

**BIBLE STUDY NOTES
ON
THE BOOKS OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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INTRODUCTION

These outline notes on the Old Testament books of the Bible are based on original documents by the Rev L G Stapleton, used at mid-week Bible Studies. They followed a series of Family services where coloured illustrated talks on the Old Testament books were used - now available as PowerPoint presentation. Go to: -

<https://www.oneeagleswings.me.uk/grandpasbooks/>

Note –

1. Scripture references and quotes are taken from the King James Version.
2. The 'CONTENTS' page list is linked to the chapter headings. Use 'CONTROL+ mouse click.

Compiled and edited by Mark Stapleton.

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THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Book of Genesis, as the name implies, means the **BOOK OF BEGINNINGS**. We may well call it the SEED BOOK of the Bible. It has been said that all the great doctrines of the Word of God, such as SIN, REDEMPTION, SACRIFICE, GOD'S ATTRIBUTES etc may be found in embryo in Genesis.

It is obviously a book of REVELATION since no one could have been present at the events recorded in the early chapters. Only God can reveal Himself and the New Testament recognises this claim regarding the Scriptures in 2 Peter 1:21; this is how we got our Scriptures.

We follow four lines as representative of the book: -

A. **CREATION**

God is at the heart of all things (chapter 1 verse 1). He is the only Creator and is SELF-EXISTENT. No one can finally EXPLAIN God.

Some of the seeds sown in God's world were: -

B. **MAN** (Planted by God)

- i. Man was to have dominion (Psalm 8: 6) from the start - not rise to it. He was made in the image of God (chapter 1 verse 27).
- ii. The development of this seed showed disaster for men. Judgment followed judgment as he persisted in going his own way (e.g. Expelled from Eden, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah etc.).
- iii. Genesis finally sees the branching out of this 'tree' into Jew and Gentile.

C. **SIN** (Planted by Satan)

- i. Note that sin came into God's world from outside (Genesis 3: 1-6; Romans 5: 12; revelation 12: 9).
- ii. This seed also developed rapidly. Disobedience, lies, hatred, murder, pride, jealousy, deceit, envy, godlessness, etc. follow one another rapidly as the story of Genesis unfolds.

A **REDEMPTION** (Planted by God)

Redemption means to deliver by paying a price (1 Corinthians 6: 20; 1 Peter 1: 18-19).

- i. As soon as sin entered the world, the antidote was available. A Redeemer promised in Genesis 3:15; animal sacrifice with Abel; Noah's ark etc.
- ii. In actual fact, of course, redemption was accomplished before the world existed and before man sinned (Revelation 13: 8).
- iii. Redemption's seed finally developed into the work of Christ on the Cross (Galatians 3: 13).

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The word 'EXODUS' is the Latin form of the Greek word used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. It has the same root meaning as EXIT; so, we may say that the Book of Exodus is the '**BOOK OF THE WAY OUT.**'

The EVENTS of the book cover about 430 years (Exodus 12: 40,41) ** but most of it is about the life of Moses, who lived for 120 years (Deuteronomy 34: 7; Acts 7: 23 ff). He was the God-given Leader for the 'GOING OUT'.

Starting with about 70 persons (Exodus 1: 5), we find that two years after leaving the Land of Egypt, the Children of Israel numbered 603,550 men of 20 years old and over, excluding the Levites (Numbers 1: 46).

The words of Moses can be written over the whole of the book -
'HE BROUGHT US OUT. THAT HE MIGHT BRING US IN' (Deuteronomy 6: 23). Our notes follow this idea: -

A. THE WAY OUT -

- i. The Children of Israel came OUT OF a foreign country -.
- ii. The Children of Israel came OUT OF a condition of slavery.
(Exodus chapter 1).
- iii. The Children of Israel came OUT OF a place of death.

B. THE WAY IN –

- i. God's purpose was to bring them INTO a fruitful place - the NEW LAND OF CANAAN. It was to be their own possession. This is God's purpose for us spiritually (Colossians 1: 13).
- ii. God's purpose was that they should have LIBERTY; they were to be a free people, a nation in their own right (we are called into liberty in Christ - John 8: 36).
- iii. God's purpose was that they should come into NEW LIFE, as opposed to the dead experience of slavery. In this new life, they were to experience fellowship with God (Tabernacle) and to give obedience to Him (Ten Commandments). Our New Life is through the death of Christ (Hebrews 2: 14-15).

C. THE WAY THROUGH -

- i. The book tells of the DOORWAY THROUGH which God planned to bring His people from Egypt to Canaan.
- ii. It speaks of the blood sprinkled doorway of the Passover Night, through which everyone who left Egypt had to pass (Exodus 12: 7; 1 Corinthians 5: 7).
- iii. It shows the Lord delivering His people by His own Mighty Arm (Exodus 14: 30). We are delivered by the victory of the Cross (Colossians 1: 13).
- iv. The Cross is our door. We come out of our spiritual Egypt and into our spiritual Canaan through it alone and nobody can come any other way. We must now observe John 14: 15.

** The Bible (NKJV) margin notes for these verses, indicate that the 430 years includes the sojourning in the land of Canaan (Abraham, Isaac and Israel [Jacob]). See also Galatians 3: 16-17 (Ed.).

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

THE TITLE

The NAME of the book gives us the clue to its contents.

The tribe of LEVI was set aside as the PRIESTLY tribe and of them the family of AARON were set aside to be the PRIESTS, Aaron himself being the first HIGH PRIEST. These offices were handed on from father to son.

The LEVITES had the responsibility of looking after the Tabernacle (later the Temple). The Priests were allowed into the Holy Place and the High Priest into the Most Holy Place on one day only in the year – the Day of Atonement (see notes on the Tabernacle – Link = <https://www.oneagleswings.me.uk/grandpastabernacle/>).

THE MESSAGE

The Book is concerned with "HOW SINFULL MAN CAN BE 'AT ONE' WITH GOD or to live in fellowship with Him in spite of the fact of God's absolute and essential HOLINESS.

Much detail is given concerning UNCLEANNES not only as to FORBIDDEN CONTACTS (e.g. Dead bodies, leprosy - chapters 11-15) and forbidden food, but also regarding the MORAL LAW (chapters 18-20), the qualifications and preparation of the Priests (chapters 21 and 22), approaching God through sacrifice (chapters 1-7), preparation on the Day of Atonement (chapter 16).

Two things need to be underlined: -

A. GOD'S AWFUL HOLINESS

- i. This is the standard that man fails to reach and any approach to God is therefore met as if approaching a "HALT" sign.
- ii. Three things (among others) that stop us coming into God's Holy Presence are: -

- a. UNCLEAN HANDS (Psalm 24: 4 -What we DO).
- b. STRAYING FEET (Isaiah 53: 6; Proverbs 1: 10, 16 - Where we GO).
- c. UNCLEAN HEART (Psalm 24:4; Jeremiah 17: 9. - What we ARE).

B. GOD'S GRACIOUS PROVISION

- i. In spite of this, and because of it, God provided a way for man to come to Him.
- ii. The BRASEN ALTAR is the place where these things were to be adjusted; THEY MUST BE DEALT WITH FIRST.
- iii. The five main offerings varied with the need of the individual (Trespass Offering, Sin Offering, Peace Offering, Meal Offering and Whole Burnt Offering).
- iv. The animal sacrificed varied according to the position of the person and according to the gravity of their sin (e.g. Bullock, sheep, pigeons etc).
- v. Fundamentally God had laid down the principle that 'WITHOUT THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD THERE IS NO REMISSION' (Hebrews 9: 22).
- vi. God's gracious way and provision is seen in the Book.

C. GOD'S WAY TODAY

No longer an Altar. No animal sacrifices. The Brasen Altar prefigured the Cross of Christ with its ONCE FOR ALL time and sin removed (John 1: 29; 1 John 1: 7).

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

THE TITLE

The name 'Book of Numbers' was the Greek title, from which the Latin and the English titles were taken. The Hebrew name for the book however means "IN THE WILDERNESS". Both names help us to understand something of its nature; the 'numbers' aspect speaks of the needed DISCIPLINE of God's people, and it is whilst they are 'in the wilderness'.

The Christian word 'disciple' reminds us of the discipline of the Christian walk whilst the Christian parallel of the wilderness experience is shown in Hebrews 12: 8-16.

A. GOD AS A GOD OF ORDER

- i. The signals for the Camp to move were: -
 - a. The CLOUD (moved by God – chapter 9 verses 15-17; chapter 9 verses 21-23).
 - b. The SILVER TRUMPETS (blown by the Priests chapter 10 verses 1-7).
- ii. Each tribe had a Captain or Prince (chapter 1 verses 5-16).
- iii. Each tribe had its allotted place in the Camp (chapter 2).
- iv. Each tribe had its allotted place on the march (chapter 10:14-28).
- v. Each Prince made a contribution to the needs of the whole of God's people (chapter 7 verse 10-11).
- vi. Each part of the tribe of Levi had its own job to do-
 - a. Gershonites (chapter 3 verses 23-26) Soft furnishings (chapter 4 verse 22) to be carried in two wagons, pulled by four oxen (chapter 7 verse 7).
 - b. Kohathites (chapter 3 verses 27-32) Boards, sockets etc. chapter 4 verse 29 to be carried in four wagons, pulled by eight oxen (chapter 7 verse 8).
 - c. Merarites (chapter 3 verses 33-37) Holy furniture (chapter 4 verses 2-20) to be carried on their shoulders (see also 2 Samuel 6: 1-8).
- vii. On the March, the Ark and the Holy Furniture was in the midst, symbolising God's abiding presence with His people.

B. GOD AS A GOD OF PROVISION

- i. Quails were given them to eat (chapter 11 verse 31), although God was already graciously providing daily manna (Exodus chapter 16 verse 35).
- ii. Coming out of Egypt, the Israelites were bound for the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 6: 23), although at that time the people refused to enter it. The Book of Numbers records the Promised Land as being actually provided (chapter 13 verse 27).
- iii. Confirmation of God's appointed High Priest, Aaron, was provided (chapter 17 verses 1-13). Confirmation of Moses as leader is in chapter 16 verses 28-31.
- iv. Water was provided miraculously (chapter 20 verse 11).
- v. Deliverance from poisonous snakes was provided in spite of the fact that they came because of the Israelites' sin (chapter 21 verses 7-9 with John 3: 14).
- vi. A promise of the Coming of Christ was given (chapter 24 verses 16-19).

NOTE. The Christian who accepts the discipline of God in his pilgrimage through life will find that the Lord abundantly provides for his every need.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy is the last book of the PENTATEUCH - the five books of the LAW. It is quoted over 80 times in the New Testament. Our Lord used it in resisting Satan in the wilderness temptation (Matthew 4: 4, 7,10; Deuteronomy 6:13, 16, 8: 3).

THE NAME

The name comes from the Septuagint (Greek) title and means literally "the Second Law". Thus, the book is a 'BOOK OF REVIEW' wherein is virtually a second 'reading' or giving of the Law by Moses. This was necessary because of the following circumstances.

- a. Moses was about to die and to hand over the leadership to Joshua.
- b. The generation who had heard the first giving of the Law had perished in the Wilderness wanderings (Numbers 14: 29, 33, 35).
- c. Those about to enter the Promised Land must know the conditions of blessings from God and the dangers of His judgements.

THE TIME

The book comes at a vital place in Israel's history - a crossroad of spiritual experience (chapter 1 verse 5).

- a. 'This side' is the EAST side of Jordan -the land of Moab (chapter 1 verse1).
- b. 'Eleven days' (chapter 1 verse 2) is the time the journey should have taken if the people had obeyed God. Because of unbelief and disobedience, it took 40 years!

