

Genesis To Revelation
A Brief Introduction to Each of the Sixty Six Books of the Bible

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Preface

THE OBJECT of this little volume is to give the reader a few brief, helpful facts about each of the books of the Bible, in order that he may better understand and appreciate the reading of the Sacred Scriptures.

Each sacred book is listed in the numerical order in which it is found in the Bible. Besides the principal things known about the writer of each book, are stated the time of its composition and the scope of the treatise. Bible references are given in most instances to indicate where the information may be found. The dates given are, in most cases, only approximate. In preparing this material we have followed mostly the dating given in that excellent little booklet Sacred Chronology, published by the Oxford University Press, New York City.

Search the Scriptures

“NO MAN, woman, or youth can attain to Christian perfection and neglect the study of the word of God. By carefully and closely searching His word we shall obey the injunction of Christ, “Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.” This search enables the student to closely observe the divine Model, for they testify of Christ. The Pattern must be inspected often and closely in order to imitate it. As one becomes acquainted with the history of the Redeemer, he discovers in himself defects of character; his unlikeness to Christ is so great that he sees he cannot be a follower without a very great change in his life. Still he studies, with a desire to be like his great Exemplar; he catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed.” -Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Nov. 28, 1878.

An Introduction to The World’s Sacred Library

THE WORD “Bible” is derived from biblia, the plural form of the Greek noun biblion, and signifies “little books.” The Bible is a sacred library of 66 small books.

This unique library of divine origin. The Creator of the universe is the author, for the Holy Scriptures were “given by inspiration of God.” 2 Timothy 3: 16. “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21. These Sacred Writings, containing the inspired word of the Eternal One, are called “The Oracles of God.” Romans 3: 2.

Some 40 men living in different generations, in different localities, and occupying various stations of life-were chosen by the Lord to prepare the original manuscripts.

Genesis was written about 3,500 years ago, about 1500 BC; the Revelation was composed about AD 97, nearly 1,900 years ago. A period of approximately 1,600 years elapsed during the accomplishment of this great enterprise.

The 66 books of the Bible are divided into two great divisions popularly called “The Old Testament” and “The New Testament.” The Old Testament was written before Jesus was born among men, and is composed of 39 books. The New Testament was penned after Jesus was crucified, and contains 27 books. The Old and the New Testament stand together as one work, and the unity of the two is remarkable. The New Testament contains numerous direct quotations from, and very many references to, the Old Testament.

This gift from God, preserved miraculously through the centuries, is a priceless heritage. It is the universal Book, and belongs to everybody. The Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into more than 1,000 tongues.

In our Authorized English Version of the Bible the books are not arranged in the chronological order of the dates of their composition, but are grouped according to the nature of their contents.

The five books of Moses - from Genesis to Deuteronomy -come first in the Old Testament. They are commonly referred to as the Pentateuch. In Greek the word pente means “five,” and teuchos signifies volume.” Hence the Pentateuch is a fivefold volume.

The next group-extending from Joshua to Esther consists of 12 historical books which tell the story of the Hebrews from their settlement in Canaan to their restoration after the Babylonian captivity.

The third group consists of the inspirational books—from Job to the Song of Solomon, these are of a literary nature consisting mostly of poems and proverbs.

The fourth group comprises 17 books of prophecy—from Isaiah to Malachi. The first five of this group make up what are called “The Major Prophets”, while the last 12 are spoken of as “The Minor Prophets.”

Turning to the New Testament, we find that the four Gospels—from Matthew to John - constitute the first group of books. The first three are biography of Jesus Christ by different writers, while that of John supplements them.

The Acts of the Apostles comes next, being the one historical book of the New Testament. It tells of the most outstanding developments of the primitive church from the crucifixion of Christ to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome.

Third comes a group of 21 letters penned by several leaders of the apostolic church. Paul wrote the first 14, James wrote one, Peter wrote two, John wrote three, and Jude wrote one.

Last is the book of prophecy—the Revelation—written by the apostle John.

The Books of The Old Testament

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY
JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 SAMUEL
2 SAMUEL
1 KINGS
2 KINGS
1 CHRONICLES
2 CHRONICLES
EZRA
NEHEMIAH
ESTHER
JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON
ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL
HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

The Books of The New Testament

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

ACTS
ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS
2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 THESSALONIANS
2 THESSALONIANS
1 TIMOTHY
2 TIMOTHY
TITUS
PHILEMON
HEBREWS
JAMES
1 PETER
2 PETER
1 JOHN
2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE
REVELATION

The Old Testament

“HE SAID unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.” Luke 24:44.

THE BIBLE

When I am tired, the Bible is my bed; Or in the dark, the Bible- is my light; When I am hungry, it is vital bread; Or fearful, it is armor for the fight. When I am sick, 'tis healing medicine; Or lonely, thronging friends I find therein.

If I would work, the Bible is my tool; Or play, it is a harp of happy sound. If I am ignorant, it is my school; If I am sinking, it is solid ground. If I am cold, the Bible is my fire; And wings, if boldly I aspire.

Should I be lost, the Bible is my guide; Or naked, it is raiment, rich and warm. Am I imprisoned, it is ranges wide; Or tempest-tossed, a shelter from the storm. Would I adventure, this is a gallant sea, Or would I rest, it is a flowery
lea.

Does gloom oppress? The Bible is a sun. Or ugliness? It is a garden fair.

Author Unknown.

Genesis

THE NAME Genesis means “origin” or “beginning.” The first book of the Bible is called Genesis because it gives an account of the generation, or the origin, of our world. This book appears to have been written by Moses about 1500 B. c., while he was a shepherd in the land of Midian, prior to the departure of Israel from Egypt. It contains our only authentic account of the creation of the world, of the origin of man, of God’s original plan for man, of the entrance of sin into the world, and of the first promise to man that the Savior would come to redeem us. (Genesis 3: 15)

In Genesis we have the first 2,500 years of human history. Transgression became so universal that 1,656 years after Creation the Lord destroyed the world by a flood of waters. Only faithful Noah and his family were saved.

Noah and his three sons, with their wives, re peopled the earth. Next came the dispersion of the race at Babel by the confusion of man’s primitive language. Faithful Abraham, a descendant of Shem, was called to found in Canaan a nation to preserve the knowledge of the Creator. Five times the promise was given that through this nation all the nations of earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12: 3; 18: 18; 22: 18; 26: 4; 28: 14)

That blessing was to come to the nations through the promised Savior. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. . . . Now to Abraham

and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” Galatians 3: 8, 16.

Later Jacob, on his death bed, foretold that from the tribe of Judah would come the Savior, whom he called Shiloh, the “Peace-giver.” (Genesis 49: 10)

Exodus

THE TITLE Exodus signifies “a going out.” This book was written by Moses during the wilderness wanderings of the Hebrews in the fifteenth century BC. It contains his record of the bondage of Israel in, and their departure from, Egypt. It covers a period of about 145 years—from the death of Joseph to the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

To understand Exodus, study it with Genesis. In the latter the history of the human race is traced down to Abraham and his family, who were chosen to be the special witnesses of divine truth among the nations of earth. The sojourn of this family in Egypt led to the bondage of the Hebrew people there. Exodus takes up the story of Israel’s bondage in Egypt, and tells of their deliverance under the leadership of Moses after a long sojourn in the land of the Pharaohs.

The historical part of Exodus—chapters 1-18—deals with Israel in Egypt, Moses the liberator, the departure of the Hebrews from the land of bondage, and their encampment at Mount Sinai.

The rest of the book—chapters 19-40—tells of the Ten Commandments, the judicial ordinances, the old covenant and its ratification, and the Lord’s directions for the construction of the sanctuary and the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood.

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was the beginning of a purpose. “You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation,” said Jehovah to His people. Exodus 19: 6. In the land of Canaan they were to be God’s witnesses, that all nations might learn to know Him during the centuries to come.

Leviticus

THE THIRD book of the Bible is called Leviticus because it presents the sacred laws and ceremonial ordinances relating to the priestly ministry assigned to the Levites, who were one of the 13 tribes of Israel. It is really a continuation of the book of Exodus, and was also penned by Moses during the sojourn of his people in the wilderness in the fifteenth century BC.

Within its pages are described various sins and the different sacrifices and offerings required for their propitiation. It tells of the regulations for the consecration of the priests, and the celebration of the various feasts, ceremonies, and rituals observed in the worship of Jehovah.

The great lesson taught by the Mosaic system of animal sacrifices was that the wages of sin is death, and that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. (Hebrews 9: 22.)

To see the wisdom and love of God in the Hebrew ritual, we must have our eyes continually on the incarnation and death of Christ, to which it refers. In order to better understand the great atonement made by our Savior, we must study the ancient ceremonies which foreshadowed His sacrifice on the cross, for He is “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” John 1: 29.

The ministry of Aaron and his sons in the ancient priesthood foreshadowed the mediatorial work of Christ, our great High Priest, in the courts of heaven above. The great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) was a figure foreshadowing the work now being performed by our great High Priest in the true tabernacle in the heavens, which the Lord pitched, and not man. (Hebrews 4:14-16; 8: 1-5) Keeping in mind that the ceremonial laws of services of the Israelites were designed to teach the plan of salvation of sinners by faith in Christ, one finds that the book of Leviticus is full of gospel truth.

Numbers

IN THE name Numbers we are reminded that this book tells of the two numberings, or census-takings, of the Israelites after they left Egypt. One was made at the beginning, and the other at the close, of their wilderness wanderings. Moses wrote the book.

In Numbers we find interesting accounts of Israel’s experiences during the 40 years they spent in the wilderness their trials and deliverance, their rebellions and punishments. There we are told of the death of Miriam and Aaron, sister and brother respectively of Moses. Indeed, the history presented in this book leads up to the arrival of the Israelites at the eastern bank of the river Jordan. It also depicts the justice, the long suffering, the mercy, and the watch care of our loving heavenly Father over His children.

Paul, recalling the story of Israel in the wilderness, reminds us that “all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1 Corinthians 10: 11.

Much gospel truth is set forth in this book. In Balaam’s prophecy it was foretold that “there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” Numbers 24: 17. This refers to the birth of Jesus, as King of Israel. (Matthew 2: 1, 2.)

In His conversation with Nicodemus, the eminent Jewish rabbi and ruler, the Savior said: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3: 14, 15. The story of the Israelites’ being bitten by the fiery serpents because of sin and unbelief, and the lifting up of the symbolic serpent for them to behold by faith and receive healing, is told in Numbers 21. The brazen serpent was a symbol of the crucified Christ.

Deuteronomy

HE NAME of the book Deuteronomy comes from two words of the Greek language: deuterios, meaning “second,” and nomos, signifying “law.” The book consists mostly of a series of oral discourses that Moses gave to Israel shortly before his death (1451 BC). All the adults who left Egypt with Moses 40 years before had died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb. Those now alive were only children at the time of the Exodus or had been born during the wilderness wanderings. For their benefit the story of Israel’s deliverance, the giving of the sacred laws to them, and their wilderness experiences was rehearsed by Moses. Thus the laws were given to them a second time.

