rome continued in power for over 500 years. It was Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, who made the decree "that all the world should be taxed," and this taxing brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Luke 2:1-7. It will be helpful to follow the outline as presented in the chart, which lists the kingdoms mentioned in prophecy and also the time of the writings of the various prophets. Thus we come to the opening of the New Testament with the gospel of Jesus Christ beautifully portrayed for us by four writers.

Jesus and the Early Church

THE New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books, which were written during the brief period of about fifty years, AD 48-96.

First is the gospel story as recorded by four different writers. Matthew and John were of the twelve apostles; Mark was a relative of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10); and Luke, "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14), is generally believed to have been a Greek convert who early believed in Jesus.

Next comes the Acts of the Apostles, which is a brief history of the early church as it grew and prospered under the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter and Paul are the principal characters.

Then follow twenty-one epistles which give instruction for the church on such matters as church organization, the care of the church as Christ's body, and the proper discipline of unruly members. In them vital doctrine is expounded, and they give instruction on godly living, admonition against the sins in the world, and sympathy and encouragement for the weak and oppressed.

The purpose running through the whole is that the church, which has been purchased at such infinite cost, may become perfect and be able to stand, "not having spot, or wrinkle," when Christ shall return.

The epistles may be classified into three groups:

First, the books which were written to churches and provinces, including Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Second, the personal epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 2 and 3 John.

Third, the general epistles, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude. (These are sometimes called the catholic epistles. The word "catholic" means "general or universal" and does not belong to any particular church.)

The last book, the Revelation, is prophetic. Its own introduction reads thus: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." Revelation 1: 1.

The books of the New Testament will be considered separately.

From the day when Adam and Eve sinned, and God came to them with the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15) God's people had longed for the fulfillment of that promise. The time had been long, and the forces of evil had been strengthening their hold upon the human family. God had not forgotten His promise to our first parents. The promise had been renewed through the prophets, giving them many details regarding the seed of the woman who was to come. This event was the grand climax toward which all the Old Testament writers pointed.

Isaiah wrote that He was to come as a child, born of a virgin. His name was to be called Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." He is also "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Isaiah 7:14; 9:6, 7; Matthew 1:23.

Daniel had foretold the time when the promised seed should come. When the decree to restore Jerusalem was given, in 457B.C., they were to count “seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks,” then “Messiah the Prince” would be manifested. Daniel 9:25. (Note: A verse-by verse exposition of the book of Daniel can be obtained through the publishers of this book.)

Through Micah we learn He was to be born in the city of Bethlehem. Micah 5:2. And so the promises multiplied, with more definite details as time went on. These promises were read and cherished by those who believed God.

The time came when these promises were to be fulfilled, and of this we read, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5.

In this connection we find that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias the priest as he was offering incense in the temple. Gabriel delivered the message that a son would be born to Zacharias and Elisabeth. This child would be filled with the Holy Spirit and would do a mighty work, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” The child was named John by the angel, and was later known as John the Baptist. Luke 1:1-17.

Before the birth of John, the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth to the home of the Virgin Mary. He declared that a Son would be born of her. Of this Child he said, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.” Luke 1:32. It was also stated that the name of this child was to be Jesus, which means “Savior.” Matthew 1:21.

When John was born, his father, Zacharias, gave utterance to his profound faith in God. He declared that God had visited His people and fulfilled the promises which He had spoken “by the mouth of His holy prophets, since the world began.” Luke 1:67-80.

After this the angel visited Joseph in a dream, telling him of the child to be born to Mary, and the work He was to accomplish. Matthew 1:18-25.

The decree by Caesar Augustus to levy a tax on all peoples, brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, their own city, and there the child Jesus was born. His birth was announced to the shepherds by a multitude of angels who glorified God in these words, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2:14.

These heavenly visitors sent the shepherds to Bethlehem, where they found the Babe and His mother. The presentation in the temple followed, and the name “Jesus” was registered in the family record.

While these events were taking place in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the Wise Men of the East had observed a special star in the heavens. More than 1,450 years before the birth of Jesus, Balaam had prophesied, “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” Numbers 24:17. The writings of Balaam were no doubt known to these Wise Men, and when the “Star” appeared they set out to find the King and worship Him. Their visit to Jerusalem is recorded in Matthew 2.

As an introduction to the story of the life of Christ it is well to read the following chapters as they are listed here. In them the statement is often made that the coming of the child Jesus is in fulfillment of the promises which God had given through His prophets in all ages. Matthew tells us He was of the seed of David and Abraham, and traces his family connection from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of Mary. Luke gives the genealogy of Christ from Mary back to Adam, showing that Jesus is indeed the seed of the woman promised to Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:15.

Now read at one sitting and in this order: Luke 1, Matthew 1, Luke 2, Matthew 2.

The Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew was called from his business as tax collector at Capernaum to become a follower of Jesus Christ. He was one of a group known as disciples, which means learners, or students. In the early part of the second year of Christ’s public ministry, He “called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.” “Apostle” means “a messenger, or one sent.” Luke 6:13. Matthew was chosen as one of the twelve apostles, and remained with Christ till His ascension. After the ascension, he remained in Jerusalem for some time, and preached among the Jews.

Matthew, being a Jew, knew the promises and prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah. He also knew the hopes of the Jews of his day—that the Messiah would come and establish a glorious kingdom upon earth. He knew that these hopes were not according to God’s plan. The Messiah must first suffer and die for the sins of the world, before the kingdom could be established. Knowing the longing in the hearts of his own people, Matthew presents to them the King and His true mission into the world; together with the positive assurance that the kingdom of God will be established in its proper time.

Matthew introduces his message with a declaration that Jesus is the Son of David and Abraham. This is in fulfillment of the promises to David in 2 Samuel 7:12,13; Psalm 132:11; and to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 and 22:18. He then gives in order the names of the family through whom the Messiah would come. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; and, of the twelve sons of Jacob, Judah is chosen. In Genesis 49:8-10, we read, “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.... The scepter shall not depart from Judah, . . . until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Shiloh is another name for the Messiah or the Christ. In Revelation 5: 5, Christ is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

It is not by chance that these names are recorded, but in direct fulfillment of the word of God. They give evidence that the One who was born of Mary in Bethlehem was indeed the true Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the true King of Israel. Christ is the “seed” of the woman, (Genesis 3:15); the “seed” through whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Being the “Son of David” He is of the royal line “according to the flesh.” Romans 13, 4. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was of the seed

of David through Solomon, and Mary was of the seed of David through Nathan. Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:31. Matthew is the only writer who introduces the King in this manner, and the King and His kingdom become the theme of the entire book.

The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, that a virgin shall bring forth a Son, and call His name Emmanuel, is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:21-23. The second chapter is a record of fulfilled prophecy. John the Baptist appears in fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew 3; Isaiah 40:1 When Christ moved His residence from Nazareth to Capernaum, even that was in fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew 4:13, 14; Isaiah 9:1, 2. This answer to prophetic utterances of the past is characteristic of Matthew. Such expressions as, "Then was fulfilled" and "that it might be fulfilled," stand out like signposts all through the book.