THE SUMMARY

As the last book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy also becomes something of a summary of the preceding books. Moses recounts much of the history and we may link with the other books thus: -

- a. EXODUS -the WAY OUT of Egypt.
- b. LEVITICUS -the WAY IN to God's presence for worship.
- c. NUMBERS -the WAY THROUGH the wilderness under God's leading.

THE MESSAGE

The underlying message of all this recapitulation of history may be brought down to two main thoughts: -

- a. 'Thou shalt remember' -looking back to deliverance from bondage and to redemption - God's basis of appeal to His people (chapter 4 verse 9, 34; chapter 5 verses15; chapter 7 verses 7- 8).
- b. 'Thou shalt obey' -the result of redemption and the vital admonition as they enter the Promised Land with Joshua this obedience should rest on LOVE TO GOD (chapter 4 verses 29, 37; chapter 5 verses 7,10; chapter 7 verse 24; chapter 10 verse 20; chapter 11 verses 26-28; chapter 6 verse 13,17,25).

THE PROMISES

There are many great promises in this book, and many have an application beyond the days of Moses or Joshua: -

- a. Promise of fruitfulness (chapter 11 verses 13-25).
- c. Promise of the Coming Messiah (chapter 18 verse 15).
- d. Promise of security (chapter 33 verse 12).
- e. Promise of daily strength. (chapter 33 verse 25).
- f. Promise of God's continual care (chapter 33 verse 27).
- g. Promise of God's protection and power (chapter 33 verse 27).

THE ASSURANCE

God is referred to as THE ROCK (chapter 32 verses 4,18).

- a. Paul gives the spiritual application in 1 Corinthians 10: 4.
- b. The Cross in the desert is a wonderful thought for us.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

THE SUBJECT

Moses, having handed over the leadership to Joshua, has now died; the Book is concerned with the entry into the Promised Land of Canaan and the settlement of the Tribes in it.

THE NAME

Joshua is sometimes rendered 'Hoshea' (Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 44) or 'Oshea' (Numbers chapter 13 verse 8) meaning 'salvation'. The name Joshua itself means 'God is salvation' and is the equivalent of 'Jesus' in the New Testament (Hebrews chapter 4 verse 8).

THE BOOK

holds much that is vital for Israel and, spiritually, for the Christian. It may be thought of as the 'WAY TO VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING' (1 Corinthians 10: 11; Romans 15: 4).

Notice-

A ITS WONDERFUL REASSURANCES

- i. A land to be possessed exists (Joshua 1: 2; Hebrews 4: 9).
- ii. Overcoming strength is available (chapter 1 verse 5).
- iii. The past gives every encouragement (chapter 1 verse 5).
- iv. God's presence will be known (chapter 1 verse 5).
- v. Obedience will have to be maintained (chapter 1 verses 7, 8).
- vi. A living faith will bring security (chapter 1 verse 9).

B. ITS TREMENDOUS VICTORIES

- i. The crossing of Jordan (chapter 3 verse 13-16; chapter 4 verse 7).
- ii. The destruction of Jericho (chapter 6 verse 20) - a fortress town.
- iii. The lesson of Ai (chapter 7) - Victory forfeited.
- iv. Defeat of the five kings of the Amorites (chapter 10).
- v. Complete list of kings overcome (chapter 12) and the summary in chapter 11 verse 23 (Numbers 13: 29-33 reminds us of the time when the report of the spies caused the people to fear, which led to disobedience).

C. ITS MANY TESTIMONIES

- i. God's faithfulness in supplying manna (chapter 5 verse 12).
- ii. God's faithfulness in the new supply in Canaan (chapter 5 verse 12).
- iii. God's faithfulness in the crossing of Jordan (chapter 3 verse 7).
- iv. God's faithfulness in giving these victories (chapter 5 verses 13-15).
- v. God's faithfulness in establishing the Cities of Refuge (chapter 20 verses 7-8).
- vi. God's faithfulness in doing ALL that He said he would do (chapter 24 verse 14).

D ITS SPIRITUAL LESSONS

- i. All the points already mentioned (Sections A & C).
- ii. Jordan as a type of entry into LIFE (not DEATH as in many hymns).
- iii. The crippling effect of UNBELIEF in the people of God (Hebrews 4: 6).
- iv. The emphasis on loyalty and obedience in God's people (chapter 24 verses 16-17).
- v. The way that Joshua typifies the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation (also Hebrews 2: 10; Joshua chapter 5 verse 14).
- vi. God's promises and presence guaranteed in Christ (2 Corinthians 1: 10; Matthew 28: 20).

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

THE JUDGES AND THEIR TASK

The men (and one woman) referred to as 'Judges' were not so in the sense of our use of the word; they are more correctly to be looked upon as 'leaders in battle' and 'rulers in peace'. There are twelve mentioned in the book and they are of varying importance.

THE JUDGES AND THEIR TIMES

It is to be noted that the book comes after that of Joshua and before that of Samuel. (the happenings of Ruth are in the period of the Judges - Ruth 1: 1) No leader seems to have been appointed to succeed Joshua and 450 years went by before Samuel took over that important office as the last of the Judges and as the first of the prophets (Acts 13: 20).

The book may be entitled 'THE BOOK OF UPS AND DOWNS'. It was a matter of constant choice between GOD and gods and the promises of Exodus 23: 27 were rendered ineffective time after time by the disobedience of God's people.

During the 450 years, the main troubles and deliverers were -

- a. 8 years occupation - Mesopotamia - chapter 3 verse 8, Judge - Othniel chapter 3 verse 9.
- b. 18 years occupation - Moab/Philistia - chapter 3 verse 14, Judges - Ehud chapter 3 verse 15, & Shamgar chapter 3 verse 31.
- c. 20 years occupation - Canaan chapter 4 verses 2-3, Judge- Deborah chapter 4 verse 4.
- d. 7 years occupation - Midian chapter 6 verse 1, Judge - Gideon chapter 6 verse 11.
- e. Civil War (?) - Judges - Tola chapter 10 verse 1, Jair chapter 10 verse 3.
- f. 18 years occupation - Ammon chapter 10 verses 7-8, Judges - Jephthah chapter 11 verse 1, Ibzan chapter 12 verse 8, Elon chapter 12 verse 11, Abdon chapter 12 verse 13.
- g. 40 years occupation - Philistia chapter 13 verse 1, Judge – Samson chapter 13 verses 5 and 24.

THE JUDGES AND THE NEED FOR THEM

The need is obvious from the pattern that recurs throughout the book: -

- i. The Children of Israel sinned (chapter 3 verse 12) - Idolatry etc.
- ii. They were punished by being put into servitude (chapter 3 verse 12).
- iii. They cried to the Lord (chapter 3 verse 15).
- iv. The Lord sent them a DELIVERER (chapter 3 verse 15).

The tragedy of this period is very well summed up in chapter 17 verse 6 and chapter 21 verse 25. The book speaks of OUTWARD CAPTIVITY (chapters 1-17) and of INWARD CORRUPTION (chapters 18-21).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES

- i. The depravity of man- he turns again and again to sin.
- ii. The constant love of God. He delivers again and again.

- iii. Life with God is meant to be one of VICTORY, not of 'ups and downs'.
- iv. The Christian life that is not RULED by Christ will meet with disaster. 'Right in his own eyes' is no motto for the Christian.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

The story of the book of Ruth took place during the days of the Judges (Ruth chapter 1 verse1), hence its place in the Old Testament.

THE OUTLINE OF THE STORY

Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, live in Bethlehem with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Owing to a famine, they journey to the land of Moab and there Elimelech dies. The two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, marry Ruth and Orpah respectively, both of whom belong to the Land of Moab. Naomi hears that the famine is over in Bethlehem and decides to return home. She gives her two daughters in law, now widowed, the opportunity of returning to their parents and this Orpah does; Ruth, however, in the wonderful words of chapter 1 verses 16,17, elects to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem.

The two widows (Naomi and Ruth) exist for a time by Ruth gleaning in the harvest field, where she accidentally (?) comes into contact with Boaz, a relative of Elimelech's. Acting under Naomi's advice, Ruth claims the relationship and its accompanying protection. Naomi now has to sell land that belonged to her late husband (possibly in order to live) but, according to the Mosaic Law, it must not pass from the family. The nearest kinsman is unable to do anything about it and so Boaz steps in and claims his right to redeem the land; included in the transaction is the taking of Ruth as his wife. The story ends with a short genealogy that shows Boaz and Ruth to be the ancestors of David and thus of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STORY

Notice the GUIDANCE in chapter 2 verse 3; the GRACE in chapter 2 verses 8,9; the PROTECTION in chapter 2 verse 9; the PROVISION in chapter 2 verse16; the PLENTY in chapter 2 verses 17,18.

Note the CUSTOM of the LEVIRATE MARRIAGE in chapter 4 verse 10 and its sanction in Deuteronomy 25: 5,6. This was the basis of Ruth's claim, put forward in the first place by Naomi.

Note the CUSTOM of the removal of the shoe in chapter 4 verse 7, signifying the unwillingness to take on a responsibility and being accepted as a legal declaration of renunciation of all rights in the matter.

THE WONDERFUL CONCLUSION OF THE STORY

This book brings out as no other in the Old Testament the work of the KINSMAN-REDEEMER. The person acting as Redeemer had to be QUALIFIED by relationship, ABLE by his riches and WILLING in his person. This mirrors the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the redeemer of His people.

Remember that Ruth was a foreigner who had no rights and was wholly dependent on the GRACE of Boaz. He CHOSE to redeem her.

A THOUGHT

How the Lord would love to hear us applying the words of chapter 1 verses 16,17, to our discipleship.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE TITLE

In the Authorised Version it is also called the 'First Book of the Kings'. It is the first of the six books which deal particularly with the history of the Children of Israel.

THE DATE

It is easy to fix the date in the memory by taking 1000 B.C. as the approximate date of the middle of the book and about 100 years to cover its happenings; that is, from the days of Eli (the last Judge before Samuel) until the Accession of David.

THE CENTRAL FIGURE

Obviously, Samuel, who is spoken of as having written some things in a book. (chapter 10 verse 25) Samuel is known as a PROPHET (Acts 13: 20) instead of a 'SEER' was the earlier word that later became known as a 'PROPHET' (chapter 9 verses 9,11).

SAMUEL' S IMPORTANCE

Samuel may rightly be called the last of the Judges and the first of the Prophets. His was the difficult task of bringing Israel out of their failure to live as a THEOCRACY (a people ruled by God) into the MONARCHY (a people ruled by King). Note that this was God's PERMISSIVE WILL for them, not His DIRECTIVE WILL.

DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

The three main divisions, which are very rough and ready, centre round the three prominent characters: -

- A. Chapters 1-7 - Samuel.
- B. Chapters 8-15 - Saul.
- C. Chapters 16-31 -David.

POINTS TO NOTICE

- a. The corruption of the opening days of the book; the days into which Samuel was born.
- b. The victory over the Philistines into which Samuel leads them (chapter 7 verses 3,13).
- c. The reasons for Israel's request for a King: -
 - i. The godlessness of Samuel's own sons (chapter 8 verses 1,3,5).
 - ii The desire to be like other people (chapter 8 verse 5).
 - iii. Note that God allowed them to have Saul as king but Psalm 106: 15 was tragically true in their resulting experiences.
- d. The story of Saul's failure: -
 - i. By intruding into the priest's office (chapter 13 verse 11-14).
 - ii. By disobedience which looked like obedience (chapter 15 verses 22,23).
 - iii. By consulting a medium (chapter 28 verses 7,8).
- e. God's choice of David – 'A man after His own heart' (chapter 16 verse 7).
- f. Subsequent victories by David and narrow escapes from Saul.

REMEMBER that our Lord is referred to in Luke 1: 32,33 as being the ultimate successor to the Throne of David.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

The events of this book took place well after the death of Samuel. The TITLE is explained by remembering that the first and second books of Samuel were once one book. The Second book is all about DAVID and should be compared with the First Book of Chronicles, which covers the same ground from a different point of view.