Moses emphasized the need of faithful and loving obedience to God’s commandments. He said: “And now, Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?” Deuteronomy 10: 12, 13.

The Song of Moses is given in chapter 32, where in beautiful language he tells of God’s love and watch care over Israel. “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Verses 10-12. Besides practical instruction, this book contains warnings and blessings. Several prophecies concerning the Jewish nation are found in it. The account of Moses’ death, given at the end of the book, is believed to have been appended by Joshua.

Joshua

THIS book has the name of the man who succeeded Moses as the leader of Israel. Joshua was born in Egypt. He became the leading man in the tribe of Ephraim, and served as aide to Moses during the 40 years of the wilderness wandering. (Exodus 24: 13; 33: 11; Joshua 1: 1.) Shortly before his death, Moses installed Joshua in the office of chief magistrate over the nation. (Deuteronomy 31: 14, 23) Joshua himself probably wrote this book. (Joshua 24: 26.)

The book gives the history of Israel from the death of Moses (1451 BC.) to the death of Joshua, about 1426 BC. (Joshua 24: 29) It covers a period of nearly 30 years, and tells of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites and their settlement there. Joshua was the general who led them from victory to victory until the land was possessed and divided among the tribes. In his old age Joshua called upon his people to finish the work they had begun under his leadership, and not to be led into apostasy by association with the remnants of the heathen nations still left among them. (Joshua 23)

When the day of his death drew near, he assembled again the tribes of Israel at Shechem, with their leading men, to make his farewell address and to ask them to renew their covenant relationship to God. He briefly rehearsed the history of their nation from the time of Abraham down to their day, and appealed to them to remain true to God. They made a covenant with him then that they would be true. “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel.” Joshua 24: 31.

Judges

THE BOOK of judges takes its name from the fact that, it is a history of Israel covering most of the time from the death of Joshua to the days of Eli, from 1426 to 1171 BC, the period when the Hebrew people were governed by civil magistrates called “judges.” It is thought that Samuel the prophet was the author of the book, but this is not certain.

The 14 judges - 13 men and one woman - “were neither hereditary governors, nor were they chosen by the people: they were properly vicegerents, or lieutenants of the Supreme God. . . . They had no power to make or change the laws; they were only to execute them under the direction of the Most High. God, therefore, was King in Israel: the government was a theocracy: and the judges were His deputies. The office, however, was not continual, as there appear intervals in which there was no judge in Israel.” Adam Clarke, Commentary and Critical Notes, Vol. 2, p. 3. (B. Waugh and T. Mason, New York City, 1832.)

The book covers a period of nearly 300 years. It is a story of repeated apostasy, repentance, and deliverance. The long-suffering, justice, and mercy of God toward a wayward people are beautifully portrayed in this book. Four of the judges whose feats are recorded therein are among the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11.

The Israelites, after settling in Canaan, failed to drive out the heathen from the land as the Lord had commanded. Instead, they intermarried with the idolatrous Canaanites and thus were led to depart from the truth of the living God. Consequently He left them to the cruel mercies of their pagan neighbors. In their afflictions and repentance, Israel called upon Him for help, and He had mercy upon them and delivered them. Six times Israel was thus afflicted, and six times the Lord raised up judges to deliver His people.

Ruth

RUTH is the first book of the Bible to bear a woman’s name, and is the only one having the name of a Gentile. It is not known who was the writer of this book, or when it was written. The experiences recorded in it took place “in the days when the judges ruled” in Israel. (Ruth 1: 1.) The genealogy given in the fourth chapter goes no farther than David, which has led some to suppose that the book was written by Samuel the prophet.

This interesting story of Ruth tells how this Moabite woman, a heathen woman-learned to know the true God through the faithfulness of her pious Hebrew mother-in-law. When her husband died, and she thus became free to return to her own people, Ruth

cast her lot with the Lord's people, refusing to return to her idolatrous kindred. Her choice, as expressed to Naomi, is recorded in these beautiful words:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goes, I will go. And where thou lodges, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou dies, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Ruth 1: 16, 17. ,

Later she was married to Boaz, a wealthy landowner of Bethlehem, and became the mother of Obed, the grandfather of David. Thus she became one of the ancestors of Jesus, the Savior. The story of Ruth is one of simple faith, hope, and love. It shows how God cares for those who put their trust in Him, and proves that He loved the Gentiles and would have them obey and serve Him even as He did Israel. The closing verses of the last chapter contain a genealogical table showing the ancestry of King David.

1 Samuel

THE FIRST Book of Samuel is a history of the Hebrew people from the birth of Samuel (about 1160 BC) to the death of Saul, the first king of Israel (1055 BC). Samuel probably did not write this book, for he died some time before Saul did. (1 Samuel 28: 3; 25: 1.)

Samuel, one of Israel's greatest prophets, was born when Eli, the priest, had judged the nation nearly 40 years. (1 Samuel 4: 15, 18) A Levite by birth, Samuel was trained at an early age in the services of the sanctuary. There, while still a youth, he was called to the prophetic office.

Eli had failed to train his sons properly, and they had become a disgrace to the priesthood. Spirituality was at a low ebb in Israel, and apostasy prevailed. The Lord had permitted the pagan Philistines to put the nation under tribute and to oppress them.

Samuel brought about a religious reformation among the people while they suffered at the hand of their enemies. When Israel repented, the Lord wonderfully delivered them. Samuel established several schools throughout the nation to educate the youth in the true faith.

The seer judged Israel more than 20 years. (1 Samuel 7:2) But when he grew old, and his sons proved to be unfaithful leaders, the people clamored for a government like that of the nations around them. Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was chosen to be first king. He was rash in judgment, jealous, and obstinate, and became very wicked. The Lord had Samuel secretly anoint David, of the tribe of Judah, for the kingship. David became the hero of the nation's warriors. This excited Saul's jealousy, and he relentlessly persecuted David. Finally, Saul committed suicide when he was defeated in battle by the Philistines.

2 Samuel

THE SECOND Book of Samuel begins with David's enthronement as king of Israel (1055 B), and extends to the anointing of Solomon as his successor (1015 BC), when David had reigned about 40 years. It is not known who wrote the two books bearing the name of Samuel.

The story opens with the return of David, then 30 years old, to his people after Saul's death, and records his coronation as king of Israel at Hebron.

The tribe of Benjamin, to which Saul belonged, preferred to have his 40-year-old son, Ish-bosheth, for king. This resulted in a civil war that lasted seven years and six months. Abner, the military commander of the Benjamite forces, finally deserted his master and came over to the side of David, and this brought the struggle to a speedy close.

The story of the long reign of David is presented in this book—the great achievements together with the gravest blunders of his life. He is called a man after God's own heart. His life was not perfect. But when David did make a mistake and was reproved, he repented, confessed his guilt, and showed the sincerity of his repentance by his conduct thereafter. This sincere willingness to do the right was what made him precious in the sight of the Lord. Psalm 32 and 51 are permanent Bible records, penned by David himself, to show that he truly repented after his disgraceful conduct with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

David probably was taught in one of the schools established by Samuel the prophet, who showed personal interest in the young man. (1 Samuel 19: 18) He was the greatest of the kings of Israel, and during his reign and that of his son, Solomon, the nation attained its highest glory and prosperity as an earthly kingdom.

1 Kings

THE FIRST Book of Kings tells the story of the Hebrew people from the death of David (1015 BC) to the beginning of the reign of Ahaziah, king of Israel (898 BC). The author of the book is not known.

This book tells the story of the building and the dedication of the beautiful temple of God in Jerusalem. Then follows an account of the prosperity of Solomon, who made the mistake of forming worldly alliances with the heathen nations taking to himself many wives. This resulted in his apostasy and the establishment of heathen systems of worship in Jerusalem itself.

When he had reigned 40 years, Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam (975 BC). The people, burdened by excessive taxation under the rule of Solomon, asked Rehoboam to reduce the amount of tribute exacted of them. His imperious refusal to do so resulted in a revolt. Only the tribes of Benjamin and Judah remained loyal to the house of David, while the other 10 tribes made Jeroboam their ruler, with headquarters in Samaria. Thus the Hebrew nation became divided into two separate kingdoms: one (the northern) called "Israel," and the other (the southern) called "Judah."

The rest of the book tells of the reigns of the rulers of the northern kingdom down to Ahaziah (898 B). A brief parallel record is given for the reigns of the kings of Judah down to that of Jehoshaphat (915 BC).

Fearing that his people would go to Jerusalem to worship God and thus become attached to the house of David, King Jeroboam introduced into his kingdom a system of idolatrous worship. Elijah, the Tishbite, was raised up by the Lord in the reign of Ahab (918-898 BC) to denounce the worship of Baal and to call the people back to the service of Jehovah.

2 Kings

THE SECOND Book of Kings is a continuation of the First. The author is not known, but it is believed that these histories of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah were compiled under the direction of Ezra. The Second Book of Kings extends from the reign of Ahaziah, king of Israel (898 BC) to the first year of Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon (561 BC).

This book tells the story of the reigns of the kings of Israel down to the destruction of their kingdom by the Assyrian armies under King Sargon in 721 BC. The mighty religious reformation begun by Elijah was continued by Elisha, his successor, who re-established the system of schools set up in the days of Samuel. Elisha died in the reign of Joash (Jehoash), king of Israel (842-825 BC). Apostasy soon revived, civil war and crime prevailed in the kingdom, while it suffered several invasions by the Assyrian armies. Finally, the Assyrians removed the people to distant lands, and settled Samaria with Gentiles.

A brief parallel account is given of the reigns of the kings of Judah from that of Jehoshaphat (915 BC) down to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah (588 BC). The independence of the Hebrew people, as a free and sovereign nation, then came to an end.

Apostasy to Baal worship, the sun cult of the Phoenicians, gradually developed in the kingdom of Judah until Jerusalem itself became a center of idols and idolatrous practices. God-fearing kings and prophets brought about religious reformations from time to time and thus delayed the day of doom for the southern kingdom. Such noted prophets as Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Nahum, Obadiah, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel were the spokesmen of Heaven during the period covered by this book.

1 Chronicles

THE FIRST Book of Chronicles is a historical record of the reign of King David (1055-1015 BC). The author of this book is unknown.

This history opens with a series of genealogical tables that begin with Adam and extend down to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (598-588 BC). The civil war that followed when David was made king of Israel is described, and is followed by the story of the united kingdom under him through the remainder of the 40 years of his reign.

The First Book of Chronicles gives much information that is not found in the Second Book of Samuel. Particularly worthy of note are David's plans and preparations for the building of the temple of the Lord. He himself was not permitted to build the structure, but Solomon, his son, accomplished this task which his father so devotedly and zealously began.