Matthew is the only writer who tells of Joseph's dream, the visit of the Wise Men, the flight into Egypt, and the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem. Matthew gives the most complete record of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and he also gives the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25. In this book are recorded more parables regarding the King and the kingdom than are related in any of the other records. From the first verse, where Jesus is pointed out as the Son of David, to the last verse of the book, where He commissions the apostles, Jesus is presented as the promised King.

The book of Matthew may be divided into three parts. The first section, chapters 1-4:16, tells of the birth of Christ, His sojourn in Egypt, and His return to Nazareth. It also describes the ministry of John the Baptist, the baptism and anointing of Jesus, His temptations, and His change of residence from Nazareth to Capernaum. This was the crossroads of travel in those days, and here Christ could meet more people, from all parts of the country, and minister to their needs.

In the second part we read, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17. Here we see the beginning of a new phase of the work of our Lord. Soon after the beginning of His preaching, Christ declared the principles of His kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, and then He went forth to demonstrate these principles in relation to the needs of the world. He exercised power over the most hopeless of diseases, and over the elements of nature; and they obeyed His command. He supplied the material needs of the people by feeding the multitudes. He raised the dead, and spoke comfort to the sorrowing. By precept and example He taught the kingdom of God, and its spiritual power in the heart and life; and He declared its value to be above rubies and pearls. To all who hear and obey His teachings, He promises keeping power through the storms of life.

His early Galilean ministry ended with the events recorded in chapter 14. Then Jesus made a brief tour to Tyre and Sidon, Decapolis, Magdala, and Caesarea Philippi. Here Jesus sought an expression from the apostles which would give evidence of their comprehension of His mission. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He asked; and then He brought the question closer to their hearts by asking, "But whom say you that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:13-16. After this confession Jesus began to prepare His disciples for the suffering awaiting them when He should yield His life on the cross.

The third division of this book opens with these words: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Matthew 16:21. Jesus had come to the last stage of His life upon earth. His mission among men was about finished, and "from this time forth" His burden was for the disciples who were to carry forward the work which He had begun, and much of His teaching was for them. While this is true, we also find in these last chapters many parables and prophecies which belong especially to the last days. These are designed to prepare a people for the Second Coming of Christ. Of these Matthew 24, 25 are especially worthy of our consideration. This prophecy is also recorded in Mark 13 and Luke 21.

The prophecy of Matthew 24 was given in answer to a question asked by the disciples, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3. "These things" refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of which Christ had just spoken, and His words came to pass in the year A. D. 70. See Matthew 23:37-39; 24:1-3, 15-20. The rest of the prophecy deals with the signs to precede the Second Coming of Christ. There shall be wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, persecutions, and false christs and false prophets. Nations will be distressed and perplexed, and there will be great disturbance in the sea. See also Luke 21:25, 26. The sun and moon would be darkened. This event came to pass on May 19, 1780. The stars should fall from heaven-this occurred November 13, 1833. These signs are also mentioned in Revelation 6:12-17.

Christ declared that although these signs would appear as a warning, many would refuse to believe that the end of all things is at hand, for "As the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39.

The parables of the ten virgins, the unfaithful servant, and the separation of the sheep and the goats, all recorded in Matthew 25, warn us in the most impressive language of the results which await all who reject the message of God, and put off His coming. "Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come.... Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes." Matthew 24:42-44.

After the resurrection of Jesus, Matthew says, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted." Matthew 28:16, 17. This was no doubt the occasion when "above five hundred" saw Christ after He was risen. 1 Corinthians 15:5, 6. Here Jesus gave the great commission, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19, 20. Now read Matthew in two sittings: chapters 1-14; 15-28.

The Gospel According to Mark

Mark gives the briefest account of the life of Christ. He mentions nothing of the birth and childhood of Jesus, but in a very few words he tells of the baptism by John, and the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God. Then he enters immediately upon the work and ministry of our Lord, and follows this method throughout the book.

Mark records eight parables, two of which are not given by the other writers. Fifteen miracles are recorded, and most of them are presented in detail. In chapter 13 we find the prophecy of Jesus, telling of the signs of His Second Coming, and there are other brief discourses interspersed with the acts of Jesus. What Jesus did is the burden of this writer. Christ is here brought to our attention as the "Servant" of whom Isaiah speaks in Isaiah 42:1 and 53:11.

The book closes with the commission to the apostles, "Go you into all the world," and Mark adds that after the ascension of our Lord, "They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Now read Mark 1-9; 10- 16.

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke introduces his message in a very personal and friendly manner. He is writing to Theophilus, a Greek who it seems believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. "It seemed good to me also," says Luke, "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou might know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed." Luke 1:3, 4.

Luke gives the background for the coming of the Messiah. He tells of the visit of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias as he ministered in the temple and of the promise of a son who "shall be great in the sight of the Lord and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:15, 17. Gabriel then visits Nazareth with the announcement to the Virgin Mary of the birth of Jesus, and says: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:... and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Verses 32, 33.

It is from the pen of Luke that we learn of the taxing by Augustus Caesar, the visit of the angels to the shepherds, the stable as the birthplace of Jesus, and His presentation in the temple. Only Luke records the song of praise by Mary, the prophecies of Zacharias, and Simeon, and the announcement by Anna, the prophetess, "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:36-38. Here also we may read of the visit of Jesus to the temple at the age of twelve, the exact time of the ministry of John, and the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam. These early chapters should be studied very carefully.

Luke gives us many parables not recorded by the other writers. The most outstanding of these are, the good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37; the friend at midnight, 11:5-8; the lost sheep, 15:1-7; the prodigal son, 15:11-32; the rich man and Lazarus, 16:19-31; and the Pharisee and publican, 18:10-14.

Luke alone tells us of the experience of Zacchaeus, 19:1-9; the feast in Simon's house, which resulted in the parable of the two debtors, 7:36-50; the raising of the young man of Nain, 7:11-17; the ten lepers, 17:11-19; and the visit to the home of Mary and Martha, 10: 38-42. Each of these experiences has contributed precious truths which have enriched the account of the ministry of Jesus, and have become a blessing to the church.

Luke is very definite in his presentation of the day on which our Lord was crucified. "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23:54-56. This teaches us that the followers of Christ were Sabbath keepers, according to the commandment. Exodus 20:8-11.

In the last chapter of Luke we are reminded of Matthew's writings, by an emphasis on fulfilled prophecy. After the resurrection, Christ reviewed the writings of Moses and all the prophets to show that His death was necessary, and the resurrection a part of His mission, and that all this had been foretold by all the prophets since Moses. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47. "Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." "Repentance and remission of sins" were to be preached in His name. After this interview, Christ and His disciples walked together as far as Bethany. Jesus ascended to the Father, and the eleven returned to Jerusalem "with great joy."

Now read Luke in two sittings: chapters 1-12; 13-24.

The Gospel According to John

John declares Jesus to be one with the Father and in very truth God; who created all things, and was made flesh in order that He might dwell with man. Of His message he declares, "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." John 20:31.