The BOOK OF SAMUEL gives the POLITICAL or MONARCHIAL view whilst the book of CHRONICLES gives the PRIESTLY or THEOCRATIC view of the same historical events.

This book gives us an insight into the whole CHARACTER OF DAVID: -

1. He laments the death of Saul and Jonathan (chapter 1 verses 17-end).
2. He thanks the men of Jabesh Gilead for burying them (chapter 2 verses 5-7).
3. He pursues relentlessly what he knows to be God's plan for him; that is, to be king over all Israel (chapter 3 verse 1). However, he is only crowned king of Judah at Hebron for the first 7 years of his reign.
4. One commentator calls chapter 5 'King David's first year of sunshine'. In it he gains a NEW CROWN (verses 3,4) a NEW CAPITAL (verse 7), a NEW PALACE (verse 11), and a NEW VICTORY (verse 25).
5. His zeal for God is shown in his desire to bring back the Ark of God (chapter 6). His zeal led him astray in that he attempted to do the right thing in a wrong way, with resulting judgement (chapter 6 verse 7).
6. When he later saw God's way he immediately adopted it (1 Chronicles 15: 2).
7. His worthy ambition is seen in his desire to build the temple. His greatness was tested in having to accept the Lord's ruling on the matter (chapter 7 verses 12/13). Nevertheless, he prepared materials for the building.
8. He received one of the greatest Messianic promises as a result (chapter 7 verses 12-16).
9. His kindness (grace) shown to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (an all-time picture of God's grace to us because of ANOTHER) - Chapter 9.
10. His terrible sin with Bathsheba is included in the portrait - he was not perfect. Note the catalogue of sins that were involved in this act of adultery (lying, murder) (chapters 11 and 12).
11. His suffering at the hand of his son, Absalom, which included fleeing from his capital at Jerusalem (chapter 15 verse 14).
12. His ready acknowledgement of his sin when Nathan spoke to him (chapter 12 verse 13).
13. His utter heartbreak at the death of Absalom (chapter 18 verse 33).
14. His thanksgiving to God alone for victory (chapter 22 verse 2 ff), which is virtually the same as Psalm 18.
15. His remembrance of loyal service by his mighty men, not forgotten in his old age (chapter 23 verse 8).
16. His haste in taking a census when not directed to do so by the spirit of God (chapter 24 verse 2).
17. His repentance when he is reprov^{ed} and his acknow¹edgement that sin must be judged (chapter 24 verse 10).
18. His honesty in insisting to pay for the threshing floor of Araunah (chapter 24 verse 24). Later the site of the temple.

David was by no means the Perfect man, but he has always been regarded by Israel as the IDEAL KING. The points mentioned above all have something to say to the people of God in every age.

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

GENERAL CONTENTS

Remember that the two Books of the Kings cover much the same ground as the two Books of the Chronicles. The Books of the Kings (the ROYAL records) tell the story from the point of view of the THRONE, whilst the Books of the Chronicles (CHURCH records) do so from the PRIESTLY point of view. None of these books is to be regarded as COMPLETE in every detail. The books record some very important events so far as the whole history of Israel is concerned: -

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER AT DAVID'S DEATH

1. Adonijah, apparently the eldest surviving son of David, tries to seize the throne as David's death approaches (chapter 1).
2. Nathan, the prophet, and others take the matter up with David.
3. The Lord had revealed to David that Solomon was to be his successor (1 Chronicles 22: 6-10) (Note here how David prepared for the building of the Temple, actually to be erected by Solomon).

THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON

1. His wealth was fabulous (chapter 10 verses 14-27). The Kingdom of Israel, under Solomon, rose to its peak of economic prosperity.
2. His wisdom was God given (chapter 4 verses 29-33 and chapter 10 verses 23-24 and the book of Proverbs).
3. His work was the erection of the Temple and also the increase of trade (More about this in the book of Chronicles).
4. In spite of all this, Solomon did not wholly follow the Lord, with consequent judgment on his son's succession to the Throne (chapter 11 verses 1-10).

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

1. A vital point in the history of Israel and one that we need to grasp clearly. Up till now, Israel had been ONE KINGDOM under Saul, David and Solomon.
2. One of Solomon's own followers rebelled against him (Jeroboam) and fled to Egypt until Solomon's death (chapter 11 verses 26,40).
3. Rehoboam, on the death of his father Solomon, declares a policy of greater hardship and this, politically precipitates the breakaway (chapter 12 verse 15).
4. Ten tribes become the NORTHERN KINGDOM, known henceforth as ISRAEL under the leadership of Jeroboam (chapter 12 verse 20).
5. Two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, become the SOUTHERN KINGDOM, known henceforth as JUDAH, under the leadership of Rehoboam (chapter 12 verse 21).
6. This division took place about 975 B.C. (Ussher), and the land was NEVER AGAIN united as a Kingdom.

THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH

1. An evil succession of kings in ISRAEL brings us to the reign of AHAB and his evil wife, Jezebel.
2. ELIJAH is raised up by God to speak out against this evil reign, with all its idolatry and allegiance to Baal (chapter 16 verse 33).
3. The final challenge of Elijah 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' (chapter 18 verse 21) becomes the constant cry of prophetic voices during the remainder of Israel's history.

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

Altogether, the first and second books of Kings cover about 420 years, of which about 250 years belongs to the second.

A. THE TRAGEDIES OF THE BAD KINGS

1. The evil reigns recorded might have been quite beneficial to the land from the political or material point of view. The Bible, however, looks at the spiritual side.
2. In the case of ISRAEL (Northern Kingdom), there are 20 kings altogether, beginning with Jeroboam. ALL these kings are spoken of as doing evil.
3. Jeroboam had started the rebellion against Rehoboam which divided Israel into the two kingdoms. His name is always linked with the introduction of sin; the phrase 'which made Israel to sin' constantly recurs (chapter 3 verse 3).
4. In the case of Judah (Southern Kingdom) there are 12 bad kings and 8 good kings.
5. As always, the story of the evil kings shows their disastrous effect on the nation.

B THE WORK OF THE GOOD KINGS

Note particularly: -

1. JEHOASH (chapter 12) - Repaired the Temple.
2. HEZEKIAH (chapter 18) - Destroyed idolatrous worship.
3. JOSIAH (chapter 22) - Repaired the Temple: Brought back the Word of God; re-established the Passover (chapter 23 verse 22).

C THE CALL OF THE PROPHETS

1. With the exception of Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, all the Old Testament prophets prophesied during the period covered in 2 Kings – e.g. Isaiah is referred to in connection with King Hezekiah – 2 Kings 19:2.
2. Their message was always a call to repentance, based on the constant love of God for His people.

D THE ANSWER FROM THE PEOPLE

1. Time and again they refused to listen and judgment was inevitable.
2. This judgment came to Israel (Northern Kingdom) in 722 B.C. by the invasion of Assyria. It came to Judah (Southern Kingdom) in 586 B.C. by the invasion of Babylon.
3. From chapter 18 verse 11, the second book of Kings is dealing only with Judah.
4. Note the way in which the Samaritans arose (chapter 17 verses 24-28).

E THE DOMINANT LESSON

The Lord calls for His people to walk in obedience and loyalty to Himself (see Exodus 20: 3).

Deviation from this simple fact leads to judgment in the life (chastening).

THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

Previous notes have pointed out the difference between the Books of the Kings and the Books of Chronicles. We have entitled the latter 'THE CHURCH RECORDS', because of the point of view of the writer.

THE CONTENTS: -

Chapters 1-9 -consist of genealogies.

Chapter 10 - tells of the death of Saul.

Chapters 11-29 - is all about David.

Notice that the account of Saul's death is only brief and that there is no account of the struggle for power with Saul's descendants before David becomes king. Chapter 29 verse 28 tells us that David dies FULL of Days, FULL of Riches and FULL of Honour. We pinpoint three things in this book: -

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

- i. It symbolised GOD'S PRESENCE, GOD'S HOLINESS and GOD'S MERCY (remember its position and significance in the Tabernacle).
- ii. It went first at the crossing of Jordan (Joshua 3: 11). It was in the main body of the army circulating round Jericho (Joshua 6: 6-7).
- iii. It was captured by the Philistines in the early days of Samuel (1 Samuel 4: 17,18) and the boy's name 'ICHABOD' is applied to the desolate state of Israel as a result.
- iv. It appears that the Ark was not used during Saul's reign (chapter 13 verse 3) except on one occasion (1 Samuel 14: 18).
- v. David felt it was vital that the Ark should return to its place at the heart of the nation (chapter 13 verse 6).

B. THE PREPARATION FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

- i. David declared his intention of building a house for God (chapter 28 verse 2).
- ii. He was forbidden this great privilege because of the warlike character of his reign (chapter 28 verse 3).
- iii. He understood God's purpose to the extent that his son, Solomon, was to carry out the task (chapter 28 verse 6).
- iv. Instead of quarrelling with God's will in the matter, he graciously accepts it and gives all the help possible.
- v. He passed on to Solomon the Divine Pattern for the building and a great deal of the material (chapter 28 verses 11-21; chapter 29 verses 1-9).
- vi. He was even able to praise and magnify God through it all (chapter 29 verses 10-20).

C. THE NECESSITY OF UTTER LOYALTY

- i. The kind of men that David needed were a. Disciplined (chapter 12 verse 38), b. Separated (chapter 12 verse 8), c. Entirely his (chapter 12 verse 38; chapter 12 verse 33).
- ii. What a great moment it was when David heard the words 'THINE ARE WE, DAVID' (chapter 12 verse 18).
- iii. These characteristics (i) are those that are required in the Christian disciple.
- iv. Our 'David' delights to hear the words of loyalty (ii).

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

This book continues the story started in the first Book of Chronicles, but it is not PRIMARILY concerned with history. These notes are therefore not concerned with the various KINGS of Israel and Judah.

CHAPTERS 1 – 9

These chapters are all about Solomon and the great task of BUILDING THE TEMPLE (See also notes on the first book of Chronicles).

1. Chapter 2. Note the trade agreement with HIRAM both as to the materials and the labour (verses 7, 8, 10, 15, 16 etc).
2. Chapter 3 verse 1. Note the SITE OF THE TEMPLE (1 Chronicles 21: 22-26). This is also thought to be the place where Abraham offered Isaac (Genesis 22: 2) and possibly also the place of the crucifixion.
3. The work is completed but the Temple needed one more thing – THE ARK (chapter 5 verse 5).
4. Chapter 5 verse 14 – the result – the GLORY OF THE LORD filled the House of the Lord.
5. Chapter 6. The great dedicatory prayer on the occasion of the opening of the temple (Prayer and Work must always go hand in hand).
6. Chapter 7 verses 12-16 – The Lord's acceptance of this house.
7. Chapter 7 verses 19-22 – The Lord's very specific warning to His people.

CHAPTERS 10 – 36

The notes on the second Book of Kings told of the way the various kings went away from God and also of these kings who endeavoured to lead them back to Him. Here we mention only the literal way in which chapter 7 verse 20 was eventually fulfilled: -

1. The NORTHERN KINGDOM of ISRAEL was overpowered by the ASSYRIAN EMPIRE under Sennacherib in 722 B.C. The people were taken away and dispersed amongst the nations. The Assyrians brought in other nationalities and their own people to occupy the land.
2. The SOUTHERN KINGDOM of JUDAH (who are the main topic of this book) was overrun by the BABYLONIAN EMPIRE under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. This part of the nation returned 70 years later under Nehemiah, Ezra and Zerubbabel.
3. During those 70 years the capital city of Jerusalem was left in ruins together with the Temple (Nehemiah chapter 1 verse 3). This tragedy forms the basis of the LAMENTATION OF JEREMIAH (Lamentations 2: 15 etc).
4. We need to learn the lesson again and again – DISOBEDIENCE was the ONLY reason for God's awful judgement.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were once ONE BOOK. They have ONE THEME - the return of God's people (the Southern Kingdom of Judah) from captivity. Read Jeremiah 25: 8-14 and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.