Besides presenting abundant genealogical data concerning the various tribes and leading men of Israel, this book gives important information about the organization and administration of both the civil government and the sanctuary services in those days. It was at the close of David's reign that Israel reached the peak of her prosperity and expansion, and this made it necessary to expand and improve the facilities for carrying on the religious ceremonies and services connected with the worship of God in Jerusalem.

The book closes with an account of David's last meeting with the leading men of the kingdom, his farewell address to them, and the installation of Solomon as king in his place. The last verses are a notice of David's death. They mention the principal books containing the original records of his reign.

2 Chronicles

THE SECOND Book of Chronicles is a continuation of the history begun in the First. Beginning with the reign of Solomon (1015 B. c.), it extends to the end of the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia (536 BC). It is believed that the Chronicles were compiled and written under the direction of Ezra.

This book is principally a history of the reigns of the kings of Judah from that of Solomon to that of Zedekiah, in the eleventh year of whose rule (588 BC) Jerusalem was destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. A brief parallel account of the reigns of the kings of Israel down to the destruction of the northern kingdom by the armies of Assyria, in 721 BC, is presented.

A description is given of the building and the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem by King Solomon. Here we find a copy of the remarkable dedicatory prayer that he offered to the Lord on that occasion. All of this makes more striking and sad the story that follows. When he had finished building the temple of God, Solomon erected a magnificent palace for himself, and there enthroned himself in great pomp and glory. His fame went out to the ends of the world, and great men from distant lands came to learn wisdom at his mouth, for he was the wisest man on earth. But this wisdom was not of himself; it was a special endowment given him by the Lord that he might glorify Him and make His truth known to the world.

Becoming proud and worldly, trusting in his own wisdom, Solomon formed alliances with the pagan nations around him, took wives of them, and finally lost his hold on God. To please his wives, he built pagan temples and established idolatrous worship in Jerusalem itself. Thus the people of God were led to apostasy and the ultimate tragedy that overtook them.

Ezra

THE BOOK of Ezra bears the name of its author. Ezra was a learned priest and a spiritual leader of the Jews who returned from the land of their captivity to Palestine in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia (465-425 BC). He was associated with Nehemiah, civil governor of Jerusalem about 444 BC. (Nehemiah 8: 1.)

Ezra sought to bring about a great spiritual reformation among his people. "He was a ready scribe in the law of Moses." Ezra 7: 6. The Persian king took a personal interest in the restoration of the Jews in Palestine, and issued in 457 BC a decree authorizing it. The edict was addressed to Ezra personally. That Gentile monarch recognized in him a man of great piety and learning. (Verse 12)

In preparation for his work, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it." Verse 10. His labors were very successful. "The efforts of Ezra to revive an interest in the study of the Scriptures, were given permanency by his painstaking, lifelong work of preserving and multiplying the Sacred Writings. He gathered all the copies of the law that he could find, and had these transcribed and distributed. The pure Word, thus multiplied and placed in the hands of many people, gave knowledge that was of inestimable value." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 609.

The Book of Ezra contains a history of the restoration movement from the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia (536 BC), to the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (457 BC) a period of about 80 years. To better appreciate the writings of Haggai and Zechariah, one needs to read the Book of Ezra. (Ezra 5:1; 6:14)

Nehemiah

THE BOOK of Nehemiah was written by the man whose name it bears. He was probably born in Babylon during the captivity of his people. His book is a continuation of Ezra's story of the return of the Hebrew people from their exile, particularly of the restoration of the city of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's account begins with the twentieth year (445 BC) of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia. At that time he held the important position of cup bearer to this Persian monarch, which shows that he was a man of reputed integrity.

Artaxerxes, appointed Nehemiah civil governor of Jerusalem for a period of 12 years. (Nehemiah 5: 14) He was a zealous religious reformer, as well as an able civic leader of his people. In his work of reformation he had the assistance of Ezra, the priest. (Nehemiah 8:1,9) Nehemiah's first work was the rebuilding of the wall of the city, which he did in troublous times and despite much difficulty.

About 432 BC Nehemiah returned to the court of the king of Persia. While he was away from Jerusalem, evils crept in among his people and threatened to pervert the nation. Upon his request, he was granted a leave of absence by the king to visit Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 13: 6.) This resulted in further reforms among his people.

Nehemiah, in his many activities, made God his source of strength and confidence. He was a man of prayer and a tireless worker, one who could manifest great faith and courage in the face of discouragement.

Esther

THE BOOK of Esther is the second and last book of the Bible to bear the name of a woman. Esther, a God-fearing Hebrew maiden, was born in Persia. Left an orphan at an early age, she was brought up by her cousin, Mordecai, an employee at the palace of the king. (Esther 2: 5-7)

The narrative has its setting in the reign of Xerxes 1 (485-464 BC), the wealthiest of the Persian kings. Although God is never mentioned in this book, His overruling hand is discerned throughout the story.

The king, on the occasion of a great feast he had given at Susa (Shushan), the capital of his kingdom, became displeased with Vashti, his queen, and set about to find another woman to take her place. Youthful Esther, whose racial identity was not revealed to the monarch at the time, was chosen, for she was "fair and beautiful."

Haman, the prime minister, plotted the destruction of all the Jews in the empire, and built a high scaffold especially for the public hanging of Mordecai, who refused to kneel in homage to him. The unsuspecting king signed the decree that Haman drafted for exterminating the Jews, not knowing that in so doing he was sentencing his queen to death.

Esther, informed of the plot, notified Mordecai to request the Jews of Susa to fast while she brought the matter before the king. Taking her life in her hand, she exposed the malicious prime minister. Immediately Xerxes issued an edict counteracting the death decree already published against the Jews. Haman was hanged on the scaffold prepared for Mordecai, who was then appointed prime minister.

Job

THE BOOK of Job is an epic poem believed to have been written by Moses not long after he wrote Genesis and while he was a shepherd in Midian. The tenor and style of the Hebrew language used, and the patriarchal setting of the story, support this opinion. Job, the principal human figure in the narrative, was a wealthy, God-fearing chieftain of Uz, on the edge of the Arabian desert. He probably was a contemporary of Isaac, who lived from 1896 to 1716 BC.

Satan is "the accuser of our brethren." Revelation 12: 9, 10. He tries to cause men and angels to question the sincerity of the children of God and the justice of His mercy and care for them, and seeks opportunity to test their religious profession. God sometimes permits the evil one to try us and thus demonstrate before the universe who are those on earth who are disposed to serve Him at all costs.

Job was widely known for his piety and integrity. Satan charged before God, the angels, and representatives of other worlds that Job served the Lord only for what material benefits he received thereby. The evil one was permitted, with certain limitations to test the patriarch's love for God.

Besides suffering the loss of his children and his property, Job was afflicted with a loathsome disease that caused intense suffering. His friends misjudged him, and his wife tried to discourage his trust in God. But in all his trouble he said: "He knows the way that I take. When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23: 10. Also: "He will not lay upon man more than right." Job 34: 23.

Psalms

THE BOOK of Psalms is a collection of 150 sacred poems, which were sung as hymns by the ancient people of God. The singing was often accompanied by appropriate music. David, the sweet singer of Israel, composed most of them. Credit for some is given to others, including Moses and Solomon.

The Psalms are the longest book in the Bible. They contain the longest chapter in the Bible-Psalm 119-and also the shortest-Psalm 117. The collection appears to be divided into five sections: (1) Psalms 1-41, (2) Psalms 42-72, (3) Psalms 73-89, (4) Psalms 90-106, and (5) Psalms 107-150.

"The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God. His life record declares that sin can bring only shame and woe, but that God's love and mercy can reach to the deepest depths, that faith will lift up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God. Of all the assurances which His word contains, it is one of the strongest testimonies to the faithfulness, the justice, and the covenant mercy of God."-E. G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 754.

These poems abound with prophecies concerning the first and second advents of Jesus. They are often quoted in the New Testament. Psalms 22 and 69 foretold various details of Christ's sufferings and death. The Psalms often speak of His coming in glory to judge the world. They contain some of the most quoted and most loved portions of Holy Scripture. Psalm 23, called "The Shepherd Psalm," probably has been committed to memory more than any other. Psalms 46 and 91 have been a comfort and help to God's children in times of great danger.

Proverbs

THE BOOK of Proverbs is a collection of brief, epigrammatic sayings uttered by wise men of ancient times. King Solomon contributed the largest number of them. It is recorded that "he spoke three thousand proverbs." 1 Kings 4: 32. Only a few of his inspired sayings have been preserved in this book. He is expressly mentioned by name as being the author of most of the Proverbs. (Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1.) But those of chapter 30 are attributed to "Agur the son of Jakeh." Those of the last chapter are described thus: "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." Verse 1. We do not know anything else about these two men.

In the Proverbs we have a treasury of practical wisdom. These inspired maxims contain principles of holy living and high endeavor needed by men and women in every walk of life. The secret of true wisdom is revealed in these words: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 1: 7. The promise is that if "thou incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yea, if thou cries after knowledge, and lifts up thy voice for understanding; if thou seeks her as silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures. Then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2: 2-5.

A lovely description of the ideal wife is found in the last chapter of the Proverbs. In this book much is said against the use of intoxicating drink. (Proverbs 20: 1; 23: 29-35) It abounds with instruction and counsel for young and old, for parents and children, kings and their subjects, employers and employees, businessmen, farmers, scholars, artisans in a word, for everybody. The apostle Peter found in them a very apt illustration. (2 Peter 2: 22; Proverbs 26: 11.)

Ecclesiastes

THE TITLE Ecclesiastes means "Preacher." King Solomon, the son of David, is the preacher who wrote it during the last years of his life. He had permitted worldliness to lead him away from God and into the folly of sin. Chastened in spirit and enfeebled in body, he turned, wearied and thirsty, from the world's broken cisterns to drink again at the sacred fountain of divine truth.

The book was written after Solomon had found his way back to God. In it he discusses the ambitions and problems of life for the benefit of the youth, and shows how differently men relate themselves to them.

"Solomon's later writings," observes a Bible student, "reveal that as he realized more and still more the wickedness of his course, he gave special attention to warning the youth against falling into the errors that had led him to squander for naught Heaven's choicest gifts. With sorrow and shame he confessed that in the prime of manhood, when he should have found God his comfort, his support, his life, he turned from the light of Heaven and the wisdom of God, and put idolatry in the place of the worship of Jehovah. And now, having learned through sad experience the folly of such a life, his yearning desire was to save others from entering into the bitter experience through which he had passed." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 80.

In his closing words, Solomon says to the youth: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shall say, I have no pleasure in them. 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 12:1, 13-14.

Song of Solomon

THE AUTHORSHIP of the Song of Songs is attributed to King Solomon. (Song of Solomon 1:1; 3: 9-11; 8:12.) It is a beautiful poem glorifying wedded love. It abounds in metaphors and portrays the love existing between Christ and His church, under the figures of a lover and his beloved.