We may therefore expect to find in this record the things which deal especially with the deep spiritual things of God. Here we find nothing of the details surrounding the birth of Christ into this world as recorded by some of the other writers. Instead, He is God coming to dwell with man. John the Baptist declared Him to be the "Lamb of God" and the "Son of God," the evidence being the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, which rested upon Him at His baptism. John 1:29-34. This declaration aroused an interest among John's disciples and resulted in two of them following Jesus. Being convinced of Jesus' true nature, these call others, and five acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah of prophecy, the King of Israel, and the Son of God. John 1:35-51.

The first miracle of Jesus; His first Passover in Jerusalem after His anointing; the first cleansing of the temple from buyers and sellers; and the first hint at His death and resurrection, are recorded in chapter 2.

John alone records for us the visit of Nicodemus, and the discourse on the new birth. This reached its climax in the declaration, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John 3:16-18.

The rest at Jacob's well was the occasion for the discourse on the "living water" of which He said, "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water . . . shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." At a later time the promise was given, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me. . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 4:14, 7:37, 38.

In John we find the beautiful discourse on "the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." John 6:27-63. This brought offense to most of His followers and they "went back, and walked no more with Him." John 6:66. It was an earthly kingdom they wanted, and when hopes faded for such a kingdom, they despised the greater spiritual riches. This experience marked the close of Christ's ministry in Galilee.

The resurrection of Lazarus brought from Jesus the comforting assurance, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." John 11:25, 26.

In the upper room, after the Passover had been eaten, Jesus gave His last message of comfort and instruction to the eleven, and only John records this intimate experience. Here Christ assures them, "I will come again." He would send them the "Comforter," which is the Holy Spirit, and He would abide with them forever. He was to teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance the teachings of Christ, and give them power and encouragement. This heart-touching and encouraging discourse closes with the intercessory prayer of our Lord. John 17.

After this, Christ goes forth to meet the powers of hell and of death. The cruel death of the cross was His to bear, but death could not hold Him. On the third day He met Mary who hailed Him with the simple word "Rabboni." To her was given the privilege of carrying the glad tidings of the resurrection to the rest of His followers.

John records three meetings with His disciples after the resurrection, and closes his story with the statement that the record is not a complete account of all that Jesus said and did while upon the earth.

Now read John in two sittings: chapters 1-12; 13-21.

The Acts of the Apostles

The book of Acts contains an accurate account of the rise and progress of Christianity, and is an answer to the commission of Christ to His disciples, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "And they went forth, and preached everywhere." Mark 16: 15,20.

The account is written by Luke to Theophilus. The writer refers to a "former treatise," which is the gospel according to Luke. He states he has already written of the life and work of Jesus, and now he is to tell what took place after "He was taken up" into heaven.

Christ had been with His disciples, at intervals, for forty days after His resurrection. He was with them for the last time and together they walked to the Mount of Olives. Here He gave them His last message. First He reassures them that the Holy Spirit would come and they were to wait in Jerusalem for His coming, and then they were to go forth as witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

There were yet ten days till Pentecost, and this time was spent in the upper room, where they prayed and made ready for the great work before them. One must be chosen to take the place of Judas, and Matthias was chosen to be one of the twelve. He had been with Jesus from the day of His baptism, until He ascended into heaven, so Matthias would be able to witness to the life and work of Jesus. Acts 1: 21, 22.

Pentecost came, and the Holy Ghost, which had been promised by Christ, came upon the waiting disciples and filled them with His presence. The experiences of that day in the preaching of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus resulted in the conversion of three thousand souls. This marvelous ingathering of believers, in one day, reminds us of a statement by Jesus, when He said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. . . . One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored, and you are entered into their labors." John 4:35-38.

The gospel seed had been sown by John the Baptist, and by Jesus and His disciples, the twelve and the seventy, and the "common people," who "heard Him gladly," had told the glad news of salvation. Mark 12:37. Now under the power of the Holy Spirit conviction and repentance followed, and the harvest was reaped.

For three and a half years the disciples continued their witnessing in Jerusalem, and of the results we read, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts 6:7. This brought persecution. Stephen was stoned, James was beheaded, and Peter and John were imprisoned and escaped only by the intervention of God. This persecution scattered the believers, and as they went into new places, they carried the gospel with them, and churches were established everywhere.

The conversion of Saul, who was later known as Paul (Acts 13:9), brought to the early church its greatest missionary. Paul and his companions traveled extensively through Syria, Cilicia, Cappadocia, Galatia, Thrace, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy. Many believe that Paul went as far as Spain, at least Spain was in his plans. He also visited the islands of Cyprus and Crete. Romans 15:24.

Everywhere, to Jews and Gentiles alike, Paul declared that Jesus was the Christ, that His death was necessary, but that God had raised Him from the dead, and through Him “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:38, 39.

This stirred up the wrath of the Jews, and in Acts 21:28-38 we read of Paul’s arrest. He was brought before governors and kings to witness for the Lord. He was finally sent to Rome to appear before the emperor. After a long imprisonment he suffered a martyr’s death, but gained “the crown of life” which through eternal ages shall adorn the brow of that noble warrior who shrank not from the stroke of the sword, but in death was more than conqueror “through Him that loved us.” Romans 8:37.

The churches established by Paul during his missionary travels needed more instruction than he was able to give them in the short time he was with them, so he wrote letters or epistles to them, and these epistles have come down to us and form a large part of the New Testament writings.

The book of Acts is an interesting story of travel and adventure for Christ. The apostles knew God had called them to go everywhere; that they were messengers of God carrying the all-important message of salvation through Jesus Christ. This Jesus, who was crucified, God had raised up, and He ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God to make intercession for us. The coming of the Holy Spirit is evidence of this fact, and salvation from sin can be had only through His name. Acts 4:12. This is the burden of the message given by the apostles, whether they preached to the Jews or to the Gentiles.

Now read this book in two sittings: Acts 1-12, telling of the work in Jerusalem by Peter and his associates; chapters 13-28, the work among the Gentiles by Paul and his associates. See Galatians 2:7, 8.

Romans

The epistle to the Romans was written while Paul was in Corinth. This we conclude from comparing Romans 16:23 with 1 Corinthians 1: 14 and 2 Timothy 4:20. Paul had not been in Rome when he wrote his epistle, but had heard of the faith of that church which, he says, “is spoken of throughout the whole world.” Romans 1:8.

It is not stated who first brought the gospel to Rome, but we read in the Acts that Cornelius of Caesarea, a Roman centurion, believed in Christ and with him his household and relatives. Before this a Roman centurion, who was in charge of the execution of Jesus, declared: “Truly this was the Son of God.” Matthew 27:54. We are also told that “strangers from Rome” were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and heard Peter’s sermon. Aquila and Priscilla had come from Rome. Acts 18:1 There were believers in “Caesar’s household.” Philippians 4:22. From these interesting items, as well as from the epistle itself, we learn that a church had grown up in Rome, the capital of the world, and Paul desired that the church in this center of influence should be well instructed.

Paul comes at once to the heart of his message. It is “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; declared to be the Son of God with power,. . . by the resurrection from the dead.” “The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.” Romans 13, 4, 16, 17.