A. NOTE THE OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD

- i. God's time of 70 years for the Captivity had been completed.
- ii. The Babylonian empire had been crushed by Persia.
- iii. A heathen king is the first mover in releasing them (chapter 1 verse 1).
- iv. Later, the written records of this king enable the work to be restarted after enemies had stopped it (chapter 6 verses 1-3).

B. SEE THE STAGES IN THE RETURN OF GOD'S PEOPLE

- i. First party, led by Zerubbabel about 536 B.C. He laid the temple foundations and erected the building (chapters 1-6).
- ii. Second party, led by Ezra about 458 B.C. He established the Law and the ritual.
- iii. Third party, led by Nehemiah about 444 B.C. He built the wall of Jerusalem and established the civil government.

C. REMEMBER THE OPPOSITION THEY ENCOUNTERED

- i. By enemies who masqueraded as fellow travellers (chapter 4 verse 2).
- ii. By enemies who attempted to discourage the people (chapter 4 verse 4).
- iii. By enemies who wrote a letter to the king of Persia making accusations against the Lord's people (chapter 4 verses 7-22).
- iv. An accusation was made that the Jews would withhold tribute if their city was rebuilt. (chapter 4 verses 13-14).

D. STUDY THE BACKGROUND AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S MAN –EZRA

- i. A direct descendent of Aaron, the High Priest (chapter 7 verses 1-5). The return was not led by a King but by a Priest.
- ii. A ready scribe in the Law of Moses (chapter 7 verse 6).
- iii. One on whom the hand of the Lord rested (chapter 7 verses 6-9).
- iv. This threefold ambition (chapter 7 verse 10): -
 - a. To seek the law of God with his heart.
 - b. To do the Law of God in his life.
 - c. To teach the Law of God to his people.
- v. A man who was concerned only for God's way (chapter 8 verses 21-23).
- vi. A man with a tender conscience concerning sin (chapter 9 verses 3-7).
- vii. A man who dealt fearlessly with that sin (chapter 10 verses 10-12).

E. MARK THE PART PLAYED BY THE PROPHETS

- i. A rebuke (Haggai chapter 1 verses 1-15).
- ii. An encouragement (Haggai chapter 2 verse 19).
- iii. Zechariah 1: 12; 2: 5; 4: 6; 8: 4.
- iv. The prophets 'helping' (chapter 5 verses 1,2) and 'prospering' the work (chapter 6 verse 14).
- v. The recall to God, not only to the Land, resulted in the PASSOVER being celebrated (chapter 6 verses 19-22).

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Refer to the Book of Ezra for details of the background of this book (i.e. the return from the Captivity). It is a book of PRAYER & ACTION.

A. THE SITUATION

1. The ruined state of the gates and wells of Jerusalem (chapter 1 verse 3).
2. The position of God's people (chapter 1 verse 3).
3. The integrity of God's character = the prior concern (chapter 1 verse 10).

B. THE MAN

1. Nehemiah -the king's cupbearer (chapter 1 verse 11).
2. Trustworthy; influential; cheerful; faithful.
3. Humble with God - bold with man (chapter 2 verses 4,5).
4. Careful about detail (chapter 2 verses 7,8).
5. God's choice for work that had to be done after the 70 years of captivity.

C. THE METHOD

1. The systematic building of the wall (chapter 3).
2. Work shared by all (sons of goldsmiths, chapter 3 verse 8; apothecary chapter 3 verse 8; ruler chapter 3 verse 12; gatekeeper chapter 3 verse 29; merchants chapter 3 verse 31; priests chapter 3 verse 22; daughters chapter 3 verse 12).
3. WORK ONLY TO BE DONE BY GOD'S PEOPLE (chapter 2 verse 20 and chapter 4).

D. THE OPPOSITION

1. Chapter 2 verse 10 is FUNDAMENTAL (Spiritual work is Satan versus Christ).
2. Ridicule is used (chapter 2 verse 19; chapter 4 verse 3).
3. Outright attack is threatened (chapter 4 verse 8).
4. Discouragement is infectious (chapter 4 verse 10).
5. Side-tracking is attempted (chapter 6 verse 2).
6. Personal profit is insinuated (chapter 6 verses 6,7).
7. Pseudo spiritual counsel is given (chapter 6 verses 10-12).
8. Family connections bring pressure (chapter 6 verse 18).
9. Good deeds are paraded (chapter 6 verse 19).
10. Threatening letters are received (chapter 6 verse 19).

E. THE SEQUEL

1. Purging of God's people (chapter 7 verses 5,6, 64; chapter 13 verse 11, 3).
2. Hearing God's Word (chapter 8 verse 8).
3. Obeying God's voice (chapter 9 verses 1-3).
4. Acknowledging God's goodness (chapter 9 verses 5-35).
5. Sealing a Covenant with Him (chapter 9 verse 38- chapter 10 verse 27).

F THE OBLIGATIONS

1. The promises to God touched every part of their lives - Marriage chapter 10 verse 30; Sunday trading chapter 10 verse 31; Money chapter 10 verse 32; God's House chapter 10 verse 34; harvest chapter 10 verse 35; cattle chapter 10 verse 36; tithes chapter 10 verse 37; people chapter 11 verse 1.
2. Dealing with sin involved: -
 - a. Separating God's people (chapter 13 verse 3,23,25).
 - b. Cleansing God's House (chapter 13 verses 9-10).
 - c. Restoring God's portion (chapter 13 verses 10-12).
 - d. Reinstating God's Day (chapter 13 verse 15).

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

THE BACKGROUND

KING AHASUERUS is the Persian King XERXES (486-465 BC). This story comes therefore between the return of the Jews under Zerubbabel and that under Ezra (see notes on Ezra). The story is about the remainder of the Jews in Captivity.

The Feast of Purim (chapter 9 verse 26-32) is still observed by the Jews. NOTE that the name of God does not appear in this book.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS.

- A. **MORDECAI** (chapter 2 verses 5,6) A Jewish captive descended from Kish. (tribe of Benjamin) He was cousin to Esther.
- B. **HAMAN**. (chapter 3 verse 1) An Agagite (Amalekite) 1 Samuel 15: 8. The Amalekites were the first enemies of the Israelites (Exodus 17: 8).
- C. **ESTHER** -an insignificant orphan who, in the purposes of God, became Queen (chapter 2 verse 7; chapter 4 verse 14).

THE STORY IN BRIEF

- i. Esther is chosen as Queen to Ahasuerus (chapter 2 verses 16-17).
- ii. Mordecai's discovery of a plot against the king (chapter 2 verse 21).
Haman's rage at Mordecai's lack of deference to him (chapter 3 verse 5).
Revenge planned on ALL THE JEWS (chapter 3 verse 6).
- iii. The decree to exterminate the Jews goes out (chapter 3 verse 15).
Mordecai in mourning (chapter 4 verse 4). Esther discovers the reason and, encouraged by Mordicai, resolves to DO SOMETHING.
Esther dares to enter the King's presence (chapter 5 verses 1-3). She invites him to a banquet with Haman. Haman's boasting (chapter 5 verse 11) and the erection of the gallows for Mordecai.
- iv. The King, unable to sleep, reads the royal records. He resolves to honour Mordecai (chapter 6 verses 1-3).
- iv. Haman, instead of hanging Mordecai, is called upon to give him high honour (chapter 6 verses 7-11).
- v. The second banquet reveals the plight of the Jews and the infamy of Haman (chapter 7). Haman's execution.
- vi. The decree could not be cancelled but is amended (chapter 8 verses 5-8). A great victory for the Jews (chapter 9 verse 5).
- vii. Great honour given to Mordecai (chapter 10 verse 3). The story commemorated in the Feast of Purim.

POINTS TO NOTICE re ESTHER

- a. Her LOYALTY to her people although she was Queen.
- b. Her HUMILITY in submitting to the King and to Mordecai (chapter 4 verse 16).
- c. Her COURAGE in entering the King's presence (chapter 4 verse 11).
- d. Her FAITH -acting in dependence on God and on the prayers of God's people (chapter 4 verse 16).
- e. Her PRAYER seen in intercession for the destruction of the enemy and for the deliverance of her people (chapter 4 verse 16 and chapter 8 verses 3-7).
- f. Her JOY, shared with her people, for a miraculous deliverance (chapter 8 verse 16; chapter 9 verse 19).

- g. Mordecai's faith in the purposes of God - God would use one means or another (chapter 4 verse 14).
- h. Although God's name is not mentioned in this book, His over-ruling of events is clearly seen. The promised Saviour would come through the nation of Israel: God would not allow the destruction of that nation. His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12: 3) and to King David, was sure to be fulfilled (2 Samuel 7: 16).

THE BOOK OF JOB

Outside the Book of Job, he is referred to only in Ezekiel 14: 14,20 and in James 5: 11. We cannot certainly identify him or the times in which he lived. BUT the subject of the book is of UNIVERSAL INTEREST for all time.

A. The PROBLEM

- i. The theme is usually regarded as being the Problem of Suffering.
- ii. It is more than this - it is the challenge of Satan as to the INTEGRITY OF GOD'S MAN under suffering (chapter 1 verse 9).
- iii. In one sense, God is on trial IN HIS SERVANT.

B. The ACCUSATIONS

- i. Notice that Satan here appears as the 'ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN' (Revelation 12: 10). His appearance before God is a mystery.
- ii. Satan asserts that Job serves God for what he gets out of it (chapter 1 verses 8,9).
- iii. He further asserts that Job's faithfulness rests upon his material prosperity (chapter 1 verses 10,11).
- iv. He says that good health is essential to such faithfulness (chapter 2 verse 5).
- v. God accepts the challenge of Satan (chapter 1 verse 12; chapter 2 verse 6). Notice the license given to Satan and the limitation imposed.

C. The ARGUMENTS

- i. The three friends regard Job as good as dead (chapter 2 verses 11-13).
- ii. ELIPHAZ has a glib answer - Job has sinned (chapter 4 verse 7).
- iii. BILDAD says that God is JUST (chapter 8 verse 3). Job is a hypocrite. If Job were right in God's sight, He would answer and deliver.
- iv. ZOPHAR affirms that Job is both a hypocrite and a liar (chapter 11).
- v. ELIHU asserts that suffering is sent for the good of the sufferer (chapter 33 verses 28-30). He rebukes the three for their accusations (chapter 32 verse 9) and Job for his self-righteousness.

D. The ANSWERS

- i. In answer to Eliphaz, Job wants to know how he has sinned (chapter 6 verse 24).
- ii. In answer to Bildad, Job agrees that God is JUST.
- iii. After Zophar speaks, Job says that he is as clever as they and if he had been in their position he could have done as well (chapter 12; chapter 16 verse 2; chapter 16 verse 14).
- iv. Job has two main points of defence - a) that the wicked prosper (chapter 21) and b) that of his own personal righteousness (chapters 29 & 31).

E. The REVELATION

- i. God finally speaks out of the whirlwind but does not give an answer to the problem. Instead, it seems that He underlines His own POWER and ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY.
- ii. This leads to Job's utter submission (chapter 40 verses 4,6).
- iii. The blessings of the last chapter of the book reveal God's constant goodness (chapter 42 verse 12).
- iv. NOTE - The triumphant attitude of the man of God (chapter 13 verse 15). The vindication of God by Job (chapter 19 verse 25).

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Book of Psalms is the HYMN BOOK of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament. The Jewish teachers held that there were five books in one –Psalms 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150.