To understand this book, we must consider the Redeemer as the loving bridegroom and the church as His bride. The apostle Paul presents the church as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5: 22-27.) His beloved church is presented as one "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." (Song of Solomon 5: 10) Over it is unfurled God's banner of love. (Song of Solomon 2: 4)

King Solomon was well acquainted with the plan of redemption and the privileges of the Christian life. He speaks of the coming King as the Beloved, the One who is altogether lovely, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valley, the Chiefest among ten thousand, and the Well of living waters. (Song of Solomon 2: 1, 2, 8; 5: 10, 16; 4: 15)

Throughout the poem the imagery employed by Solomon is very appropriate and beautiful despite the fact that much of the literary quality of poetry is lost when it is translated from one language into another. His description of spring is unsurpassed in literature. He portrays it thus: "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." Song of Solomon 2: 11-13.

Isaiah

THE PROPHET Isaiah wrote the book bearing his name. As a youth he began his ministry near the close of the reign of Uzziah (811-758 BC), and continued through the reigns of Jotham (758-743 BC), Ahaz (743-726 BC), and Hezekiah (726-698 BC), kings of Judah. He died a martyr early in the reign of King Manasseh, having been a prophet more than 60 years. He was living when the kingdom of Israel came to its end; and he was in Jerusalem when the Assyrian armies of Sennacherib came down to capture the city.

Called "the gospel prophet," he spoke often about Christ and His love for man. He foretold the Savior's birth into the world as the child of a virgin. (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 22, 23) He predicted that this Child would be God in human flesh, and that He would one day occupy the throne of David, of whose royal lineage He would be. (Isaiah 9: 6, 7.) This seer recorded beforehand many details of the Lord's trial, death, and burial. (Isaiah 53) The kind of work the Savior would do at His first coming was fore shown by him. (Isaiah 61: 1-3; Luke 4: 16-18) The message of John the Baptist, who heralded the first advent of Christ to the world, was based on a prophecy in Isaiah. (Isaiah 40: 1-4; Luke 3: 3-6.) Isaiah also spoke of the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom upon earth. (Isaiah 65: 17-25; 66: 22, 23.)

Through him the Lord made gracious and loving appeals to His disobedient people, pleading with them to repent and return to Him. Best known is this invitation: "Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1: 18.

Jeremiah

JEREMIAH, whose writings bear his name, was of a family of the priests living in Anathoth, a town set aside for them in the tribe of Benjamin. (Jeremiah 1: 1.) It was in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (640-610 BC), that he was called, while still a youth, to serve as a prophet. His ministry continued until after the destruction of Jerusalem (588 BC). He remained in Palestine and prophesied there for a time thereafter. Later he was taken to Egypt by a band of rebellious countrymen, and there also did he prophesy. (Jeremiah 43)

The ministry of Jeremiah lasted more than 40 years, and he presented messages for the Lord to many different nations besides his own. He is sometimes called "the weeping prophet," because of the tears he shed for his wayward people. Jeremiah 9: 1.

Repeatedly he pleaded with the kings and the princes of Judah, and with the elders and the people, to hearken to the word of God. He warned them of the terrible end that awaited them, their city, and its temple. Mistreated and imprisoned, yet through it all he was faithful to duty—a pathetic, lonely figure who never ceased to warn Judah until the kingdom was brought to an end by the invading armies of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 588 BC.

Jeremiah presented God as a deity of infinite love, longsuffering and gracious to those who would forsake evil. The Lord, he declared, loved Israel and Judah with an everlasting love, and would never break His covenant with the house of David. He prophesied of the coming Savior and the glorious future that awaits the ransomed of the Lord. "In His [Christ's] days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 23: 6.

Lamentations

THE FIVE chapters of Lamentations are a series of five poems penned by Jeremiah the prophet to express his deep grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of his countrymen by the Babylonian armies in 588 BC. The poems in four of the five chapters consist of 22 verses each.

For 40 years the prophet had urged the people to heed the word of God and spare themselves the terrible fate that awaited them. He himself went through the siege of Jerusalem, and saw the famine, the slaughter, and the destruction. The beautiful temple, erected by Solomon centuries before, was given to the flames. The walls of the city, and of its stately palaces, public buildings, and sanctuary, were thrown down and made a pile of rubble.

Nevertheless, in all his grief the prophet could write: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, said my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Lamentations 3: 22-26. "The Lord will not cast off forever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Verses 31-33.

The prophet continued to work for his people, saying: "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Lamentations 3: 40.

Ezekiel

THE BOOK of Ezekiel also bears the name of its author. He was a priest (Ezekiel 1: 3) who was taken into exile at the time that Jehoiachin, king of Judah (599 BC), was taken prisoner to Babylon. For 22 years he ministered, presenting messages to the people in Jerusalem, to the Hebrews in the captivity, and to various Gentile nations.

"While Jeremiah continued to bear his testimony in the land of Judah, the prophet Ezekiel was raised up from among the captives in Babylon, to warn and to comfort the exiles, and also to confirm the word of the Lord that was being spoken through Jeremiah. He was also instructed to foretell, by means of a variety of symbols and solemn messages, the siege and utter destruction of Jerusalem." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 448.

Ezekiel explained to his people the justice of God in permitting the captivity to overtake Israel and Judah, and made it clear that the hand of the Lord had control over the affairs of the world. He foretold that out of the captivity a faithful remnant would survive, and that in the future the nation of Israel would be restored under God their King. He also foretold the resurrection of the dead (chapter 37). Through him the Lord speaks of the state of the redeemed in the world to come, as follows:

"When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to My servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God." Ezekiel 28: 25, 26.

Daniel

DANIEL, the author of this book, was a Hebrew prince whom the Babylonians took captive in the third year of King Jehoiakim of Judah-about 606 BC. After three years of study in Babylon, this youth entered the service of King Nebuchadnezzar. (Daniel 1.) He served that government until its last king Belshazzar-was slain in 538 BC. (Daniel 5.) When King Darius set up a new world government under the Medo-Persian regime, Daniel was appointed its prime minister. (Daniel 6.) He was alive in the third year of Cyrus. (Daniel 10: 1.)

In Daniel 2 were foretold the rise and fall of Babylon (605-538 BC), Medo-Persia (538-331 BC), Greece (331-168 BC), Rome (168 BC - AD 476), the nations of western Europe (AD 476 to our day), and the final establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. In Daniel 7 the same four universal empires are symbolized by four great beasts, and the nations of western Europe by the 10 horns from the fourth. The little horn described as tampering with God's law and persecuting His people depicted that great ecclesiastical system that dominated Europe during the Dark Ages-from AD 538 to 1798. The ram and the he goat of Daniel 8 represent Medo-Persia and Greece, while the little horn that waxed great symbolized Rome. The 2,300 prophetic days of Daniel 8: 14, of which the 70 weeks of Daniel 9: 24-27 are the first part, began in the autumn of 457 BC, when Artaxerxes Longimanus issued the final decree restoring Jerusalem. (Ezra 6: 14; 7: 6-28.) Daniel 10, 11, and 12 are a prophecy extending from Medo-Persia down to the time when Messiah shall deliver His people.

Hosea

THE BOOK of Hosea is the longest in the Minor Prophets. Hosea prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah (811-758 BC), Jotham (758-743 BC), Ahaz (743-726 BC), and Hezekiah (726-698 BC), kings of Judah, and during that of Jeroboam II (825-773 BC), king of Israel. (Hosea 1:1.)

"The closing years of the ill-fated kingdom of Israel were marked with violence and bloodshed such as had never been witnessed even in the worst periods of strife and unrest under the house of Ahab. For two centuries and more the rulers of the ten tribes had been sowing the wind; now they were reaping the whirlwind. King after king was assassinated to make way for others ambitious to rule. 'They have set up kings,' the Lord declared of these godless usurpers, 'but not by Me: they have made princes, and

I knew it not.' Hosea 8: 4. Every principle of justice was set aside; those who should have stood before the nations of earth as the depositaries of divine grace, 'dealt treacherously against the Lord' (Hosea 5: 7) and with one another. With the severest reproofs, God sought to arouse the impenitent nation to a realization of its imminent danger of utter destruction. Through Hosea and Amos He sent the ten tribes message after message, urging full and complete repentance, and threatening disaster as the result of continued transgression." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 279-280.

Hosea urged his people to turn from idolatry and corrupt living, saying: "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." Hosea 14: 1, 2. The Lord said: "I will heal their back sliding, I will love them freely." Verse 4.

Joel

JOEL wrote at a time when the judgments of God, particularly in the form of war from enemies without the nation, were about to fall upon the Hebrew people.

Through this seer the Lord called upon the people to repent of their evil ways and thus avert the impending wrath. He pleaded with them, saying: "Turn you even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Who knows if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him?" Joel 2: 12-14.

The style of Joel's language is vivid and vigorous, and yet it has the tenderness of Jeremiah. The sublimity and majesty of it rival that of Isaiah and Habakkuk.

Joel foretold the restoration of the Hebrew people to their homeland after their captivity, and assured them that Jehovah would still love them and be their God. He foresaw also the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and also the great ingathering of souls in preparation for that time when Christ shall come again.

Peter declared that Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2: 16-21.) Joel's prophecy concerning the darkening of the sun and the moon (Joel 2: 31) was fulfilled on May 19, the memorable "Dark Day," of 1780, as one of the signs of the imminent return of Jesus. (Matthew 24: 29) The prophet also spoke of the last days and of the triumph of God's people when the great day of the Lord shall come. (Joel 1)

Amos

AMOS was a herd man and a gatherer of sycamore fruit in Tekoa, a little to the south of Bethlehem. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah (811-758 BC), and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (825-771BC). He is noted for the statement: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets." Amos 3: 7.

This prophet denounced the sins and corruption prevalent among God's professed people, and warned that there was a limit to His forbearance, and that injustice He must punish sinners.

Through Amos the Lord said: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 4: 12.

"Against the marked oppression, the flagrant injustice, the unwonted luxury and extravagance, the shameless feasting and drunkenness, and gross licentiousness and debauchery, of their age, the prophets lifted their voices; but in vain were their protests, in vain their denunciation of sin. 'Him that rebukes in the gate,' declared Amos, 'they hate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly.' 'They afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.' Amos 5: 10, 12." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 282.

Amos foretold that a remnant of faithful ones would be saved and possess the earth as God's everlasting kingdom. (Amos 9:11-15)

Obadiah

THE PROPHECY of Obadiah, consisting of a single chapter of 21 verses, is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It was written not long after the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 BC, and carries a burden of reproof to the people of Edom for having aided the Babylonians in destroying the Hebrew nation. The Edomites were kinsmen of the Jews, being descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, from whom the Israelites had descended.

Obadiah foretold the extirpation of Edom as a nation, declaring that it had been determined upon them by the Lord because of their wickedness. The message states that the victory of the heathen over Israel was not permanent, and that ultimately salvation and victory would come to the faithful remnant among the professed people of the Lord.