The message of the epistle is a presentation of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul first declares that the cause for the darkest paganism is that “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God; . . . but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” He charges all-Jew and Gentile alike to be under sin and the condemnation of God. “There is no difference, says Paul, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:22, 23. The only advantage of the Jew is that “unto them were committed the oracles of God.” That privilege also placed them under greater responsibility, and, having been disobedient to “the oracles of God,” it increased their guilt before God.

The means of salvation is next presented. In Jesus Christ, God has provided a righteousness for all, by which all that believe are justified freely. This righteousness is a free gift upon all men unto justification of life.

Abraham and David are presented as outstanding examples of the grace of Christ. Both were justified through faith, and thus received the promise. This righteousness by which man is justified, comes by the obedience of One, even Jesus Christ, and its acceptance by faith brings peace.

The free gift “of righteousness” does not give license to sin, nor release man from the moral obligation of the law. The law of God is not evil, but “holy, and just, and good.” It is spiritual and the means by which man becomes conscious of sin. Romans 6; 7.

Christ’s redemptive work has provided for the spiritual renewal of man, so that instead of the law of sin and death having control in the life, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus takes possession of the one who believes in Jesus, and brings the life into harmony with the law of God. Through Christ, man is justified and sanctified, and shall be glorified when He returns to claim His saints.

The latter part of the epistle deals with Christian living in respect to God; toward one another; and declares one’s duty to the state. Paul then sends warm greetings to many by name, and includes all in the final benediction, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Romans 16:24.

Now read Romans in two sittings: Chapters 1-7; 8-16.

1 Corinthians

During his second missionary journey, Paul visited Corinth and remained a year and six months. Of his reception into that city we read in Acts 18:1-18. He found Aquila and Priscilla had established a business in Corinth, 41 and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent makers.” Acts 18:1 On the Sabbath day he preached to the Jews and Greeks.

Corinth was a wicked seaport in a heathen country. Paul describes the low level of life in these words: "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;" and then adds, And such were some of you." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. The gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation" wrought through Paul, and a church was raised up in the city of Corinth.

Persecution arose, and Paul was driven from the synagogue where he began his ministry; but he found shelter in the house of Justus. Here the word from the Lord must have been a great encouragement to him, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Acts 18:9, 10.

From Corinth Paul went to Ephesus, and while there reports reached him of trouble in the church. Some said, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos," and this party spirit caused contention and division. It was also reported that gross sin was indulged in by some of the members, and the church had failed to deal with the offense. Questions had arisen on various matters pertaining to godly living, and these circumstances caused Paul to write his first epistle to that church.

Paul declared that as Christ is one, so must the church, which is His spiritual body, be one. The gospel had been preached to them in simplicity, and that was God's manner of presenting the way of salvation. The gospel cannot be understood by human reasoning, for, "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. Therefore, there is no occasion for man to glory in any man, for all is of Christ and "Christ is God's." 1 Corinthians 3:23. God has appointed His ministers to be stewards of the gospel, and as such they labor and suffer that the word of God may be preached with power.

Paul sternly rebukes the church for failing to deal with the open sin existing among its members. He appeals to them to be holy, reminding them of the great price paid for their redemption. He then gives instruction on various matters such as marriage, eating things offered to idols, judging one another; admonishes against murmuring, saying temptations will come, but God has provided "a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10: 13. Then comes instruction on public worship with respect to prayers, the Lord's Supper, and the exercise of the spiritual gifts in the church. The church is an organized body with many members, each to fulfill his purpose, but all must be done for the harmonious working of the whole. Hence discipline of unruly members is necessary.

God had bestowed the gifts upon the church through the Holy Spirit, but these gifts are for the edifying of the church and not for unbridled display. Prophecy is for the building up of the church, miracles are for signs to those who believe not.

In chapter 15 Paul declares again the gospel of Jesus Christ whereby we are saved. The assurance of the Christian's hope lies in the resurrection of Christ. Christ is the first fruits of them that sleep. In Adam. all die, in Christ all live. "Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

In conclusion Paul reminds the church to remember the poor saints in Jerusalem and set aside an offering weekly for their relief. He concludes with personal greetings. Now read chapters 1-10; 11-16.

2 Corinthians

The first epistle was sent to Corinth by Titus, who was also instructed to see that the instruction in the letter was carried out. After his mission was accomplished, Titus joined Paul, this time in Macedonia, and brought him a favorable report from Corinth. His epistle had caused the church to realize its responsibility, and the offending member had been dealt with, and this had caused his deep repentance. 2 Corinthians 2:5-9. Seeing this result, Paul says, "In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." 2 Corinthians 7: 11.

Some in the church had manifested hostility toward Paul's letter and challenged his authority as an apostle. These circumstances caused him to write the second epistle, and Titus was again sent to Corinth to guide the church in the way of truth.

In this epistle Paul commends the church for its loyalty to right principles, but cautions against carrying the discipline so far that the offending party would despair. While proper discipline belongs to the church, the final judgment is with God when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." 2 Corinthians 5: 10.

In the latter part of the epistle, Paul vindicates his apostle ship, and in so doing reveals more of his personal life, his conflicts and triumphs, than is revealed in any other of his writings. Now read 2 Corinthians in two sittings: chapters 1-6; 7-13.

Galatians

The labors of Paul resulted in establishing "churches" in Galatia. It is not definitely stated whether this was during his first or second missionary journey, but it is generally believed to have been during his second journey.

It is very evident from the epistle that Paul had been received with warm affection, "as an angel of God!" Of them it is said, "If it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." Galatians 4:14, 15.

After Paul left the field, false teachers came among them and turned some of them from the gospel taught by Paul. Paul says they were "bewitched" by the strange doctrine. These false teachers are mentioned in Acts 15, and of them we read: "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved!" Acts 15: 1. They sought to make the rite of circumcision a means of salvation. This question had been discussed before the

church in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and Paul's teaching was in full harmony with the decision of the church. There is only one means of salvation, and that is faith in Jesus Christ. His atoning blood is the all sufficient means of salvation.

The false teachers had also questioned Paul's authority as an apostle, since he had not labored with Christ, nor been one of the twelve apostles. To this Paul answered: "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man. . . but by the revelation of Jesus Christ!" Galatians 1: 11, 12.

These disturbing factors caused many to turn aside from the truth of the gospel, and caused Paul to write his epistle to correct these false impressions and restore them again to right paths.

Paul first establishes the fact that there is "but one gospel, and that he had received his commission to preach the gospel direct from God and not from man. He tells of the beginning of his ministry before he had contacted the apostles in Jerusalem. His message was now and always had been that, "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ!" Galatians 2:16. Once again he cites Abraham, as an example of righteousness by faith and establishes anew the proper function of the law.

Salvation through Christ frees us from the bondage of sin and makes us sons by adoption. "And because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" Galatians 4:6. This spirit is the spirit of liberty and not of bondage. The fruits of the Spirit will be manifested in those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Outward forms can never take the place of holiness of heart and life. Of these outward forms Paul says, "He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Galatians 6:8.