The authors of the Psalms vary (e.g. David, Asaph or anonymous), but most of them are ascribed to David. The HEADINGS to the Psalms are not part of the Psalms themselves and not all of them can be explained. Some are obviously connected with the singing of the Psalms (Psalm 4), whilst others describe the circumstances under which they were written (Psalm 18).

We shall look at the whole book under the following SUBJECT headings, although these are by no means exhaustive.

A. THOSE DESCRIBING GOD'S POWER

An example of this is Psalm 90, which forms the basis of our hymn 'O God our help in ages past'.

There is also Psalm 8: 3; Psalm 19: 1; Psalm 33: 6; You will come across others as you progress through the book. Notice what a GREAT SENSE of GOD the Psalmist had, in common with many of the Prophets.

B. THOSE ASCRIBING PRAISE TO GOD

'Praise' is the literal meaning of the word 'Psalm' and naturally flows from the contemplation of God's power.

Psalm 103 = our hymn 'O bless the Lord my soul'.

Psalms 149-150 - where many instruments are also mentioned.

C. THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH PILGRIMAGE TO GOD'S HOUSE

Psalms 120-134 bear the title 'A SONG OF DEGREES' ('ASCENTS' is used on the NKJV) and may well have been used for singing on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Our hymn 'How pleased and blest was I' is obviously based on Psalm 122. Other Psalms with a similar theme include Psalm 42: 4; Psalm 43: 3; Psalm 84.

D. THOSE SPEAKING OF GOD'S PRECEPTS.

God's House and God's Word are easily thought of together. Psalm 119 is the classic on the theme of God's Word.

Various words are used such as "Judgements, precepts, testimonies, statutes etc. which may be summed up as 'His Word.' Out of the 176 verses in this, the longest Psalm, only two (verses 122 and 132) do not have any such reference to God's Word.

E: THOSE EXPRESSING PENITENCE

Discovery of sin comes by the reading of God's Word and by being in God's Presence. These Psalms are particularly known as PENITENTIAL. Examples are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

F. THOSE FULL OF PROMISE

A number of Psalms are called MESSIANIC because they obviously speak of victory and deliverance. Some of these are Psalms 2, 16, 24, 47, 96-99, 110. They hold out the bright hope of Israel's King upon the Throne.

NOTICE

The SUFFERINGS of the Lord Jesus Christ in Psalm 22.

The MINISTRY of the Lord Jesus Christ in Psalm 23.

The GLORY of the Lord Jesus Christ in Psalm 24.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

INTRODUCTION

This book has no stories to tell and no history is recorded. It appears disjointed, being composed quite a bit of individual verses, which often do not seem to connect with others.

Reference to 1 Kings 4: 29-34 is useful as background re Solomon but note that not all his proverbs are here.

Note that whilst chapter 1 verse 1 speaks of Solomon as speaking these proverbs, chapter 30 verse 1 ascribes some to AGUR and chapter 31 verse 1 some to LEMUEL.

TITLE

The book can be entitled 'HOW TO LIVE WISELY' for it is essentially practical. Later we see that to Live Wisely means putting the Lord first.

CONTENT -

WISE ADVICE

Chapter 4 verses 20-27- is applicable to all.

WISE THINGS

Chapter 30 verses 24-28 - the ANT, CONEY (Rabbit), LOCUST and SPIDER, all can learn from these creatures.

WISE WARNING

Road signs are familiar to all, but it is only a WARNING, you may disregard it at your peril. For example, see chapter 14 verse 9; chapter 14 verse 12; chapter 4 verse 14; chapter 11 verse 1, chapter 27 verse 1.

WISE STEPS

These lead us upwards. Some steps are chapter 1 verse 7; chapter 8 verse 33; chapter 18 verse 10; chapter 3 verse 5; chapter 18 verse 24 and are progressive.

WISE CHOICE

Link 1 Corinthians 1: 24, with 1 Corinthians 1: 30. Note that the Lord Jesus Christ is in this book - see chapter 8, for example. The wise choice is the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

THE PREACHER = Solomon.

This is one of three books in the Bible written by Solomon or collected from his writings and sayings (Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes).

It may be called the BOOK OF THE NATURAL MAN. Some have thought it to be a biography of Solomon's life reviewing his search for happiness. If not that of Solomon it is typical of thousands of men and women.

“MAN” is mentioned about 47 times. ‘VANITY’ is mentioned continually and signifies the emptiness of life. To us it is the final result of life lived apart from God.

Note the recurring phrase 'UNDER THE SUN'. The book confines itself to the earth and chapter 1 verse 9 tells us that there is nothing new under the sun.

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION

There are various ‘doors’ at which man knocks in his search for happiness, and satisfaction. In each case the door ‘opens’ to reveal VANITY or EMPTINESS: -

WISDOM - chapter 1 verses 16-18.
GOODS – chapter 2 verse 4.
MONEY – chapter 2 verse 8.

PLEASURE - chapter 2 verse 1.
POWER - chapter 2 verse 7.
WORK - chapter 2 verse 11.

The first eleven verses of chapter 2 give these and others. Verse 10a shows the achievement of all 'I wanted' and verse 11b sums it up - 'NO PROFIT'.

Note: - There is a time for everything - chapter 3 verses 1-9.

THE END OF IT ALL

There are various verses which are true and need to be remembered. For example, chapter 7 verse 1, chapter 12 verse 1.

Eventually, we all come, however, to old age in chapter 12 verses 2-7. For example, verse 3 ‘Grinders are few’ = the loss of teeth. 'Windows darkened' = failing eyesight.

So, we have the SILVER CORD verse 6, GOLDEN BOWL verse 6, PITCHER verse 6, WHEEL verse 6, LONG HOME = GRAVE verse 5.

'Under the sun' -this is the end of every man.

THE GATHERING OF WISDOM

Chapter 12 verses 9-12 speaks of the wisdom of man, gathered into books. The Preacher comes to the conclusion of the matter in chapter 12 verse 13, that is – ‘To fear God and keep His commandments’. This is the LAW (shown as better than all man's wisdom), but it is a poor substitute for what God has to offer in Christ.

Note also chapter 12 verse 14 - the judgment of works as the basis of acceptance.

Note that, where the NATURAL MAN in Ecclesiastes leaves (chapter 12 verse 13), the SPIRITUAL MAN in Proverbs begins (Proverbs 1: 7).

All Ecclesiastes is under the sun.

There is NO REDEMPTION, NO HOPE in the Book. It is all dismal failure – ‘VANITY OF VANITIES’.

To live life to the full, to deliver from failure etc., God sent His son - ‘THE CROSS IS SET ABOVE THE SUN’.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The third book by Solomon (c/f Proverbs and Ecclesiastes).

Recorded in 1 Kings 4: 32 that he wrote 1005 songs etc. THIS IS THE BEST - THE SONG OF SONGS

Sometimes known as Canticles - it is Eastern in its setting and is the story of two people in love. Not necessarily religious but NOTE that it was in the O.T. at the time of Christ and He read it.

The two parties spiritually in the O.T. are Israel and Jehovah - see Isaiah 54: 5 and the book of Hosea.

The two parties in the N.T. may be taken as: -

- a. Christ and the Church. Ephesians chapter 5.
- b. Christ and the Christian. Romans 7: 4.

Broadly speaking the book speaks of the steps in Courtship (Remember the hymn – ‘Jesu’ lover of my soul!’).

DRAW ME (c/f - a magnet, and the way it works with various articles) Love does this and especially Christ’s love for us. His love has been declared - we can respond to its power.

WEDDING BELLS signify that HE and SHE have said YES to each other. In spite of difficulties, trials and absence.

See chapter 2 verse 16, chapter 6 verse 3, chapter 8 verse 6, for a delightful picture.

How wonderful to be able to say, 'I AM HIS' and to hear him say 'YOU ARE MINE'.

HIS BEAUTY Having become His there is an increasing discovery of His beauty. How can there be any comparison?

A Rose – chapter 2 verse 1; A Lily - (among thorns) chapter 2 verse 1; Chiefest among 10,000 – chapter 5 verse 10; Altogether lovely – chapter 5 verse 16; All fair, no spot – chapter 4 verse 7.

So, the SONG is about the Loved One. The best that was known in the Old Testament, summed up in chapter 8 verses 6,7.

But Christ's love goes far beyond this -TO THE CROSS – Galatians 2: 20b.

A NEW SONG The Christian has a new song because of the Cross.

Revelation chapter 5 shows the redeemed in heaven, and the new song is all about the Lamb slain (Remember - 'Worthy is the Lamb' from the 'Messiah').

This song is the best in the Universe and in all time. If we are in love with the Lord Jesus NOW and are His we shall join in the New song then.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

In the Bible, the Old Testament division called the PROPHETS included Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, but we only come to the real PROPHETIC WRITINGS with the Book of ISAIAH. This book is the longest of them and is regarded as the greatest.

Attempts to show that there were three separate writers in the book (as frequently taught in our day schools) are certainly not convincing and we reject the theory. The testimony of the Septuagint, the Jewish teachers and the Dead Sea Scrolls all point to its being regarded as one book before the time of Christ. Above all, the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ is unquestionable; He quotes, for example, from chapter 6: 9 (Matthew 13: 14), chapter 29: 13 (Mark 7: 6), chapter 42: 1 (Matthew 12: 17-18), chapter 61 (Luke 4: 17-18), and always refers to Isaiah as the writer, without qualification.

THE TIME OF HIS MINISTRY

This is fixed by chapter 1 verse 1 and fits into 2 Kings chapter 19 and 2 Chronicles chapters 26-32.

He commenced somewhere about 750 B.C. and continued for some 60 years.

THE TARGET OF HIS WORDS

Isaiah addresses himself particularly, but not exclusively - to the SOUTHERN KINGDOM of JUDAH. In this he is like Micah, with whom he was partly contemporary (Micah 1: 1).

THE TRUTH DECLARED

God is a HOLY GOD (For example - chapter 1 verse 4; chapter 5 verse 24; chapter 10 verses 17,20; chapter 12 verse 6; chapter 17 verse 7; chapter 29 verse 23; chapter 30 verses 11,12,15; chapter 31 verse 1; chapter 37 verse 23; chapter 40 verse 25).

THE THEME ENLARGED

The stress on God's holiness brings the vivid contrast of man's sin. This is graciously met by the promise of salvation in the person of a Saviour.

THE TRUTH EXPERIENCED

Chapter 6 shows Isaiah knowing for himself the Holiness of God - but also His grace, His cleansing and His Commission.

THE TRAVESTY EXPOSED

Judah's worship was FALSE. The land was rich and prosperous; luxury abounded on every hand; the sanctuaries of Jehovah were crowded; they were offering multitudes of sacrifices. Hand in hand with this, however, went oppression, injustice and exploitation of the poor. For example, see Isaiah 3: 4-5; 10: 1-2; 26:6; 32:7.

THE TELESCOPIC VISION

So far, we have seen the prophet 'FORTH telling', God's will to the people. Now we have his second function - that of 'FORE telling' God's ways with His people for the future.

Not only does Isaiah see the captivity of Judah (586 B.C.) but also that it will be by a power other than the one ruling in His day (Assyria) (Isaiah 37: 33-35; 39: 5-7; 45: 1 + 13).

THE TRIUMPHANT PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

Isaiah speaks of -

- a. The Promise of the Birth of the Messiah (chapter 7 verse 14; chapter 9 verse 6).
- b. The Nature of the ministry of the Messiah (for example - chapter 11 verse 1; chapter 7 verses 14-15; chapter 11 verses 3,4; chapter 42 verse 6; chapter 61 verse 1).
- c. The Peace that accompanies the coming of the Messiah (chapter 42 verses 1-4).
- d. The Way of victory for the Messiah - His death, (chapter 53 verses for example - 5, 7, 9) His resurrection (verse 10; chapter 25 verse 8) His glorious reign (chapter 11 verses 3,6).