After describing the fate that awaited the enemies of God's people, the seer says: "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." Obadiah 17. And in the end, he says, "the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Verse 21.

The prophecy has been fulfilled in so far as Edom is concerned, for that nation has disappeared from the face of the earth, and her people are known no more among men.

"A fulfillment of the word of prophecy in history is a fascinating story," says William. A. Spicer. "To the Lord, the future is an open book, even as the present. The word is spoken; the event to come is made known and is written on the parchment roll by the

prophet's pen. Time passes; centuries come and go. Then, when the hour of the prophecy arrives, lo, the fulfillment is seen in matters that pertain to individuals as well as in the affairs of cities and

Jonah

JONAH, the author of the book that bears his name, was the son of a certain Amittai. He was a native of Gathhepher, a border town of the tribe of Zebulun. (2 Kings 14:25; Joshua 19:10,13.) It is believed that he lived during the ninth century B. C. In fulfillment of Jonah's predictions Jeroboam II, king of Israel, restored to Israel one of the boundaries lost to their enemies in years past. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was a flourishing and wicked metropolis in the days of Jonah. This prophet was called by the Lord to bear a solemn message of warning to that Gentile city, with a threat that it would be destroyed within 40 days.

Jonah did not wish to go to Assyria, and attempted to flee by ship to a place called Tarshish. In order to spare the vessel and its crew from destruction by a storm, Jonah, at his own request, was tossed overboard into the sea. Then he was swallowed by a large fish, and kept in its belly three days and nights. Before losing consciousness, the prophet repented and cried for mercy. Later he was thrown up upon the shore by the fish, and thus was saved.

Zealously and faithfully did the repentant prophet preach the message of warning to the city of Nineveh. The king and the people sincerely responded by repenting in sackcloth and ashes. For this reason God in mercy delayed the coming of the fate foretold for that great Gentile city.

We are told that as the preaching of Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so Christ's preaching was a sign to the people of His generation. (Matthew 12: 38-41.) Yet in the face of scorn and indifference, the Savior continued His labors until His mission among the Jews was accomplished.

Micah

MICAH, who wrote the sixth book of the minor prophets, was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (758-698 BC), with messages for both the northern and the southern kingdoms of the Hebrew people. (Micah 1:1.)

This prophet denounced the idolatry prevalent among God's people, and spoke of the calamities that would soon fall upon them. Jeremiah records that in the reign of King Hezekiah. This seer foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and that a religious reformation followed. (Jeremiah 26:18,19.) He laid the responsibility for the deplorable state of God's people principally upon the leaders, charging them with corruption, injustice, oppression, and robbery.

Through him the Lord urged the people to repent and return to Him, assuring them that He would pardon them, purge them of their iniquities, and "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:18-20.

Micah foretold 700 years beforehand where the Savior would be born. He said: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5: 2, margin. This prophecy was cited to Herod by the chief priest and scribes when the wise men of the East came to Jerusalem and inquired where they might find Him that was born King of the Jews. (Matthew 2: 1-6)

Micah declared that the time would come when the Lord would reign over the whole earth, and that a glorious future awaited the people of God.

Nahum

THE BURDEN of Nahum's prophecy is concerning Nineveh, the gay and wicked capital of the Assyrian empire, the city in which Jonah preached with amazing results some years before. The central date given for the ministry of Nahum is 715 BC. Nothing is known about the man, except that he was a Jew.

Nahum's prophecy reveals that Nineveh had become exceedingly wicked, filled with crime, oppression, and godlessness. Later the city was destroyed by the Babylonians and their allies.

"With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps account with the nations. While His mercy is tendered, with calls to repentance, this account remains open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of His wrath begins. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. Mercy no longer pleads in their behalf." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 364.

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power," said Nahum, "and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him." Nahum 1: 3-6. Much of what this prophet has written concerning Nineveh applies also to society in the last days, and some of his predictions of impending wrath refer to our time, to the coming of the Lord to execute judgment upon all.

Habakkuk

HABAKKUK prophesied about the time of the beginning of the Babylonian captivity (605 B. c). He foretold the coming, of the Babylonian armies from Chaldea to lay Judah waste as punishment for the wickedness among the professed people of God.

The prophet said that although God was using the Chaldeans to punish Judah, Babylon's turn for punishment would come ere long, and that she would be utterly destroyed.

Confident that the Lord's purpose for His people would be for the best, the seer bowed in submission to His will. His faith reached out beyond the immediate future and laid hold on the precious promises of God's love for His children. He wrote: "The just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2: 4.

This prophet was bidden: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it." Moffatt's translation says, "that one may read it at a glance." Habakkuk 2: 2. Looking into the distant future, he saw that the glory of Jehovah would one day fill the whole world, and that right would finally triumph over wrong. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Habakkuk 2: 14. "The sure word of prophecy," one writer reminds us, "will meet its final fulfillment in the glorious advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Let us ever hold in remembrance the cheering message, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. The just shall live by his faith.' Habakkuk 2: 3, 4." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 387-388.

Zephaniah

ZEPHANIAH was a prince of royal blood, descended from Hezekiah, king of Judah. He prophesied early in the reign of King Josiah of Judah (640-610 BC), shortly before Jeremiah began his ministry.

This prophet denounced the apostasy of Judah, and foretold the judgments that would come upon the kingdom. The nations that rejoiced over the calamities befalling Judah were told what would be their bitter end. The Lord pleaded with the people, saying: "Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." Zephaniah 2: 3.

"The word of the Lord came to Zephaniah, specifying plainly the results of continued apostasy, and calling the attention of the true church to the glorious prospects beyond. His prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ." - E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 389.

The seer speaks of the last days as follows: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastens greatly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Zephaniah 1: 14-18. But the redeemed will inhabit the earth, and serve Him with one consent. (Zephaniah 3: 9, 15)

Haggai

HAGGAI was a contemporary of Zechariah, another prophet, and had a prominent part in the movement for the restoration of the Hebrew captives to their homeland after the Babylonian captivity. Ezra names him as one of the seers who prophesied during the second year (520 BC) Of Darius I, king of Persia. (Ezra 5: 1; Haggai 1: 1.) To better understand the prophecies of Haggai, read the Book of Ezra. Haggai's messages greatly encouraged the Lord's people in the work of rebuilding Jerusalem. (Ezra 6: 14) Haggai's messages were given during one year. (Haggai 1: 1; 2: 1, 10, 20)

The Jews, after being in their homeland 16 years, had made little progress beyond the laying of the foundation of the temple. Their condition was deplorable. They made their personal interests first, even to the neglect of the Lord's. Their work had been made difficult by their enemies. Discouraged, the Jews said: "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Haggai 1: 2.

Haggai was raised up to reprove and to encourage the people. The Lord said through him: "You have sown much, and bring in little. You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Because of Mine house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house." Haggai 1: 6-9.

The plots of their enemies were defeated, the people and their leaders responded to the call, and the temple was built. Through Haggai it was promised that Christ, "the Desire of all nations," would visit that temple and thereby honor it above the one Solomon had built. (Haggai 2: 7, 9)

Zechariah

ZECHARIAH was a contemporary of Haggai. Ezra says that he was one of the prophets who prophesied to encourage Israel during the reign of Darius 1, king of Persia (520 BC), when the Jews were rebuilding and restoring Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. (Ezra 5:1; 6:14) To better understand and appreciate Zechariah, one must read Ezra.

The seer's first message was given about two months after Haggai's first one was given, that is, in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. Another message was given in the eleventh month of that year, while still another was given in the ninth month of the fourth year, of that king. (Zechariah 1:1,7; 7:1.)

Through this prophet the Lord sent encouragement and comfort to Zerubbabel, the civil governor, and to Joshua, the high priest, the leaders of the Lord's people at that time. They were given assurances that the Lord's protecting care was over His work, and that it would succeed despite the great obstacles that lay in the way. Several interesting visions of a symbolic nature are also recorded in this book. Prophecies relating to the first and second advents of Christ are found therein. The prediction concerning the triumphal entry of Jesus, into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, is quoted by a Gospel writer. (Zechariah 9: 9; Matthew 21: 4, 5)

This prophet speaks of the Fountain that shall be opened for all sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah 13: 1.) That is Christ, the only One who can cleanse us from sin. (1 John 1: 7, 9.) He is also spoken of as the Branch, who shall build the temple of the Lord, which is His church. (Zechariah 6: 12; Ephesians 2: 19-22) The final restoration of all things is foretold as taking place when "the Lord shall be King over all the earth." Zechariah 14: 9.

Malachi

THE LAST of the Old Testament prophets to write a book of the Bible was Malachi, whose messages were given about 400 BC. Little is known about him.

The Israelites, now restored to their homeland, had become careless in supporting the work of God by means of their tithes and offerings. Special reproof is given to the priests for their bad example. Their high calling is set forth in these words: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Malachi 2: 7.

Malachi was sent to give a final written message to his disobedient people. He assured them that the Messiah will come, and that He will bring judgment instead of comfort to the negligent. Nevertheless, God's mercy was extended to them. "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you," pleaded the Lord with them. Malachi 3: 7. Precious promises of blessing are assured to the faithful. The wicked will be destroyed at the last day, when the earth shall be purged by fire. (Malachi 4: 1.) Christ, the Messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3: 1), would surely come to the temple some day, and He would be preceded by a forerunner clothed in the Spirit and the power of Elijah. (Malachi 4: 5, 6.) The Elijah message in Malachi has a twofold application. It refers primarily to John the Baptist, who heralded the first advent of Christ. (Matthew 11:11-15) He called upon the people to repent and prepare for the arrival of the Messiah. (Matthew 3.) But also today, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4: 5), men and women clothed in the Spirit and power of Elijah are heralding the message of the second coming of Jesus, that a people may be prepared and ready to meet Him when He comes. (Revelation 14: 6; Matthew 24: 14)

OUR SAVIOUR

"By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Savior has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' John 3: 16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.' God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the 'Son of man' who shares the throne of the universe. It is the 'Son of man' whose name shall be called, 'Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9: 6. The I AM is the Days man between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,' is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7: 26; 2: 11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love."-E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25-26.

Matthew

THE FIRST four books of the New Testament are written about the life of Christ, the first of them being the Gospel according to Matthew. The author of this book was Levi-Matthew, a well-to-do tax-collector whom Jesus called into His service. (Luke 5: 27; Matthew 9: 9; 10: 3.)

Matthew, it appears, wrote this book prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), but the exact year of its composition is not known. It seems to have been written primarily to tell the story of Jesus to the Jews.

Matthew begins by tracing Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, whom God had said would be a forebear of the promised Seed-the Messiah. (Galatians 3: 16.) The writer cites numerous Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in the life and ministry and death of Jesus.

Matthew alone tells of the visit of the wise men from the East at the time of the Savior's birth, and the flight of Joseph and Mary with Christ to Egypt. Only he gives us the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most notable of the discourses of Jesus.