The glory of the Christian is in "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14. Now read Galatians.

Ephesians

We must again turn to the book of Acts for the setting of this epistle. The first visit of Paul to Ephesus followed his mission in Corinth. He was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, who remained in Ephesus, while Paul went to Jerusalem. Acts 18:18-21. The seed sown by Paul during this brief stop was watched over by Aquila and Priscilla, and later Apollos came to Ephesus. Of him it is said he was, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures." Acts 18:24.

When Paul returned to Ephesus he found believers there. For three months he preached in the synagogue, but evil men stirred up much opposition, and Paul withdrew to the school of Tyrannus, where he "disputed daily." Paul labored in Ephesus for three years, and a church was established in this stronghold of paganism. See Acts 19:9, 10; 20:31.

Ephesus was famous for its gorgeous temple to the goddess Diana, which was considered one of the wonders of the world. The preaching of Paul produced a great revival and reformation so that "many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds." Acts 19:18. They burned their books of "curious arts" and destroyed their idols. As the sale of these things decreased, Demetrius became alarmed and stirred up the people. Paul left the city and returned to Macedonia, but Timothy remained in Ephesus. 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul's last contact with the church of Ephesus was through their elders who met him in Miletus, and to whom he gave his final charge for the church in this heathen city. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28. Following this "charge, "he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him." Verses 36, 37. Read Acts 18:18 to 20:28. Paul went on his way to Jerusalem, and while in that city he was arrested and sent a prisoner to Rome. It was during the early part of his imprisonment that he wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus and sent it by Tychicus.

In this epistle, Paul gives us a glimpse of the holy calling of the church of Christ. Christ as the head of the church loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it. . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle; . . . but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25-27.

In Christ, as the head, the church has been exalted to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:5, 6. God's purpose for His church has been expressed in these words: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3: 10, 11.

In harmony with these privileges and responsibilities of the church we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!" Ephesians 1:1 Paul then mentions the sevenfold blessings bestowed upon the church, which culminate in the sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise. Then follows a prayer for a clear understanding of this high and holy calling, and a view of the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Having presented the exalted privilege of the church, he reminds his readers of their condition without Christ when they were "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Christ's mission into this world ' changed all this, for now in Christ, Jew and Gentile are made one by the blood of Christ. Together they grow "unto an holy temple in the Lord," Jesus Christ being the chief Cornerstone.

In chapter 3 Paul glories in the grace bestowed upon him,, that 1 should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The apostle then prays for the believers, that they be rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend the all-embracing love and fullness of God. He assures his readers that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

We next find a plea for unity in the church. To this end God has enriched the church with spiritual gifts that it might grow into a perfect whole in Christ. To make this possible each individual must "put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt" and "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:22-24. The child of God must have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" but must "walk as children of light."

In conclusion the apostle writes, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” Ephesians 6:10. Now, as then, the Christian warfare can be fought only “in the Lord,” and the Christian armor will protect against “all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Now read Ephesians.

Philippians

This epistle brings to our memory some interesting experiences that came to Paul and Silas and are recorded in Acts 16.

Paul with his companions came to Philippi by direct guidance of God. While in Troas, Paul had a vision in which “there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us!” Acts 16:9. In this case as always, Paul “was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19), but came “to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.” Here they found a few women who were believers in Christ, and with these they worshiped on the Sabbath day.

Trouble soon overtook them when a “damsel possessed with a spirit of divination” met them, and began to advertise them as servants of “the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” Paul rebuked the evil spirit, and because “her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone,” persecution and imprisonment followed.

In prison Paul and Silas sang praises to God, and He sent an earthquake which opened the prison and loosed the bands of the prisoners, yet none escaped. This remarkable evidence of God’s care for His own brought conviction to the jailer, and he and his family were baptized. At the request of the city officials, Paul and Silas left the city, but returned at a later date and raised up a church which became a crown of joy to the apostles. Philippians 4: 1.

The epistle was written while Paul was a prisoner, seemingly during his first imprisonment in Rome. The church at Philippi had sent one of their number with gifts to Paul, and he writes the epistle to thank them for their liberality and to encourage them to be steadfast in the Christian life. This was not the first time this church had ministered to the needs of God’s servant, and he accepts the gifts as “an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” Philippians 4:15, 18.

Twice in this epistle, Paul weighs the eternal riches over against those of this world. Before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus he had gloried in his natural heritage. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a strict Pharisee, with all its advantages in the Jewish economy, and its responsibility in seeking to maintain the standing of the Jewish practices. But having seen Christ, all this seemed as refuse in comparison to the eternal riches to be found in the fellowship of His suffering and in the end attaining “unto the resurrection of the dead.” This was the goal toward which Paul pressed, and admonished the believers to strive for the same thing. Even while in prison, Paul weighed the advantages of life and death. He would gladly choose death. It would be sweet release from the cares of life, with its hardships and persecutions which had been his lot; but again he thought of those who needed his counsel and encouragement, and, having the mind of Jesus, he served others to the end of his life. When the call came for him to lay down his life, he said, I am now ready to be offered.”

Fifteen times in this brief epistle we find the words “joy” and “rejoicing.” Paul rejoiced in the church at Philippi, in their love toward him and one another, and in their loyalty to God. He encouraged them to rejoice even in trials and persecutions which was their lot in life. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4.

Colossians

The church at Colossae was not established by the preaching of Paul. There is no mention of his having been in that city. Epaphras seems to have been the one who raised up this church and cared for it. Paul knew some of its members, and had learned of the dangers which confronted them by the teachers of false doctrine, such as the worship of angels and delving into the mysteries which would exalt the human mind; so he writes his epistle to correct these errors and to present the rightful place of Jesus Christ in the plan of God.

The exalted position of Jesus Christ is the theme of this epistle. This is set forth in many brief statements: He “is the image of the invisible God;” “He is before all things;” “by Him were all things created;” “He is the head of the body, the church.” “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” He “is our life;” “Christ is all, and in all;” “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.”

The church, being the body of Christ, shares in this exalted position, and Paul admonishes them to continued faithfulness. This admonition is also put in very brief statements. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.” “And you are complete in Him.” “If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. . . . Set your affection on things above, “let the peace of God rule in your hearts;” “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; continue in prayer;” “Walk in wisdom;” “let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.” Now read Philippians and Colossians in one sitting.

Thessalonians

It was during Paul’s second missionary journey, that he, with Silas and Timothy went to Thessalonica. Of their experience in that city we read in Acts 17: 1-10. “The Jews which believed not” gathered a mob and assaulted the house of Jason, but Paul and his companions had left, and Jason became the object of their abuse. The extent and effect of Paul’s ministry up to this time may be gathered from the charge, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” Verse 6. In spite of the opposition,

“some of them believed, . . . and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” Verse 4. This was the beginning of the church in Thessalonica.

Because of the disturbance caused by the unbelieving Jews, Paul and his companions left the city, going to Berea and from there to Athens. From Athens Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica to encourage and comfort the believers in their affliction. 1 Thessalonians 3:1A. On his return to Paul with the assurance that the church was steadfast in spite of persecution, Paul wrote his first epistle.