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

A. THE BACKGROUND OF JEREMIAH

- a. He is concerned only with the SOUTHERN KINGDOM of JUDAH, since the Northern Kingdom of Israel has already gone into dispersion (722 B.C.).
- b. His ministry extended from the reign of Josiah (chapter 1 verse 2) until Judah went into Captivity; that is, from 606 B.C. - 586 B.C. - Ussher)
- c. He was therefore active some 60 years after Isaiah's death (760 B.C. – 697 B.C. – Ussher).
- d. The Kingdom of Judah had not learnt the lesson of the judgment that fell on Israel.

B. THE BURDEN OF JEREMIAH

- a. We constantly come across the phrase 'THUS SAITH THE LORD' (chapter 20 verse 9 illustrates how this was real to the prophet).
- b. He cries for repentance time and again. The words 'backsliding', 'returning' and 'amending' constantly recur.
- c. This burden is based on God's certain judgment and behind this on God's Eternal Love.

C. THE BROKEN HEART OF JEREMIAH

- a. Jeremiah has been called the 'PROPHET OF THE BROKEN HEART' and it is suggested that in his sufferings he most nearly approached our Lord (chapter 9 verse 1; Matthew 23: 37,38).
- b. Jeremiah suffered in the stocks (chapter 20 verses 1-6) and in prison (chapter 38 verse 6). He was taken down to Egypt (chapter 43 verses 7,8).
- c. The certainty of his call to the prophetic ministry was a source of constant strength to him (chapter 1 verses 4-9).

A. THE BOUNDLESS FAITH OF JEREMIAH

- a. He prophesies of the Captivity and of its duration of 70 years (chapter 5: verse 10, 25 verse 12). He also foresees the return (chapter 32 verses 8,14,15). His message is seen in graphic form in his visit to the Potters House (chapter 18 verse 6).
- b. He re-dictates the written message after it had been destroyed by the king (chapter 36 verses 1-10, 22-23).
- c. He is anxious that everybody should hear the Word of the Lord (the people – chapter 36 verse 10; the princes –verse 12; the king -verse 20).

E. THE BRIGHT HOPE BEFORE JEREMIAH

- a. Although he was not to live to see it in fact, yet he does in vision - the return and the re-established Covenant (chapter 50 verses 4-6).
- b. A new, individual and permanent Covenant is foreshadowed. (chapter 50 verses 5,34).
- c. This New Covenant was, of course, realised in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE BOOK OF THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

THE TITLE

This is not surprising when we consider the title applied to Jeremiah in our studies of that book -the PROPHET OF THE BROKEN HEART.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Each of the five chapters is a kind of song or dirge in itself. Jeremiah is mainly concerned with the terrible results of sin in God's people (chapter 1 verse 7), but in chapter 3 verse 19 he reaches the utmost depths of despair for himself.

Briefly, the chapters are as follows: -

Chapters 1 and 2 bring a lament over the city of Jerusalem and the people of Judah. Chapter 3 shows Jeremiah's own night of sorrow, but also where he found hope returned – verses 22-24.

Chapter 4 speaks of Zion's guilt and punishment.

Chapter 5 expresses the despair of the prisoners in the form of a prayer.

SPECIAL POINTS TO NOTE

- a. Jeremiah, a true man of God, identifies himself with God's people in their sin (chapter 1 verses 12,14,16; chapter 5 verse 16), as did Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1: 4-6).
- b. Jerusalem, the Capital city of Judah was known as THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY (chapter 2 verse 15). Now it has become an object of scorn and derision by the enemies of God's people.
- c. God's Word will always come to pass (chapter 2 verse 17; Leviticus 26: 14-16).
- d. It appears that the Lord has become the enemy of His people, because of their sin (chapter 2 verses 5-11).
- e. The destruction of Jerusalem is incredible even to the unbeliever – chapter 4 verse 12.
- f. Jeremiah's feelings are represented as being –
 - i. Hedged in (cf. In a walled courtyard) – chapter 3 verse 7.
 - ii. Shackled by a chain (chapter 3: 7).
 - iii. The target of God's arrows (chapter 3: 13).
- g. He recollects that God still has a wonderful love for the sinner He punishes – chapter 3 verses 31,32; Hebrews 12: 6.
- h. God's faithfulness always stands out in marked contrast to the unfaithfulness of His people (chapter 3 verse 23).
- i. Although God's people are removed into captivity as a punishment for their sin, their God is eternally immovable (chapter 5 verse 19).
- j. Prayer for restoration must always be accompanied by prayer for real heart repentance (chapter 5 verses 21,22).

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

THE TIME OF THE BOOK

Ezekiel is linked with Jeremiah and Daniel. The time - the Captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Chapter 1 verses 1,2 make it clear that he was sharing the Captivity with the other inhabitants of Judah in Babylon.

THE MAN HIMSELF

- a. He was a priest (chapter 1 verse 3).
- b. He was married and his wife died suddenly on the day that the king of Babylon came against Jerusalem (chapter 24 verses 1,2, 15-18).
- c. He ministered for at least 22 years (chapter 1 verse 2; chapter 29 verse 17).
- d. His name means 'The God who strengthens'.

THE MAIN DIVISIONS OF HIS MESSAGE

1. Chapters 1-24. The punishment of Israel.
2. Chapters 25-32. The punishment of the Gentile nations round about (see **NOTICE BRIEFLY** below).
3. Chapters 33-48. The restoration of Israel.

THE FORM OF THE MESSAGE

Like Daniel chapter 1 and John in the Book of the Revelation, Ezekiel uses symbolism graphically in presenting the Word of God. This makes it hard to understand but a careful reading of the book will show that a great deal of it is perfectly plain and straightforward.

The wheels, fire, clouds of chapter 1, for example, signify the Glory of the Lord (chapter 1 verse 28). From the vision of the Glory comes the VOICE OF GOD. (chapter 1 verse 28) Yet Ezekiel is still a humble man - he 'sat where they sat' (chapter 3 verse 15).

NOTICE BRIEFLY

In the first section (chapters 1-24) the condemnation of chapter 20 verses 1-9, the figure of the useless vine (chapter 15) and the message of WOE in chapter 2 verses 9,10 and chapter 3.

In the second section (chapters 25-32) see the nations all mentioned by name - Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt.

THE OUTSTANDING TEACHING OF EZEKIEL

This concerns the RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (chapters 33-48). Points to notice: -

- a. Restoration to the LAND demands restoration to the LORD (chapter 36).
- b. Restoration in Ezekiel means restoration of the WHOLE NATION (chapter 37 verse 15 - 28; chapter 11 verses 16-20). Still future, therefore.
- c. Restoration demands a work of the Holy Spirit (chapter 37).
- d. Restoration includes the building of the Temple; this brings us into the Millennial Age (chapter 40).
- e. Restoration is followed by the outflowing river (chapter 47 verses 1 - 5). Note, the trees on the banks (chapter 47 verse 12).

- f. Restoration will mean the name given 'JEHOVAH SHAMMAH', which means THE LORD IS THERE – chapter 48 verse 35 (margin).

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The **SETTING** of the Book of Daniel is obvious from chapter 1 verse 1 & 6. i.e. Daniel was in Babylon in the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.

DANIEL is a prisoner of war in Babylon after that nation had overrun the Southern kingdom of JUDAH. He is therefore contemporary with JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, HAGGAI, ZERUBBABEL and ZECHARIAH.

He lived a long life (chapter 1 verse 21), mainly in Captivity and he exercised considerable political influence spanning the rise of the three kingdoms of Babylon, Media and Persia.

The book is largely APOCALYPTIC in style (i.e. it reveals or unveils things by the use of visions, symbolism etc.). In this way it is like the Book of the Revelation of the New Testament and has close links with that book in its prophecies.

The name Daniel means GOD IS JUDGE and the book has a great deal to do with the GENTILE WORLD POWERS rather than with God's own people, the Jews.

Note the various KINGS in relation to Daniel: -

A. NEBUCHADNEZZAR

- i. The forgotten dream of chapter 2 is revealed and interpreted. The four parts of this image correspond to four successive world Powers.
- ii. The Golden Image of chapter 3 challenges the loyalty of the three men to God (The image was probably of Nebuchadnezzar himself). Note now God chooses to deliver His loyal subjects, and the "but if not" of verse 18.

B. BELSHAZZAR

- i. Chapter 5 verses 1-4 depicts the Godlessness of the Court Feast and the desecration of the golden vessels from Jerusalem.
- ii. The mystic handwriting on the wall foretells his doom and that of the Empires – chapter 5 verses 5-31.
- iii. The visions of the Beasts (chapter 7) and the ram and Goat (chapter 8) are also in this king's reign and again speak of Gentile World Powers.

C. DARIUS

- i. Note Daniel's high position in chapter 6 verse 1. There follows the determination of his enemies to achieve his downfall (verse 4).
- ii. Loyalty to Jehovah lands him in the Lion's Den but he is delivered from any harm (verse 22). Note Daniel's insistence on DAILY PRAYER in chapter 6 verse 10.
- iii. The VERY IMPORTANT prophecy of the Seventy Weeks comes in the reign of Darius and is recorded in chapter 9 verses 25-27. It is, of course, Messianic in character and has links with the New Testament as to the Second Coming of Christ, the Tribulation and the Millennium.

D. CYRUS

Whilst Cyrus is mentioned, most of chapters 10 to 12 deal with the course of history prophetically during the “gap” between week 69 and 70, week 70 itself, and on beyond.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

HOSEA is the first of the so-called MINOR Prophets in our Bibles. There are twelve of these and they are only called 'Minor' because of their shortness when compared with the three MAJOR Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Hosea prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam (chapter 1 verse 1) to the NORTHERN KINGDOM of Israel, who he also refers to as EPHRAIM (32 times) and the theme throughout the book is that GOD IS LOVING, just as Isaiah insists that GOD IS HOLY.

The kings who reigned during Hosea's ministry are listed in chapter 1 verse 1; they cover a long period so that we can only say that Hosea prophesied between about 790 and 730 B.C. He is partly contemporary with Amos and Isaiah and could well have been the last prophet before the dispersion of Israel in 722 B.C.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

- i. Chapters 1 - 3. The prophet's personal tragic domestic experiences.
- ii. Chapters 4 –14. God's dealings with a similarly unfaithful Israel.

THE PICTURES OF THE BOOK

- i. A broken marriage relationship. chapters 1-3. Love, loyalty and fidelity all spurned.
- ii. This is shown as Ephraim joined, not to Jehovah the true husband, but to IDOLS (chapter 4 verse 17).
- iii. The result is seen in a cake not turned (chapter 7 verse 8) – distasteful - and in the empty vine (chapter 10 verse 1) - unfruitful.
- iv. The restored relationship achieved by the buying back of Gomer – chapter 3 verse 2 = God's call to Israel in the constantly repeated cry -"RETURN" - chapter 14.

THE BRIGHT HOPE OF THE BOOK

- i. The Valley of Achor is to become a door of HOPE (see Joshua 7: 24). That is to say, sin CONFESSED, JUDGED and FORSAKEN (chapter 11 verses 7,8).
- ii. God's healing will follow (chapter 14 verses 1 - 6).
- iii. God's love still seeks to: -
REDEEM -by payment (chapter 3 verses 1 - 2).
RANSOM –deliverance (chapters 13 & 14).
- iv. He will do this freely (chapter 14 verse 4) and refreshingly (chapter 14 verse 5).

THE THEME OF THE BOOK

In spite of Israel's backsliding and waywardness, they are still God's chosen people. His love prompts Him ever to seek their good and their restoration, even at a cost to Himself. So might we say of John 3: 16.

THE BOOK OF JOEL

GENERAL INFORMATION

Nothing is known regarding the prophet Joel beyond the first verse of the book which refers to him as the 'Son of Pethuel'. His name means 'Jehovah is my God'. The date of the prophecy cannot be definitely fixed although the fact of its being only the second of the Minor prophets suggests that it could well be one of the earliest. Some people think he was a contemporary of Hosea or Amos. Somewhere about 800BC would then be a reasonable supposition.