The narrative extends from the birth of Christ to His ascension, and closes with the great commission that the Master gave the church when He was about to leave this world. It reads as follows: "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." Matthew 28: 19, 20.

Mark

IT IS generally accepted that John Mark wrote this Gospel. He was the son of a pious woman living in Jerusalem, who was the sister of Barnabas. (Acts 12: 12, 25; 15: 37, 39; Colossians 4: 10) He probably was won to Christ by Peter. He served as the traveling companion and associate worker of this apostle, and also of Paul and Barnabas. (1 Peter 5: 13; 2 Timothy 4: 11; Philemon 24.)

The exact date of the composition of this book of the Bible is not known, but it also appears to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem. It contains many facts about the life of Christ that are not mentioned by the writers of the other Gospels, and covers only the period from the appearance of John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness, unto the ascension of the Savior.

It is believed that Mark was personally acquainted with Jesus, and that he is the boy referred to in chapter 14, verses 51 and 52, for he is the only Bible writer to mention the incident. However, it is believed that he wrote this book at the dictation of the apostle Peter.

Mark's Gospel was written rather for use among Gentiles than among the Jews. He tells more about what Jesus did than about what He said. He presents Christ as the mighty Miracle-worker, as the unwearied Servant ministering to a needy world, and as the Burden-bearer ready either for service or for sacrifice. A servant needs no genealogy, and Mark gives none for Him.

This book contains only one of the Lord's long discourses, and mentions only six of His parables, but it records many of the miracles wrought by Him. It is quite chronological in its sequence of events.

Luke

LUKE, "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4: 14), is the author of the Gospel according to Luke. It is addressed to a person whom he calls "most excellent Theophilus," to whom also the Acts of the Apostles is directed. (Luke 1: 1-3; Acts 1: 1.) This Theophilus was a Christian of high social standing. The doctor was closely associated with Paul throughout this apostle's long ministry.

Luke mentions that others had already written accounts of the life of Christ, which indicates that this book probably was written after Matthew and Mark had penned theirs.

The writer begins his narrative with the birth of John the Baptist and ends with the Savior's ascension to heaven. He gives special attention to details, as a medical man naturally would, and this is an outstanding characteristic of his writings. He has given us much detailed information about the birth of John and of Jesus that no other Bible writer mentions. He also provides us very important chronological data for the study of New Testament history. (Luke 2: 1-3; 3: 1, 2)

Luke has noted particularly the Master's sympathetic interest in the sick and the outcasts. Jesus is ever exalted by him as the compassionate Son of man, who came down to earth from heaven to seek and save that which is lost. He alone records the parable of the prodigal son, which beautifully pictures the love of God for repentant sinners. (Luke 15: 11-32)

Luke gives the genealogy of Christ through His mother, Mary, as far back as Adam, establishing the fact that He was the promised Seed. (Genesis 3: 15.) At least 30 miracles and 20 parables of Jesus are recorded by this writer.

John

THE GOSPEL according to John was written by the apostle John, the brother of James. These sons of Zebedee were fishermen when they were called into the service of the Lord. John never uses his own name in reference to himself, but modestly mentions "that disciple whom Jesus loved." John 21: 7, 20. A close and warm friendship grew up between him and his Master, and in all his writings John extols the wonderful love of the Father and His Son for us. John 3: 16 has been translated into more languages than any other portion of Holy Scripture.

John wrote this book very near the time when he penned the Revelation, considerably later than the other three Gospels were written. It was written primarily to supplement the other three Gospels, and for this reason it contains much information about the life of Jesus that is not given in them.

"Why do we need a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke, a John, a Paul, and all the writers who have borne testimony in regard to the life and ministry of the Savior? Why could not one of the disciples have written a complete record, and thus have given a connected account of Christ's earthly life. Why does one writer bring in points that another does not mention? Why, if these points are essential, did not all these writers mention them?-It is because the minds of men differ. Not all comprehend things in exactly the same way. Certain Scripture truths appeal much more strongly to the minds of some than of others. The same principle applies to speakers. One dwells at considerable length on points that others would pass by quickly or not mention at all. The whole truth is presented more clearly by several than by one. The Gospels differ, but the records of all blend in one harmonious whole." - E. G. White, Counsels to Teachers, p. 432.

Acts

IN THE Acts of the Apostles we have the one historical book of the New Testament. It is the first ecclesiastical history, the story of the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem into the Gentile world.

Luke, “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4: 14), is the author of this narrative. (Acts 1: 1.) He was the close friend and companion of the apostle Paul in his missionary labors. This treatise is the second that Luke was inspired to pen. It was written in Rome soon after Paul’s release from prison in AD 63.

Luke begins with the Savior’s ascension to heaven 40 days after His resurrection in AD 31. Next comes an account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believers at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and the mighty ingathering of souls that followed as a result of the bold witnessing of the early church among the Jews in Palestine. The stoning of Stephen and the persecution of the church by the unbelieving Jews in AD 34 scattered the believers to lands afar, where they proclaimed the gospel.

Next follows the preaching of the gospel in Samaria, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Saul, and of Cornelius. Then comes the death of James and the imprisonment and deliverance of Peter. The rest of the book tells of the missionary labors of Paul and his companions in establishing Christianity among the Gentile nations. With chapter 21 begins the story of Paul’s arrest at Jerusalem and his removal to Rome for trial before Nero. During a period of nearly five years’ imprisonment Paul witnessed to governors and kings, even to Nero himself, for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans

THE EPISTLE to the Romans was written by Paul during a three-months’ visit to Corinth, about AD 59 and while on his third missionary journey. He was then the guest of Gaius, a convert whom he had won to Christ in that city. (Romans 16: 23; 1 Corinthians 1: 14) Tertius, a co-laborer, was his amanuensis. (Romans 16: 22)

The letter is addressed to the Christians in Rome, the world’s great metropolis. A church there was holding its services in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. (Romans 16: 3-5) Paul had plans to visit both Rome and Spain to preach, but his immediate objective was to take to Jerusalem certain funds that he had collected for the distressed brethren there. (Romans 15: 22-26, 31) The letter was carried to Rome by Phebe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchræa, near Corinth. She appears to have been going to Rome on business. (Romans 16: 1, 2)

Heresy and division were then creeping into the Roman church. (Romans 16: 17, 18) This letter, which sets forth so clearly the doctrine of justification by faith, gave the great Reformation of the sixteenth century the keynote of its message.

The letter was designed primarily to confute the unbelieving Jew, and to instruct the one who did believe; and also to convert the idolatrous Gentile, and at the same time to confirm the one who had been converted. The apostle emphasizes the fact that faith does not annul God’s law and thus give men license to continue in evil-doing. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Romans 3: 31.

The last chapter of the epistle gives an interesting glimpse of Paul’s social life, for it speaks of many friends and kinsmen of his in the city of the Caesars.

1 Corinthians

DURING the latter part of Paul’s labors at Ephesus he received a letter telling of serious conditions in the church at Corinth. (1 Corinthians 7: 1.) He had already written them a brief message on an important matter. (1 Corinthians 5: 9, 11.)

In the meantime a delegation of the household of Chloe had reported to Paul on the state of the Corinthian church. (1 Corinthians 1:11; 16:17,18) This led him to write this First Epistle to the Corinthians while he was at Ephesus about AD 58. (1 Corinthians 16: 8, 19) Sosthenes, a fellow worker, seems to have served as his amanuensis. (1 Corinthians 1: 1.) Titus was sent to Corinth to investigate conditions there, and probably delivered this letter. (2 Corinthians 7: 6, 7, 13, 14; 8: 6; 12: 18)

In this letter Paul deals with several matters, namely: (1) divisions based on leadership, (2) a case of incest, (3) lawsuits between brethren, (4) marriage relations, (5) food dedicated to idols, (6) Paul’s authority as an apostle, (7) lessons from history of Israel, (8) women’s headdress, (9) the Lord’s supper, (10) spiritual gifts, (11) the gift of tongues, (12) the resurrection of the dead, and (13) a collection for the needy at Jerusalem.

This epistle of Paul abounds with both doctrinal and practical instruction mingled with gentle reproof and earnest exhortation. One writer says it is “one of the richest, most instructive, and most powerful of all his letters.” - E. G. White, Sketches From the Life of Paul, p. 151.

The apostle compares the Christian’s life to a race run in the Olympian Games. But in the race for eternal life every faithful participant can win the crown of eternal life, a prize that does not fade away as did the olive-leaf wreath given to just one contestant in the games of that long ago.

2 Corinthians

PAUL left Ephesus for Troas soon after writing the First Epistle to the Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 1: 8-10; 2: 12) Titus, who had been sent to visit the church at Corinth, was to join him at Troas. Because of Titus’ delay in coming, the apostle went on to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, where Timothy joined him. (2 Corinthians 2:13; 1:1.) While they were there, Titus arrived and reported on the results of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church. (2 Corinthians 7: 6-15; 8: 6, 16, 22, 23; 12:18.) Thus the Second Epistle to the Corinthians appears to have been written at Philippi in the summer of AD 58.

In this letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians words of comfort and commendation, rejoicing over the desired effects of his first letter. Many of the evils he had rebuked were corrected. The instruction given in this second letter supplements what was said in the first epistle.

Paul speaks of the Christian worker as an ambassador for Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:19-21) He mentions the trials and suffering through which the messengers of the truth must pass, recounting many of those that he himself had endured. (2 Corinthians 1: 8-10; 11: 22-23)

The love of God for man, and the manifestation of it through Christ as our Savior, are ever the theme of the apostle's letters. "In every true disciple, this love, like a sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart" comments a modern writer. "It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross, to behold the Lamb of God."-E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 334.

Galatians

THE EPISTLE to the Galatians was written to the Christian believers scattered among the idolatrous people of the region of Galatia, in the interior of Asia Minor. There were numerous churches in that country. (1 Corinthians 16: 1.) Paul wrote it at Corinth about AD 59, when he penned the one to the believers in Rome. He states that this particular letter was written by his own hand, instead of by an amanuensis. (Galatians 6:11)

The gospel had been preached in Galatia by Paul and his fellow workers (Acts 16: 6; 18: 23), but when they were absent certain Judaizers crept in to teach these Gentile converts to observe the rite of circumcision and keep the Mosaic ordinances in order to become heirs of the blessings God had promised to Abraham. Paul wrote this letter to refute the false doctrines and to exhort the believers to stand steadfast in the faith of Christ as he had taught it to them. Abraham himself was justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, and "if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3: 6-9, 29.

And while he shows that sinners cannot be saved by the moral law, because they have broken it and become condemned thereby, he states that faith is to lead them to obey that law and live holy lives in accord with its precepts.. (Romans 3: 31; 6: 14-18; 7: 7-14)

Paul's letter accomplished good results. In later years Peter addressed two epistles to the Christians of Galatia, which shows that they did not succumb to the Judaizing apostasy. (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 3: 1.)