The people of Thessalonica had received Paul’s message “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” This word had wrought effectually in them so that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Their lives witnessed to this fact in their “work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope.” They were an example to the believers “in every place.”

From the epistles we learn that this church had been subjected to much suffering, and Paul sought to comfort them with the blessed hope of the soon coming of Christ to deliver His saints from this present evil world. To this end they were exhorted to holy living and steadfastness in the faith. They were assured that the dead shall rise at the last trump, and that all the saints of God shall together meet their Lord in the air, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Paul admonished them to be watchful unto the coming of the Lord, to be kind one to another, and especially were they to esteem those who labored among them and were over them in the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.

Paul’s vivid description of the second coming of Christ, and his repeated admonition to godly living in view of this fact, led some of them to conclude that the event was right at hand. The second epistle is written to correct this error. Paul tells them that the coming of Christ the second time would not take place till the “falling away” and the “man of sin” should be manifested. The man of sin would reveal his power by working “signs and lying wonders.” In view of this fact he once again urges: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

The second coming of Christ is the message of these epistles, and it is mentioned in every chapter of both letters. The first epistle emphasizes the effect of the second coming of Christ upon the righteous, and the second epistle the relation of that coming to the wicked, when “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8. Now read the two epistles at one sitting.

Timothy

Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1-3, where we learn that he was of the city of Lystra. Paul visited this city on his first missionary journey, and Acts 14 gives us an account of his experiences in preaching the gospel in that region. Here Paul was stoned and left for dead, but he was restored and continued preaching. It was during Paul’s second missionary journey that he again visited Lystra and Derbe, where he found Timothy a young man, “which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.” Acts 16:2. From the first epistle to Timothy we may conclude that he with his mother and grandmother had accepted the gospel under the preaching of Paul on his first visit to Lystra. 1 Timothy 1: 1, 2; 2 Timothy 1: 1-5. Paul accepted Timothy as his companion in labor because of their mutual love and interest in the work of God. Timothy was a courageous young man. He knew from his first introduction to the gospel that persecution fell to the lot of those who preached the crucified and risen Christ. 2 Timothy 3:10-12.

When Paul was sent a prisoner to Rome, Timothy was with him for a while at least. This we learn from three epistles which were written at that time in which Timothy’s name is included in the greetings to the churches. See Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1. From Hebrews 13:23 we learn that Timothy also suffered imprisonment in Rome, but it is not stated when this was nor do we know the circumstances of his arrest. However, he and Paul were both set at liberty and together they returned to Macedonia. During this brief journey, Paul left Timothy to care for the church in Ephesus, which was a very important center. It was while Timothy occupied this position that Paul wrote him the first letter. In this epistle there is no mention of imprisonment, but in the second epistle we learn that Paul is again in prison and he speaks of the trials he was experiencing and was under the conviction that his death was near. This second imprisonment of Paul must have been after he had written the first epistle. The second letter was written from his prison cell. This second epistle is the last message we have from the pen of the apostle who called himself, less than the least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8), but whom the church has considered the greatest of the apostles.

The epistles to Timothy are of a very personal character. They come from a mature and seasoned missionary to a younger worker, giving instruction on his personal life and conduct, and for the care of the church. He admonishes him to endure hardness as a good soldier; to fight the good fight of faith; and in each of the epistles gives him a most solemn charge. 1 Timothy 1: 18; 2 Timothy 4:13.

In the last epistle the great apostle opens his heart to • faithful friend and companion, and urges his presence with him during the trying days of waiting for his execution. Although Paul is weary and alone, there is a bright note of faith and courage in his final message, “I am now ready to be offered... . Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing!” 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Of this hope Paul spoke when he stood before King Agrippa, “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our

fathers. . . For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews!" Acts 26:6, 7. Paul knew in whom he believed and awaited the end with Christian fortitude. Now read 1 and 2 Timothy at one sitting.

Titus

Titus was a Greek convert. Galatians 2:3. Paul speaks of him as "mine own son after the common faith" (Titus 1: 4), and from this we may conclude that he had learned to know Jesus Christ through the ministry of Paul. He is first mentioned in the second epistle to the Corinthians as an associate with Paul in the gospel ministry.

He was left in Crete to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." Titus 1:5. He was also instructed to deal with the "unruly and vain talkers" who were subverting "whole houses, teaching things which they ought not." Titus 1: 10, 11. The Cretans did not have a good reputation even among themselves and this tendency to evil had not been overcome by some who professed Christianity.

He was to give sound and practical instruction to the members of the church regarding their everyday association and responsibilities, that "they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." For this purpose the gospel of Jesus Christ had come, teaching us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and live for Him "who gave Himself for us."

In chapter 3 we find the way of salvation presented step by step. We see the unregenerate, to whom the love of God has been manifested, renewed by the mercy and grace of God through the Holy Spirit, "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The evidence of this work of grace upon them is "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Titus 3:8.

Philemon

Philemon. was a member of the church at Colossae. He had accepted the gospel under the preaching of Paul, perhaps in Ephesus, since Paul had not been in Colossae. Epaphras had labored in that city.

Philemon's servant, Onesimus, had robbed his master and fled to Rome. There, under the influence of Paul, he became a Christian, and as such he must make restitution to his master. Ezekiel 33:14-16. Paul, realizing the difficult situation of Onesimus and the need for great tact in establishing a reconciliation between master and servant, writes this most unusual letter of intercession for a wayward servant.

Paul assumes the responsibility for whatever the servant owes his master, and then with a delicate turn of thought reminds Philemon that he is indebted to Paul for "even your own self." He pleads that the servant may be received as a "brother beloved," which now he is "in the Lord."

Onesimus traveled in company with Tychicus, who carried letters from Paul to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae. See Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-11. Paul wrote this letter from his prison cell in Rome. Now read Titus and Philemon.

Hebrews

This epistle was no doubt written for the Hebrews, who had accepted Christianity during the early years of its proclamation. Hebrews 2:3. Its message reveals the fact that the plan of redemption reaches its completion in the incarnation, the life and work of Jesus Christ. All other means have been found to be incomplete and therefore fail in supplying the needs of man. The superiority of the Son of God to all other means of revelation and ministry is emphasized throughout the epistle. The word "better" may be said to point the way to the message here presented. Christ is "better than the angels." There is a "better hope," and a "better testament" a "better covenant.... established upon better promises!" There is also presented a better tabernacle, a better sacrifice for sin, and a better priesthood. Twelve times the word "better" is used, and thrice we find the word "excellent."

The writer first declares that God has revealed Himself to man, first through the prophets, and in the last days He has "spoken unto us by His Son." The Son is said to be "heir of all things," the One by whom the worlds were made. The Son is also the "express image" of the Father, and inherits "a more excellent name" than the angels. That honor was publicly proclaimed at the baptism of Jesus when God spoke from heaven, "This is My beloved Son." Here we read, "Unto the Son He said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." Hebrews 1:8. In these words God revealed the superiority of the Son over the prophets, and over angels who communicated God's messages to the prophets. Here also the Son is declared to be God, and occupies a throne. No being in the universe of God is more highly exalted.