Joel speaks to the SOUTHERN KINGDOM of JUDAH and has special reference to Jerusalem, the capital. There is no reference to Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

The key phrase of the book is 'THE DAY OF THE LORD' (mentioned in chapter 1 verse 15, chapter 2 verses 1, 11 & 31, chapter 3 verse 14). Two main divisions may be noticed: -

- a. Chapter 1 verse 1 to chapter 2 verse 17. The Day of the Lord = Judgement (call to repentance).
- b. Chapter 2 verse 18 to chapter 3 verse 21. The Coming of the Spirit = Mercy (restoration).

CHAPTER ONE

- i. The UTTER DEVASTATION caused by a swarm of locusts (verses 1-12).
- ii. This is a picture of God's utter devastation of the land in judgement (verses 13-20).

CHAPTER TWO

- i. Zion (Jerusalem) must be warned with the TRUMPET (verse 1). This is the method of sounding a warning on the battlefield.
- ii. Just as the swarm of locusts in chapter 1 invade the land, so verses 3-11 indicate to the prophet of the future invasion of the land by a foreign 'army' (verse 2).
- iii. Since the day of the Lord will then be upon them, the call to repentance sounds clearly (verses 11,12). It is not a matter of bewailing their fate by torn robes but of repentance which is from a broken heart. All conditions of people in the land are called to this repentance (verses 12-17).
- iv. The Lord WILL answer (verse 19); the enemy will be pushed back (verse 20); the land restored (verse 22); the loss repaired and prosperity recovered (verses 23-27).
- v. Then comes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (verses 28-32). This was partially fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2: 16-21).

CHAPTER THREE

- i. Joel now goes into the future realm of prophecy and is concerned with the "FINAL" Day of the Lord.

- ii. The Gentile Nations are challenged for their treatment of God's people (verse 12). God's power will be shown (verse 16) and there will be the sifting out at God's time of Judgement (verse 14).
- iii. The final restoration of Judah in the purposes of God is shown in the concluding verses of the book (verses 17-21).

THE BOOK OF AMOS

THE DATE

The date of the prophecy of Amos (about 790BC) can be roughly assessed by chapter 1 verse 1 (Uzziah, King of Judah, is the same as Azariah in 2 Kings 15: 1). Jeroboam, King of Israel, is the second king of that name in the Northern Kingdom. The date of the earthquake mentioned is not known but it is referred to in Zechariah chapter 14 verse 5.

THE MAN

- a. Amos came from Tekoa, an obscure place about 12 miles south of Jerusalem, in Judah (chapter 1 verse 1).
- b. He was a simple herdsman (chapter 7 verse 14).
- c. He was not descended from any priestly or prophetic family (chapter 7 verse 14).
- d. He was unwanted and his message rejected (chapter 7 verse 12).

(N.B. It annoyed the priests of ISRAEL to be addressed by a man from JUDAH)

THE SUBJECT

God's coming Judgement Amos shows that this will fail: -

- a. On the surrounding nations because of their treatment of God's people (Syria, Philistia, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, Moab – chapter 1 verse 3 - chapter 2 verse 3).
- b. On Judah (Southern Kingdom) because of disobedience to God's word (chapter 2 verses 4,5).
- c. On Israel (Northern Kingdom) because of the UNREALITY OF THEIR RELIGIOUS LIFE (chapter 2 verse 6 onwards).

The strange phrase recurring in these statements of judgement – 'for three transgressions and for four' may be taken as meaning that some of their deeds was enough to justify judgement but that all of their deeds was more than sufficient justification (see chapter 1 verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 13; chapter 2 verses 1, 4, 6).

THE PICTURES

As so often in the O.T. pictorial language is used with dramatic effect.

- a. Israel had two main sanctuaries - at BETHEL & GILGAL. These were crowded but the worship was a HOLLOW SHAM (chapter 5 verse 21). God was calling them from this to HIMSELF (chapter 4 verses 6,8-11).
- b. Things were rapidly coming to a climax, and God would shortly have to intervene unless repentance showed itself. The pictures of LOCUSTS (chapter 7 verse 1), FIRE (chapter 7 verse 4), PLUMBLINE (chapter 7 verse 7), SUMMER FRUIT (chapter 8 verse 1), and the ALTAR (chapter 9 verse 1 and chapter 3 verse 14) all foreshadow this.
- c. The social injustices of the day (chapter 2 verse 6) - the luxurious ease of the rich (chapter 6 verses 4 - 6) - the irritation when God's laws interfere with their money making (chapter 8 verse 5) - the cheating in business dealings (chapter 8 verses 5,6) are all pointed out without fear or favour.

THE OUTCOME

Having refused to obey God's Word in the past they now face days when they will not have the opportunity of hearing that word (chapter 8 verses 11,12).

Nevertheless, the promise of God still holds out a final radiant hope of restoration down through the years (chapter 9 verses 11 - 15). Chapter 9 verses 8,9 are very significant.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of only one chapter. There are several men of this name in the Old Testament, but we cannot identify him from among them. It is likewise impossible to say when the book was written although verses 10-14 suggest that it was after the captivity of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C.

THEME

It will immediately be noticed that the book is not addressed to either Israel or Judah (i.e. God's people). It is all about the Edomites and they are denounced by the prophet because of their attitude and treatment of God's people.

THE EDMITES

- a. These were the direct descendants of ESAU, the brother of Jacob (Genesis 36: 8,21). Mount Seir is also used of them; it was a mountain range in their country. Teman (verse 9) is one of their cities and Bozrah (Amos chapter 1 verse 12) the capital.
- b. Their country was roughly based on the depression running south from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. It was also known as Idumea.
- c. The book of Obadiah shows that the bitter hatred that developed between the brothers Esau and Jacob was perpetuated in the races which they founded (Genesis 27: 41).
- d. That hatred had been further seen in Numbers 20: 14-21 when the Edomites refused to allow the children of Israel passage through their land on the way to Canaan.

THE MESSAGE

- a. Verses 1-9. Edom, in its pride, regarded itself as in an impregnable and unassailable position. (verses 3,4) These verses give a fine description of Petra, one of their cities. However, this security is not so from God's point of view (verse 6).
- b. Devastating judgement is to be their portion at last (verses 8,9).
- c. Verses 10-14. These underline Edom's rejoicing in other people's misfortune. The capture of Jerusalem is spoken of as: -
 - i. The day of destruction verse 12.
 - ii. The day of distress verse 12.
 - iii. The day of calamity verse 13, with Edom aiding and abetting the enemy (Psalm 137: 7). They may be sure that their sin, as well as that of other nations, will find them out.
- d. Verses 17-21. Eventually God will REVERSE THE WHOLE POSITION. Edom is destroyed, God's people are the victors and He will be vindicated. The children of Israel will occupy the very lands that their enemies held for centuries (verses 19,20).
- e. THE LAST WORD. The Kingdom shall be the Lord's (verse 21).

THE BOOK OF JONAH

WHO WAS JONAH?

Only one person is mentioned by this name in the Old Testament outside this book. This is in 2 Kings 14: 25 and it is generally assumed that this is the same man. There the prophet is living in the reign of Jeroboam 2 of Israel, who was on the throne at about the first half of the 8th century B.C. This brings Jonah as a possible contemporary of Amos and Hosea.

WHAT WAS THE IMPORTANCE OF NINEVEH?

Nineveh was the capital of ASSYRIA. It was a large city (as mentioned by Jonah and confirmed by the archaeologists) but was finally overthrown in about 612 B.C. by the Babylonians. So far as the book of Jonah is concerned it is important as being a GENTILE CITY.

WHAT WAS THE BASIC MESSAGE?

The message embraces the recurring call of God in the Old Testament - repentance in the face of imminent judgement. It further underlines the fact that God's love is for the WHOLE WORLD - a concept that the Jewish people found very hard to swallow.

A second line of thought in the book is the story of God's dealings with His servant Jonah because of, and in spite of, his disobedience.

The book therefore is soaked in the offer of God's mercy even to Israel's bitterest enemies (Assyria), who within less than a century would be over running the land of Israel.

WHAT IS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE?

It must be noted that our Lord referred to this book (Matthew 12: 39-41) using the 'fish' incident as a forecast of His own death, burial and resurrection. He also uses the response of Nineveh to the preaching of Jonah as a warning to those of His day who rejected God and His Word, that is, Christ Himself.

By His references to Jonah and the book, our Lord stamps it with authority and authenticity.

WHAT ARE THE SALIENT POINTS OF THE STORY?

- i. Jonah is commissioned by God to go to Nineveh. He goes in the opposite direction and takes a ship to Spain. God uses a storm to discipline him.
- ii. Jonah is thrown overboard and the storm ceases; he has confessed his disobedience to the seamen. God uses the big fish to deliver His servant.
- iii. After being returned to land (Notice the Psalm of Thanksgiving in Chapter 2), Jonah is re-commissioned by God to go to Nineveh (chapter 3 verse 2).
- iv. Jonah fulfils the task and repentance is evident throughout Nineveh (chapter 3 verses 5-10).
- v. Jonah is disgusted at the result of his preaching. He complains to God (chapter 4 verse 2,3) and sits sulking under the booth he constructs by the city wall.
- vi. God steps in and miraculously provides a gourd to shelter him. Then God sends a worm to destroy the plant, leaving Jonah exposed to the vehement east wind; Jonah is now at the end of his tether.

- vii. God then taught Jonah that He IS a God of compassion and that His servant must learn the lesson of God's great desire to spare rather than to destroy. Jonah must also learn that GOD is SOVEREIGN in all He does.

THE BOOK OF MICAH

HIS CONTEMPORIES.

Reference to Micah 1: 1 shows the names of various kings during whose reign he prophesied. Isaiah 1: 1 and Hosea 1: 1 show some of the same kings, whilst Amos 1: 1 is a little earlier. At this period in the history of Israel and Judah, therefore, God was saying a lot to His people. This underlines His graciousness and mercy in the face of anticipated judgement.

HIS BACKGROUND

Very little is known concerning Micah, coming as he did from almost obscure surroundings - a village near Gath in the southwest part of Judah. Yet he speaks against the sins of the town dwellers. His name means 'like Jehovah'; he emphasizes that God is 'INCOMPARABLE' and was he active between 758 and 700 BC.

HIS THEME

Micah speaks out against the SOCIAL INJUSTICES of his day (chapter 2 verse 2). He claims Divine authority and inspiration (chapter 3 verse 8) and shows the rottenness of society in every branch (chapter 3 verse 11), since personal gain is the ruling factor.

Such conditions can only result in the coming of night (chapter 3 verse 6) in national experience, not only materially but, what is far worse, spiritually (chapter 3 verse 6). Finally, the destruction of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon are foreshadowed (chapter 4 verse 10).

The Lord's call to His people (chapter 6) is graphic and, as so often in the Old Testament, based on His redemptive work in their past history. Chapter 6 verse 8 aptly summarizes His demands.

HIS FORWARD VISION

Much of the second half of the book is looking to the future. Deliverance is spoken of and the preservation of the REMNANT OF JACOB (chapter 5 verses 7,8) is an important point to note.

The prophecy of chapter 5 verse 2 is connected with the birth of our Lord in Matthew chapter 2 verse 5 but it also points forward further still to the MESSIANIC AGE (chapter 4 verses 1-7).

HIS FINAL WORD

Micah reminds Israel and Judah that their God is a PARDONING GOD (chapter 7 verse 18), and a COMPASSIONATE GOD (chapter 7 verse 19) and a COVENANT KEEPING GOD (chapter 7 verse 20).