Ephesians

TO THE believers at Ephesus, the chief city of the Roman province of Asia (in Asia Minor), Paul addressed the Epistle to the Ephesians. It was written at Rome while the apostle was a prisoner there awaiting his first trial, about AD 63. (Ephesians 3: 1.) It was carried to Ephesus by Tychicus. (Ephesians 6: 21, 22.) The Ephesian church had been raised up years before by the labors of Paul and his associates in the midst of much opposition and persecution. (Acts 19.)

This is one of the richest and noblest of the Pauline epistles. The apostle's theme is "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." Ephesians 3:18,19. His burden was to establish the believers in that love, reminding them that in Christ there is to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile on account of the Mosaic ordinances, which were abolished by the Savior's death. (Ephesians 2: 11-22.) He exhorts them to be a clean church, ready for Christ's coming. (Ephesians 5: 25-27.)

The Christian is urged to put on the whole armor of God that he may withstand the wiles of the devil, for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood." Ephesians 6: 11-18.

"God has provided abundant means for successful warfare against the evil that is in the world," says a modern writer. "The Bible is the armory where we may equip for the struggle. Our loins must be girt about with truth. Our breastplate must be righteousness. The shield of faith must be in our hand, the helmet of salvation on our brow; and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we are to cut our way through the obstructions and entanglements of sin."-E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 502.

Philippians

WHILE he was a prisoner in Rome, awaiting his first trial before Nero, Paul penned the Epistle to the Philippians. (Philippians 1:7,13,14,16; 4:22.) The first believers in Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, had been won by the labors of Paul and his associates. (Acts 16:12-40.)

The apostle mentions that Timothy was with him, and that he would be sent to them shortly. (Philippians 2:19,20,21) Epaphroditus had recently come to Rome, bringing to Paul the gifts which the generous Macedonian Christians had sent. This kindness was greatly appreciated by the imprisoned apostle. (Philippians 4:15-18.) This letter was taken to them by Epaphroditus on his return to Philippi. (Philippians 2:25.) While in Rome, Epaphroditus had become sick almost unto death, but God was merciful and spared him. (Verses 26-30.)

Even in his bonds Paul's witness for Christ in Rome was not in vain, for members of the emperor's household accepted the Savior. (Philippians 1: 13; 4: 22.)

Although suffering in confinement, Paul was not discouraged. He was confident that God would work out everything to His name's honor and glory. Hence the apostle rejoiced in the Lord and admonished his readers to do the same. (Philippians 4: 4.) He was resigned to whatever fate God should think best for him. (Philippians 1: 20.)

Pointing to the Savior, he exhorts: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2: 5. As for himself, he says: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3: 13, 14.

Colossians

COLOSSE, an ancient Greek city, stood about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor. The letter addressed to the believers there was sent by Paul while he was in Rome awaiting his first trial by Nero. (Colossians 4: 10, 18) The epistle was dictated to an amanuensis, but the salutation was penned by the apostle himself. (Verse 18) He said: "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Verse 16.

Epaphras had come from Colosse, bringing word concerning the church there. (Colossians 1: 7-9.) Tychicus was dispatched to Colosse with this letter, and with him went Onesimus with the Epistle to Philemon. (Colossians 4: 7-9)

Paul rejoiced over the steadfastness of the Colossian Christians. He warned against imbibing the philosophical teachings of that day, and pointed to Christ as our Guide. (Colossians 2: 8, 9) Christ is the Creator of the universe, and yet is the One who suffered and died for our sins. (Colossians 1: 13-17)

"The apostle exalted Christ before his brethren as the One by whom God had created all things, and by whom He had wrought out their redemption. He declared that the hand that sustains the worlds in space, and holds in their orderly arrangements and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for them. . . . Christ crucified for sin, Christ risen from the dead, Christ ascended on high,-this was the science of salvation they were to learn and teach."-E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 471, 472, 474.

1 Thessalonians

THE EARLIEST of the Pauline letters is the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, written at Corinth about AD 51, when the apostle visited this Greek city while on his second missionary journey. (Acts 18.) Thessalonica only a few months before had heard Paul and his associates preach. (Acts 17: 1-9)

Paul had recently come from Athens (1 Thessalonians 3: 1) when he wrote. From there he had sent Timothy to Thessalonica. (Verse 2) Now Timothy had returned, and with him Silas, to join Paul at Corinth. (Verse 6; Acts 18: 5) Silas is the "Silvanus" in this letter. (1 Thessalonians 1: 1.)

The Thessalonian brethren were perplexed about the state of those who had died in the faith, and Paul wrote them that such would remain in their graves to be raised at the second coming of Jesus, the principal theme of this letter. (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18) "Paul's epistle gave them new hope and strength, and a firmer faith in, and a deeper affection for, the One who through His death had brought life and immortality to light. [It caused them to rejoice] in the knowledge that their believing friends would be raised from the grave, to live forever in the kingdom of God. The darkness that had enshrouded the resting place of the dead was dispelled. A new splendor crowned the Christian faith, and they saw a new glory in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ."-E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 259.

2 Thessalonians

THE SECOND Epistle to the Thessalonians was written by Paul at Corinth soon after he had sent the first. The shortest of the letters that he addressed to churches, it contains important doctrinal matter.

Some who had read the first epistle erroneously deduced from a statement in it (1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17) that Paul meant to say that some of the brethren then living would not die, but would live to see Jesus come. To correct this misunderstanding, Paul wrote this second letter. The apostle said: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-4.

According to this prophecy, there would come a great apostasy in the Christian church before the Lord should come, and it would result in the elevation of a man in the church to the degree that he would claim to occupy the place of God in it. Furthermore, he would be a "man of sin." The Bible definition of sin is as follows: "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3: 4. Hence this personage would be a notorious violator of God's law.

Looking forward to the glorious consummation, when Christ will come and put down every evil thing in this world, Paul exhorts the believers to wait patiently for the last day, to work earnestly for the Lord, and not to become weary in well doing.

1 Timothy

THE FIRST Epistle to Timothy was written by Paul soon after he had been released from prison at his first trial before Nero in AD 63. There is a tradition that it was written at Laodicea, but it may have been sent from Macedonia. (1 Timothy 1: 3.) Timothy, to whom the letter was addressed, was a young minister whom Paul had trained in the service of Christ. He was of Lystra, where the populace had stoned Paul and cast him out of the city for dead. (Acts 14: 8-20) Soon after this experience, this youth joined the band of apostolic missionaries and became a faithful minister of Christ. (Acts 16: 1-3)

At the time of this writing, Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus. (1 Timothy 1:3.) Paul admonished him to give himself fully to the work of the ministry and to beware lest he become ensnared by errors that were becoming rampant. Specific instructions were given by the apostle concerning the qualifications necessary for men to fill the offices of elder and deacon. (1

Timothy 3) A special warning is uttered against the deceptions of spiritualism. (1 Timothy 4: 1-3.) Sundry admonitions and exhortations of a very practical nature follow, relating to the conduct of men and women professing the faith of Christ.

In the closing, the author exhorts the reader to faithfulness in the Christian warfare, as one expecting the return of His Master, to whom he must give account of himself.

Although the letter appears to have been written hurriedly, yet it is packed full of terse and practical instructions for both ministers and laymen in "the church of the living God," which the apostle calls "the pillar and stay of the truth." 1 Timothy 3: 15, margin.

2 Timothy

THE SECOND Epistle to Timothy is the latest precious document we have from the pen of Paul. It was written in AD 65, the next year after Rome was burned by Nero.

Paul had been acquitted at his first trial before the emperor. When released, he left Rome at once to work for closer union between the Greek and Eastern churches. In the meantime the conflagration of the city of the Caesars was charged to the Christians, and they were barbarously persecuted for it. Thousands perished as martyrs in Rome and elsewhere. (Tacitus, Annals, Ilk. 15.) While laboring in Troas, Paul was suddenly arrested and taken to Rome for trial. The instigator of this arrest was Alexander, the coppersmith. (2 Timothy 4: 13, 14.)

Paul now knew that his end was near. Few of his friends stood by him. Only Luke remained to comfort and care for him. Timothy was still in Ephesus. He was urged to come at once and bring the cloak, books, and parchments Paul had left behind at Troas, and that he try to reach Rome before winter. (2 Timothy 4: 11, 13, 2 l.) Tychicus, having been despatched to Ephesus, probably was the bearer of this letter to Timothy.

The letter contains practical admonition and exhortation. Paul's farewell statement is touching: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." 2 Timothy 4: 6-8.

Titus

OUR ATTENTION turns next to the Epistle to Titus. The name of Titus is mentioned 12 times in other letters by Paul. He had faithfully labored as a young worker with this apostle during the year Now he had charge of the gospel work on the island of Crete. (Titus 1: 5.) This letter was written while Paul was on route to Nicopolis, on the west coast of Achaia (southern Greece). This rather indicates that it was composed in AD 64, the year when Rome was burned, and after Paul had been released from his first imprisonment. It apparently was written in the summer, for Paul says that he expected to spend the following winter at Nicopolis. (Titus 3: 12.)

The letter contains sundry instructions, admonitions, and exhortations to Titus concerning his work as leader of the church in Crete. The qualifications for the office of bishop (or elder) are particularly described. Cautions against false teachers, and advice about how to deal with them, are given.

Paul emphasizes the truth that Christians must live holy lives, for the grace of God "hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2: 11-14.

Titus is exhorted to put the brethren "in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Titus 3: 1. Heretics are to be dis-fellowshipped after the first and second admonitions. (Titus 3: 10,11.)

Philemon

THE EPISTLE to Philemon was written while Paul was a prisoner. (Verse 1.) Philemon was a well-to-do believer of the church at Colosse. (Compare verse 2 with Colossians 4: 17) Tychicus, the bearer of the Epistle to the Colossians, went accompanied by Onesimus, the principal character mentioned in this letter to Philemon. (Colossians 4: 7-9; Philemon 10) Thus the letter was written about A. D. 63 during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome.

The epistle was written concerning a runaway slave belonging to Philemon. Onesimus, having stolen money from his master, fled to Rome, and there came in contact with Paul. The apostle's heart went out in pity to the guilty servant, and he won the wretched man to Christ. Paul then counseled the converted fugitive to return to Philemon and live for God in the future. Onesimus himself made the bearer of the letter to his master. With Christian courtesy and tact, Paul implored Philemon to receive the returning slave as "a brother beloved." Verse 16.

"Paul voluntarily proposed to assume the debt of Onesimus in order that the guilty one might be spared the disgrace of punishment, and might again enjoy the privileges he had forfeited. 'If thou count me therefore a partner,' he wrote to Philemon, 'receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.' How fitting an illustration of the love of Christ for the repentant sinner! The servant who had defrauded his master had nothing with which to make restitution. The sinner who has robbed God of years of service has no means of canceling the

debt. Jesus interposes between the sinner and God, saying, 'I will pay the debt. Let the sinner be spared: I will suffer in his stead.' - E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 458.