We next read of the humiliation of Jesus because of sin. He was made lower than the angels, took on Himself the seed of man, in order to redeem the lost dominion and every son of Adam. by His own blood. In the end He shall present the redeemed host to the Father with these words: "The children which God hath given Me." Hebrews 2:13. Then there will be complete victory over sin and death and the grave. The devil, who brought these into the world, shall also be destroyed.

Again the superiority of Jesus Christ is put in contrast with Moses who led Israel out of Egypt but failed to bring them into the Promised Land because of sin. Numbers 20:1-12. Joshua led them into the Promised Land, but was not able to give them the "rest" God designed they should enjoy. This failure was due to their hardness of heart and unbelief. God's purpose remains, and those who hear His voice and accept by faith the promises of God shall enjoy the eternal rest of which the weekly Sabbath is a foretaste. This "rest" Christ has made possible through His sacrifice. "Come unto Me," He said, "and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you,

and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Matthew 11: 28, 29. “Rest unto your souls,” is what the human heart longs for, and what God desires to give to all who are weary and heavy laden.

God sought yet another means of bringing man into oneness with Him, and that was through the sanctuary services with Aaron as the high priest, ministering before God for the people. This service could not bring the work of redemption to perfection. It was ordained as a means to point to the true sacrifice, “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” John 1: 29. The earthly sanctuary was only a shadow of the true sanctuary which is in heaven. “The blood of bulls and of goats” could not take away sin. Hebrews 10:4. The priesthood was not perfect, because by the infirmities of the flesh they sinned and must offer sacrifices for their own sins, and by reason of death their priesthood was limited.

In contrast to all this, there is revealed the sanctuary and the true tabernacle “which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Hebrews 8:2. This is the “more perfect tabernacle.” Hebrews 9: 11. The high priest is Jesus Christ Himself. “Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son.... He said also, . . . Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 5:5, 6. Again we read, “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, . . . by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Hebrews 9:11, 12. Here was the perfect Priest, with the perfect offering, “offered. . . without spot to God.” He is able through His blood to “purge your conscience from dead works;” “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 9:14; 7:25.

This one perfect sacrifice for sin is sufficient to cleanse the blackest defilement, and remove every stain of guilt. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:7-9.

Let us notice a few statements on the efficacy of the one offering for sin, made by Jesus on the cross.

“We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10.

“After He [Christ] had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Hebrews 10:12.

“Now where remission of these is [sin and iniquity], there is no more offering for sin.” Hebrews 10: 18.

In this perfect sacrifice and High Priest, the whole plan of redemption is brought to completion, and gives to man the only way to God, and his acceptance through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore we are admonished, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. . . . For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Hebrews 10: 3 5-38.

In chapter 11 we find the “honor roll” of those “who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises. . . . of whom the world was not worthy. . . . These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:33-40.

The -epistle closes with admonition to steadfastness in the Christian race, even as our Lord endured unto death. We shall never be subjected to greater suffering than He endured for us, and His sustaining grace is promised to all who put their trust in Him. Now read Hebrews at one sitting.

James

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,” is believed to be our Lord’s brother, and head of the church in Jerusalem. Galatians 1: 19; Acts 15:13. From the Gospels we learn that there was a James in the “carpenter’s” family of Nazareth. Matthew 13:55. It is also stated that Mary and the brothers of the Lord were with the disciples in the upper room after the ascension of Christ. Acts 1: 14.

The epistle is addressed to the Jewish Christians, giving evidence that there were Christians from among “the twelve tribes. . . scattered abroad.”

Since persecution was the lot of the early church, the writer begins with a note of encouragement: “Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience.” James 1:2, 3. If they endured trial a “crown of life” awaited them.

The Christian’s life is a life of action. “Faith without works is dead,” says James. A mere profession is no evidence of faith, and to those who may trust in profession only, James says, “Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” James 2:18. “Be you doers of the word, and not hearers only.” Their action must first be manifested in obedience to the law of God; care for the fatherless and widow; no distinction must be made between the rich and poor, as such; works of charity in feeding and clothing the needy; are all evidence of pure faith before God. All of these come under the obligation of the law, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” and therefore will come before the judge of all men.

James then gives a vivid discourse on “the tongue.” It is a small member, but powerful for good and evil. The evil heart will give forth evil words which lead to envy and strife: likewise from the good heart blessings will follow. True wisdom, which is from above,” will be manifest in the life of the child of God. This is “the fruit of righteousness,” which is peace.

Judgment is pronounced against the rich who oppress the poor laborer. Christians are admonished to patience in view of the fact that “the coming of the Lord draws nigh.” He is the judge, and will avenge His own. Troubles should be taken to God, and they have access to His throne through prayer. Elias (Elijah) is given as an example of earnest prevailing prayer, and God answered his prayer. See 1 Kings, 17th and 18th chapters. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16. Now read James.

Peter

The apostle Peter is well known to the readers of the Bible. In fact more is written concerning his personal life than of any other apostle. We know his good and bad qualities equally well. There is one outstanding fact that should never be forgotten: Peter loved his Lord and Master with sincere devotion, and this eventually developed the glorious fruit of godliness in the closing years of his life.

Peter wrote his epistle after his life had been mellowed and made perfect in the school of trial and suffering. He had truly followed his Lord in these experiences, and he knew that soon his lot would be to suffer the cruel death of the cross even as his Lord had suffered for him. Of this we read: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ bath showed me." 2 Peter 1: 14. Therefore, these epistles may be considered his last message to the church.

Peter addressed his first epistle to the churches in Asia Minor, but also to all who have been "begotten. .. unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." His message is concerning "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter 1:11. Seventeen times he speaks of suffering, either the sufferings of Christ or of His followers, and fourteen times of the glory to be revealed through trial and reward. Peter witnessed the sufferings of Christ and His glory and majesty, and these experiences were very vivid in his mind. 1 Peter 5: 1; 2 Peter 1: 16- 18; Matthew 17:1-7.

In view of the fact that Christ suffered and died for man. Peter admonishes his readers to godly living. He recognizes the fact that trials and suffering will be the lot of the Christian, but adds: "For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." 1 Peter 2:21.

In the second epistle we find the Christian's ladder; the strong confidence in the "sure word of prophecy;" warnings against false teachers and scoffers; and the consummation of the hope of God's people in the coming of Christ; the destruction of sin and its results by fire; and the grand climax is reached in this statement, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13. Peter states his reason for writing to the believers; it is to put them "in remembrance of these things," "to stir you up." They were to remember the "words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior." 2 Peter 1: 12, 13; 3:1, 2.

Now read. 1 and 2 Peter.

1 John

These epistles are written by John, who is often called the "beloved disciple." He is also the author of the gospel story bearing his name, in which he states; "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." John 20:31.

In the first epistle the same purpose is carried out but going a step further into Christian experience. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1: 3. This fellowship follows as one accepts cleansing from sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, and results in fullness of joy, and the smile of God lights the Christian's path.