Hebrews

THE NAME of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not stated in the letter itself. The best opinion is that it was written by Paul. The writer speaks of being in bonds, indicating that he was a prisoner when he wrote. (Hebrews 10: 34; 13: 19) It was sent from Italy. (Hebrews 13: 24.) Timothy had recently been set free. (Verse 23) The writer hoped to pay his readers a visit soon, accompanied by Timothy. (Verse 21) The letter is addressed to believers who had undergone severe persecution and spoiling of goods. (Hebrews 10: 32-34) They had long been privileged to know the truth. (Hebrews 5: 11, 12) The tenor of the epistle throughout is that of Paul, who doubtless wrote it to the church at Jerusalem when he was a prisoner in Rome the first time.

The letter presents to Hebrew Christians the true significance of the priestly ministry and sacrificial services of Old Testament times as prefiguring and foreshadowing the work of Christ as the Lamb of God and our Mediator in the plan of salvation.

The writer first tells of the Son's relationship to God the Father and the holy angels. Then he shows that the Son of God was made the Son of man taking upon Himself human flesh as the promised Seed of Abraham, and that Christ, the Head of the church, is our High Priest, the Father having made Him such after the order of Melchisedec. The heavenly sanctuary and its services, which are the antitypes of the sacerdotal ministry and sacrificial services in the Mosaic tabernacle, are discussed. The blood of animals could not save sinners from their guilt, but the blood of Christ can. Chapter 11, an eloquent discourse on faith, is followed by practical exhortations to faithfulness in Christian living.

James

THE EPISTLE of James was written by a Christian leader known as James. It is addressed "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," which seems to indicate that it was written primarily for the Hebrew Christians of the early church. The exact date of its composition is not known, but it is thought to have been penned about AD 60.

He is that James who was the prominent leader of the church in Jerusalem and who presided over the first council of the universal church. (Acts 12: 17; 15: 13; 21: 18) He is referred to also as "James the Lord's brother." Galatians 1: 19; 2: 9. Jesus did have a foster brother by the name of James. (Matthew 13: 55; Mark 6: 3)

James's letter is one of general exhortation on sundry matters. He emphasizes the fact that faith must be accompanied by works, else that faith is dead. He censures favoring the rich against the poor, calls for guarded speech and for the avoidance of envy and dissension, and recommends special prayer for the sick, with anointing with oil, by the elders of the church.

In this short epistle we find one of the most important Bible prophecies foretelling distressing social conditions in the world in the last days. Chapter five contains a notable forecast of the mighty struggle between capital and labor that has been troubling the nations in our own times. But God's counsel to the oppressed in these days is that they do not become unduly alarmed. "Be ye also patient; establish your hearts," He says, "for the coming of the Lord draws nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge stands before the door." James 5: 8, 9.

1 Peter

THE AUTHOR of the First Epistle of Peter was Simon Peter, one of the apostles of Christ. The place where he wrote this letter is referred to as "Babylon," which is generally understood to be a spiritual designation for Rome, the pagan city of the Caesars. (1 Peter 5: 13; Revelation 17: 5, 18) The message is addressed to the believers "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," which were then Roman provinces in Asia Minor. (1 Peter 1: 1.) Silvanus (Silas) either penned the letter at Peter's dictation or carried it to Asia Minor for him. (1 Peter 5: 12)

This epistle was written by Peter in the last years of his ministry, which he was permitted to close in Rome. He probably wrote it there after Paul's release and departure in AD 63. It is addressed to believers who had undergone great sufferings already, and soon-when the burning of Rome by Nero should be charged against them-the whole church would pass through a terrible period of persecution.

The apostle reminds his readers that Christ also suffered and died when many wicked things were unjustly charged against Him. Christians are told how to relate themselves to civil magistrates, and are admonished to lay aside all malice, and to live blameless and exemplary lives. Women are exhorted to be chaste in conduct and modest in dress. Every one who loves the Lord is encouraged to cast all his cares upon Him. Excellent counsel is given to church elders. All are warned to beware of the wiles of the devil, who, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.

2 Peter

THE SECOND Epistle of Peter was addressed to the same churches to which he sent the first. (2 Peter 3: 1.) It was written shortly before the apostle's death in Rome, about AD 65. (2 Peter 1: 13-15)

The believers are called upon to make their calling and election sure, to cultivate the Christian graces, to become established in the present truth, and to remain steadfast unto the end.

Peter says that the apostles were not following cunningly devised fables in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and did not have to depend solely on the testimony of eyewitnesses-those personally associated with Christ in His life on earth-but that it is attested by the “more sure word of prophecy.” 2 Peter 1: 16-21.

And while he sets forth sacred prophecy as something that we must heed, the apostle warns the church against the false prophets who would arise in the years to come to plague the church with heresy. For this reason he solemnly urged the brethren to stand true to the faith that had been preached to them. (Chapter 2)

Looking with prophetic vision down the centuries, he foretold conditions that would prevail in the world just before the second coming of the Savior. His vision of things future carried him on beyond the destruction of this present world by the fires of the last day, to the ushering in of “a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” 2 Peter 3: 13. And his admonition is: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Verse 14.

1 John

THE FIRST Epistle of John was written by that John who was one of the Lord’s disciples. The exact date when this letter was written is not known, but it was during the last years of the apostle’s life.

“As the years went by and the number of believers grew,” comments a modern writer, “John labored with increasing fidelity and earnestness for his brethren. The times were full of peril for the church. Satanic delusions existed everywhere. By misrepresentation and falsehood the emissaries of Satan sought to arouse opposition against the doctrines of Christ; and in consequence dissension and heresies were imperiling the church. Some who professed Christ claimed that His love released them from obedience to the law of God. On the other hand, many taught that it was necessary to observe the Jewish customs and ceremonies; that a mere observance of the law, without faith in the blood of Christ, was sufficient for salvation. Some held that Christ was a good man, but denied His divinity. Some who pretended to be true to the cause of God were deceivers ‘ and in practice they denied Christ and His gospel. Living themselves in transgression, they were bringing heresies into the church. Thus many were being led into the mazes of skepticism and delusion.

“John was filled with sadness as he saw these poisonous errors creeping into the church. He saw the dangers to which the church was exposed, and he met the emergency with promptness and decision. The epistle of John breathes the spirit of love. It seems as if he wrote with a pen dipped in love. But when he came in contact with those who were breaking the law of God, yet claiming that they were living without sin, he did not hesitate to warn them of their fearful deception.”-E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 553-554.

2 John

THE SECOND Epistle of John is directed to those whom the apostle calls “the elect lady and her children.” Verse 1. This godly woman was a worker for Christ and a person of high repute in the early church.

This letter, the shortest book in the Bible, commends that mother for having taught her children to walk in the truth. In it John, as ever, fans the flame of brotherly love. The church was in danger of losing, and in constant need of cultivating, the spirit of love.

The apostle warned his readers that “many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” And he goes on to say: “Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” Verses 7, 9, 10.

The following comment is very appropriate: “There exist in these last days evils similar to those that threatened the prosperity of the early church; and the teachings of the apostle John on these points should be carefully heeded. ‘You must have charity,’ is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But true charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. While we are to love souls for whom Christ died, we are to make no compromise with evil. We are not to unite with the rebellious, and call this charity. God requires His people in this age of the world to stand for the right as unflinchingly as did John in opposition to soul-destroying errors.” E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 554-555.

3 John

THE THIRD Epistle of John, almost as brief as the second, was penned about the same time as were his other two letters. It is addressed to a man named Gaius, who was reputed for his piety and steadfastness in the truth. The report of this caused the apostle to rejoice.

John especially commended Gaius, by means of this letter, for his kindness in showing hospitality to the brethren and to strangers. Workers traveling from place to place in the cause were entertained in his home when they came there on the business of their Lord. We recall that Gaius of Corinth, whom Paul won to Christ, was given to such hospitality. (1 Corinthians 1: 14; Romans 16: 23)

One Diotrephes, probably an elder of the local congregation, loved “to have the pre-eminence” in the church and refused to recognize the ministers whom the apostles had sent to visit the church. John promises Gaius that when he arrives, he will deal with this arrogant man in the proper manner. The apostle said: “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church.” 3 John 3: 10.

As John was expecting soon to see Gaius personally, he did not write him a lengthy letter.

Jude

THE EPISTLE of Jude was written by “Judas the brother of James,” both of whom were among the Lord’s apostles. (Luke 6: 16; Acts 1: 13; Jude 1) The exact date of the composition of this letter is not known, but the statement in verses 17 and 18 suggests that it was written some time after the Second Epistle to Peter was penned. (See 2 Peter 2: 1-22; 3: 1-3)

The letter contains a clarion call to the church to be on guard against the inroads of heresies then propagated by false teachers. The believers everywhere were urged to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Verse 3. Their attention was called to the story of Israel and how thousands of the Jews perished when they let themselves be seduced into pagan error and idolatrous practices by Balaam, a false prophet. The experiences of Cain, Sodom and Gomorrah, and rebellious Korah and his followers, are held up as a warning to the ungodly.

Jude calls to mind the fact that the Lord will come in glory to execute judgment upon the ungodly, and that this doctrine of the second advent of Christ was preached as far back as the days of Enoch, who lived long before the Flood. In closing, the apostle encourages his readers to build themselves up in the most holy faith. “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” he says in a farewell admonition.

The epistle of Jude was written to the universal church to rally the believers to resolutely oppose the beginnings of that apostasy which in later years wrought great havoc to the Lord’s flock. Although it is short, the letter is very instructive.

Revelation

THE REVELATION. The sixty-sixth book in the Bible was written by the apostle John about AD 96. Many refer to it as “the Revelation of St. John the Divine,” but he says that it is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 1: 1.)

When John wrote this book, he “was in the isle that is called Patmos.” Revelation 1: 9. This rocky islet, located in the Aegean Sea, was a place to which the Roman government banished notorious criminals. The pagan emperor Domitian, determined to put a stop to the preaching of the gospel by this remaining survivor of Christ’s apostles, ordered John exiled to Patmos.

Uriah Smith, a noted commentator, says that the Revelation exalts the Savior. “In the Evangelists [the four Gospels],” he says, “we have the record of His [Christ’s] humiliation, His condescension, His toil and sufferings, His patience, His mocking and scourging by those who should have done Him reverence, and finally His death upon the shameful cross, a death esteemed in that age to be the most ignominious that men could inflict. In the Revelation we have the gospel of His enthronement in glory, His association with the Father upon the throne of universal dominion, His overruling providence among the nations of the earth, and His coming again, not a homeless stranger, but in power and great glory, to punish His enemies and reward His followers. A voice has cried in the wilderness, ‘Behold the Lamb of God;’ a voice will soon proclaim from heaven, ‘Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah!’ - Daniel and the Revelation, p. 349.

The Revelation is not a scaled book, as some suppose. The Lord says: “Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” Revelation 1: 3.

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