Fellowship can be maintained only as we "walk, even as He walked." "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." This will result in love toward one another. It will wean us from the love of the world which "passes away," "but he that does the will of God abides forever." 1 John 2:15-17. He then warns against the deceptions of antichrist, but assures us that the "anointing" of the Holy Spirit will enable one to detect error.

Christian certainties are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5. The love of God toward us in giving His Son and in Him eternal life, and that even now in this life God considers us as sons, should be great encouragement to God's people.

2 John

This is addressed to "the elect lady and her children." John encourages them to walk in the truth and warns against deceivers, who teach contrary to the truth. These should receive no encouragement by kind hospitality and such like.

3 John

The third epistle is addressed to Gaius, commending him for his loyalty to the truth, and his charity toward the church. In the second and third epistle John expresses his intention of seeing the ones addressed, and then "we shall speak face to face," he says.

Jude

This brief epistle is written by Jude, "to them that are sanctified by God the Father," and preserved in Jesus Christ." He writes of the common faith and exhorts the readers, to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints!"

The reason for this admonition is that ungodly and wicked men had come among them “turning the grace of our God,” into an unholy thing. Jude denounces these wicked men in the severest terms, and reminds the reader that the Lord will come and “execute judgment” upon such for their ungodly deeds.

Jude is the only writer who mentions the prophecy of “Enoch. . . the seventh from Adam.” This is the Enoch who was translated and taken to heaven without seeing death. Genesis 5:24. Enoch said: “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.” This refers to Christ’s Second Coming.

He then admonishes the church to build “up yourselves on your most holy faith,” by prayer and trusting in the mercy of Jesus Christ, with assurance of His keeping power in the midst of the evil which surrounded them. Now read the three epistles’ of John and Jude at one sitting.

The Revelation

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.” So wrote John, the beloved disciple, while on the Isle of Patmos, a rocky island in the Aegean Sea, which was used by the Romans as a place of banishment. It was an isolated and a lonely place, but even there God did not forget His servant.

John tells us why he was there: “I John, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1:9. Here God presented to His faithful servant the most wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ, from His ascension till He comes again, and establishes “a new heaven and a new earth,” wherein “there shall be no more curse.” Revelation 21:1; 22:3.

The message of this book is given in symbols: the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven last plagues which will be visited upon the ungodly. In this manner are traced the experiences of the Christian church, the breakup of the Roman Empire, the hatred of the dragon “that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan” –against the true church of God. In his effort to destroy the church of God the devil will secure the co-operation of the nations of the earth and the apostate church, but the church of God will come through the conflict victorious. The prophet sees the church standing on the sea of glass singing the song of victory. Revelation 14:13; 15:24; 19:1-8.

The messages in this book came from God through Jesus Christ who sent His angel “to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.” Revelation 1: 1. From the lips of Jesus Christ this blessing is pronounced, “Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Verse 3. Then follows the benediction and words of praise and adoration, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Verses 5, 6.

John in vision sees Jesus in His priestly garments, standing in the midst of the candlesticks, holding seven stars in His right hand. “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou saw are the seven churches.” Revelation 1:20. Messages are then given for the seven churches. Seven being a number of completeness, these churches are symbolic of the Christian church in all ages from the days of the apostles to the end of time. While the church is rebuked for the sins in her midst during the various periods of her experience, yet God in His mercy deals with her, and a remnant will come forth purified in the furnace of affliction. These messages are followed by two chapters giving a glimpse of the exaltation of Jesus Christ and the adoration of the heavenly host and all the creatures in the universe of God.

Chapter 6 reveals the apostasy which came into the church. Paul had warned of this danger. He said there would come a “falling away” from the truth of God. Men would arise “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Acts 20:30. The color of the horses shows a gradual change from white to the pallor of death. The white horse signifies the purity of the church at the beginning of the Christian age, but through the “falling away” there is seen the red, black, and then the pale horse with Death and Hell in control, resulting in the slaying of men for the word of God. This was true during the persecutions of the Dark Ages, when thousands were slain for no greater offense than reading the word of God. And this was done by those who claimed to be believers in Christ.

The sixth seal opens with a great earthquake. The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, meets this description and time. This is followed by the darkening of the sun and the moon and the falling of the stars. These signs had been foretold by our Lord in His great prophecy concerning the signs of His second coming. See Matthew 24:29-31. In each prophecy these signs are followed by the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, the gathering of the saints who have been sealed with the seal of the living God, and the resurrection of the righteous dead. “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kingdoms, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” Revelation 7:9.

The seven trumpets bring to us in symbolic language the upheaval among the nations of the earth, resulting in the breakup of the Roman Empire by the invasion of the barbarians. This brought into existence the ten kingdoms of Southern Europe first mentioned in Daniel 7:24. Under the sixth trumpet the French Revolution is mentioned in chapter 11. This series of symbols brings us again to the coming of Christ, when “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 11:15.

Next is pictured the conflict of the church. The true church is symbolized by the “woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” Revelation 12: 1. In this line of prophecy the true church is subjected to a series of persecutions, instigated by Satan, the dragon which is “that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan.” First he sought to destroy the “Man-child” as soon as He was born. This was the attack against Christ while on earth. Next the “dragon”

seeks to destroy the church, and would have succeeded but for the special protection of God, and the church lived through the cruel persecutions of the Roman emperors and the papal powers of the Dark Ages. Another persecution of the true church is foretold in these words: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17. This experience for the church is still future.

In chapter 17 another woman is brought to view. This woman is "arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." She is crowned with "names of blasphemy," and her name engraved on her forehead is: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth." She is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Revelation 17:1-6. This is very evidently a symbol of the apostate church which has departed from her Lord.

The last message of mercy to be given to the world is recorded in Revelation 14:6-12. Here we find three angels, each with a message "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The first declares, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." The second declares "Babylon is fallen;" and the third utters a fearful warning against the worship of the beast and his image, and of receiving his mark and his name.

According to Revelation 13, this false worship of "the beast" will be forced upon the inhabitants of the earth, by "another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon." Revelation 13: 11. In the book of Daniel we learn that beasts represent governments of the earth. It is against this worship that the three angels utter their warning messages. Those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark, will suffer the wrath of God in the seven last plagues, described in Revelation, sixteenth chapter. This message will bring the true and the false church into clear contrast and the nature of each will be revealed.

The true church will be victorious in this terrible conflict. The prophet gives us a view of her, redeemed and exalted as she stands before the throne of God. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Revelation 19:8. Of the false church and her end it is said, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her." Revelation 18:8. Not only the "woman" called "Babylon," but Satan, whose she is, shall be cast into the lake of fire and be brought to ashes. See Revelation 20: 10; Ezekiel 28:12-19.

The Revelation closes with a beautiful description of the "new heaven and a new earth" with the city of God and the redeemed safely at home with the Lord.

The great importance of the message of Revelation may be learned from the blessing in the opening verses, and the stern warning at its conclusion, sounded in these words: "For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book." Revelation 22:18, 19.

The promise is then given, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. And with John the beloved disciple let us say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Verse 20.

Thus we come to the end of the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15. "But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James 1:22. Now read the Revelation in two sittings: Chapters 1-11; 12-22.