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

THE AUTHOR AND HIS TIMES

Nothing is known of Nahum personally. Chapter 1 verse 1 speaks of him as an Elkoshite which could mean that he came from a village in Galilee or another village in the southwest of Judaea.

His name means 'COMFORTER' or 'CONSOLATION', and this is certainly an apt description of his message. He speaks to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the Northern Kingdom of Israel having already been overrun by Assyria.

The date can be stated as being between about 664 BC, when the city of No was overthrown (chapter 3 verse 8) and 612 BC when Nineveh was sacked (chapter 1 verse 1, chapter 3 verse 7). It is thought that 620 BC is a reasonable assumption.

This date would make him almost contemporary with Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah.

HIS HEARERS AND THE MESSAGE

The message may be summed up in two verses – chapter 1 verses 7,15. He is addressing Judah, declaring good news to them of deliverance from Assyria. There is no rebuke of Judah, the note of a call to repentance in the face of coming judgement so often sounded by the Old Testament prophets being strikingly absent.

THE ENEMY AND THEIR DESTRUCTION

The prophecy of Nahum has been described as the 'CRY OF AN OUTRAGED CONSCIENCE'. It is uttered against Nineveh, the capital of ASSYRIA (chapter 1 verse 1), the dominating power of that day. It will be recalled that some 150 years previously, Jonah had preached against that city and there had been repentance - it had evidently not been maintained.

The greatness and majestic power of God is vividly portrayed in chapter 1 in order to encourage Judah whilst under the heel of their cruel oppressors. Chapter 1 verse 13 holds the glorious promise of deliverance for them.

This time God will make an UTTER END of Assyria (chapter 1 verses 8,9,15). (The destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. was the end of Assyria as a world power and her place was taken by the Babylonian Empire)

In chapter 2, Nineveh trusts in her own strength and security but chapter 2 verse 13 shows that God is as supreme as ever. Verses 11 and 12 reflect the fact that the national symbol of Assyria was a lion, which, is frequently depicted on the monuments and walls unearthed by the archaeologists.

Nineveh will have no better chance to escape than did the great city of No in Egypt (chapter 3 verse 8). From chapter 3 verse 12 to the end of the book Nineveh is called to prepare herself for the coming siege and destruction. Nevertheless, finally that destruction is inevitable (verse 19). A timely warning for all who oppose God and ill-treat His people.

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

BY WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

All we know is in verse 1 of chapter 1. It is, however, interesting to note that Habakkuk calls himself a PROPHET, the only one in the Old Testament prophetic writings to do so.

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Northern kingdom of Israel has been overrun (722 BC); Nineveh has fallen (612 BC); the Chaldeans have come, or are soon coming, to power; the captivity for Judah is near (586 BC). The book can therefore be dated about 600 BC, and this makes Habakkuk contemporary with Jeremiah.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

About two thirds of the book may be described as conversation with God. The prophet is concerned with Judah and is trying to answer two questions regarding God's dealings with that nation in judgement - a) Why does God allow His people to be punished by a nation more wicked than themselves? and b) How long will God allow such a situation to go on?

It will be seen that Habakkuk is seeking to deal with the same questions NATIONALLY as Job attempted to deal with INDIVIDUALLY. Both are an attempt to justify God to men.

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

A. CHAPTER 1, VERSES 5-11 and 14-17.

Here are set out the characteristics of the Chaldeans, who God will use to punish Judah. These are: -

- i. Bitter and hasty, relentless and irresistible (chapter 1 verse 6).
- ii. Terrible and dreadful = cruel (chapter 1 verse 7).
- iii. Swift, fierce and violent (chapter 1 verses 8,9).
- iv. Proud, arrogant and self-confident (chapter 1 verse 10).
- v. Aiming at world domination (chapter 1 verses 14-17).

B. CHAPTER 1, VERSES 12, 13.

The characteristics of God: -

Eternal, Holy, Almighty, Judge, Pure. Yet He is using the Chaldeans against His people.

C. CHAPTER 2 VERSES 1-4.

The prophet awaits an answer (revelation) to his problem from God. It is a two-fold answer: -

- i. Judah should flee from the judgement to come. The faithfulness of the righteous will be his salvation - verse 4.

- ii. The Chaldees will suffer the five WOES (verses 6-19). Note the detailed charges against them. Pride will be their downfall.

D. CHAPTER 3.

This is a prayer that is also a SONG OF PRAISE. The MAJESTY and HOLINESS of God in chapter 2 verse 20 and chapter 1 verses 12,13 is reflected in the GLORY of chapter 3 verses 3,4 and the POWER of chapter 3 verse 10.

Finally, there is the exhortation to the righteous (God's people) to hold on by FAITH for eventual justification (chapter 3 verses 17-19), just as Habakkuk, himself declares his own faith – 'Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (verse 18).

Note that chapter 2 verse 4 is quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10: 38 making it a message for all time.

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

THE TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED

Zephaniah is the last of the PRE-EXILIC prophets in the Old Testament. Chapter 1 verse 1 shows that he exercised his Ministry in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom (2 Chronicles chapters 34 and 35 or 2 Kings chapters 22 & 23). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1: 2).

Josiah was one of Judah's good kings, reigning from about 641 to 610 BC. During his reign (about 621 BC) he called the people back to God and His Law. Zephaniah was probably instrumental in preparing the ground for this and most commentators would put the date of his book at around 627 BC.

It is interesting to note Zephaniah's genealogy in chapter 1 verse 1, leading back to a Hizekiah. This name is another form of Hezekiah and it is therefore not unlikely that Zephaniah is directly descended from Hezekiah, another of the good kings of Judah (2 Kings 18: 3).

THE MESSAGE HE DECLARED

Zephaniah speaks of the DAY OF THE LORD and does so from a two-sided point of view: -

- a. GOD'S DAY OF JUDGMENT (chapter 1 verse 1 to chapter 3 verse 7). First of all, this will be on Judah and will issue in a detailed searching out of the life of the nation. It will be INESCAPABLE and a day of DARKNESS & TERROR (chapter 1 verses 15-18). Silver and gold will not buy it off (chapter 1 verse 18).

In view of this coming day of judgement, Judah is called upon to OBEY; to HEED; to TRUST and to DRAW NEAR to God (chapter 3 verse 2). The call is unheeded, except superficially under Josiah's reforms.

Secondly, God's day of judgement will be devastating on the enemies of God's people. These are listed as Philistia [the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron] (chapter 2 verse 4); Moab and Ammon (chapter 2 verse 8); Ethiopia (chapter 2 verse 12) and Nineveh (chapter 2 verse 13).

- b. GOD'S DAY OF RESTORATION (chapter 3 verses 3-20). Like Jeremiah, Zephaniah foresees not only God's people being punished by going into EXILE in Babylon but also, beyond that, to the RESTORATION of the REMNANT after 70 years (chapter 3 verse 12,13). This involves those who are true to Him.

The prophecy closes on a note of PRAISE and THANKSGIVING (chapter 3 verses 14,17).

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

This is the first of the POST EXILIC prophets (i.e. after the 70 years of captivity that Judah suffered in Babylon). Haggai is contemporary with Zechariah, prophesying in the second year of the reign of Darius (about 520 BC).

Some of the background of the book can be read in the book of Ezra 5:1-2. It must be remembered that, just as the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into Exile in at least three parties over a number of years, so they returned under three different leaders, namely, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, also in separate parties. Haggai chapter 1 verse 1 shows Zerubbabel to be the leader in this case and his contribution is largely recorded in the book of Ezra (see Ezra 5: 1; 6: 14).

The book of Haggai may be summarised as follows: -

1. **EXHORTATION** The returned prisoners of war are to **CONSIDER THEIR WAYS**. They have rushed to build themselves luxury houses whilst God's house lies in ruins (chapter 1 verse 4).
2. **CONDEMNATION** Their failure to put **GOD FIRST** in this respect has resulted in judgement in their material prosperity (chapter 1 verses 6-11).
3. **ENCOURAGEMENT** As and when God's call is answered the situation changes. In chapter 1 verse 12, all must learn obedience and fear of the Lord. Then comes the assurance that the Lord is with them, this assurance coming through Haggai (chapter 1 verse 13; chapter 2 verse 4).
4. **COMPARISON** Chapter 2 verse 3 - the Temple, that glorious structure of Solomon lay in ruins, its glory gone. Those who remembered it before they went into captivity will see greater glory in the new House of God they are to erect (chapter 2 verse 9).
5. **PROMISE** Before they obeyed God's word there was judgement in the land (chapter 2 verses 15 -17) but immediately they turned to walk in God's way there was blessing and promise (chapter 2 verses 18,19). The promise of victory as they did God's work in the face of God's enemies comes in chapter 2 verses 20 - 23. Later, they were to need this promise on which to lean (see Ezra chapter 4).

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai prophesying in the second year of the reign of Darius (about 520 BC). As with Haggai the background can be read in Ezra (see Ezra 5: 1; chapter 6 verse 14) and deals with the return of the Children of Israel from their 70 years captivity in Babylon, foretold by Jeremiah and others. Their return was led by Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel.

One of the key phrases of the book is 'THE LORD OF HOSTS', which points to its basic message of God's Power being employed on behalf of His people. Like Haggai, therefore, it is a message of encouragement, and some have called Zechariah the 'PROPHET OF HOPE'.

1. ENCOURAGEMENT (Chapters 1-6)

Much of the book is in symbol form and in this section, we have the following: -

- a. THE MAN AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES (chapter 1 verses 8,10). 'Good and comfortable words' (chapter 1 verse 13) are spoken to them.
- b. THE FRAYED HORNS (chapter 1 verses 18,21). The Gentile powers are now robbed of their power to hurt God's people.
- c. THE MEASURING LINE (chapter 2 verse 1). The rebuilding of Jerusalem is about to commence.
- d. THE BRANCH (chapter 3 verse 8). The renewal of the priestly office and the promise of the BRANCH = MESSIAH.
- e. THE CANDLESTICK (chapter 4 verses 1-6). The constant supply of the Spirit of God.
- f. THE FLYING ROLL (chapter 5 verses 1-3). God's Word of judgement on the earth.
- g. THE EPHAH (chapter 5 verse 6). A picture of wickedness being judged.
- h. THE FOUR CHARIOTS (chapter 6 verse 1). These are spoken of as the 'four spirits of the heavens' (verses 5-7) and they tell of Divine Power.

2. PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY (Chapters 7-11)

In Chapter 7, God reiterates to Zechariah past history and underlines clearly the reasons for their Dispersion and Captivity (chapter 7 verse 14).

In Chapter 8, the KEY to God's dealings with His people is in verse 2, where God is spoken of as being very jealous for them. This Chapter is full of joyful anticipation of what God is now going to do in His returned and restored people.

Note the following references which are quoted in the New Testament: -

Palm Sunday (chapter 9 verse 9) – John 12: 13-15.
Thirty pieces of silver (chapter 11 verse 13) – Matthew 27: 9,10.
Wounds on the Cross (chapter 12 verse 10) - John 19: 34.
Wounds on the Cross (chapter 13 verse 6) - John 20: 25.
The smitten Shepherd (chapter 13 verse 7) – Matthew 26: 31.
The fountain for sin (chapter 13 verse 1) - Luke 22: 20; Hebrews 9: 9, 14.
1 John 1: 7

3. THE FUTURE (Chapter 14)

Although there is the prophetic strain in many places in this book, it comes to a glorious climax in Chapter 14: -

- a. The Lord's Return verse 4.
- b. The Lord's as King verse 9.
- c. The Lord's sovereignty verses 16,17.
- d. The Lord's Holiness verses 20,21.

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BOOK

The book of Malachi is the LAST BOOK of the Old Testament and ends with the possibility of God coming to smite the earth with a CURSE (chapter 4 verse 6). What a contrast to the last two verses of the New Testament (Revelation 22: 20,21). It is also the LAST BOOK of the Prophets and from this point onwards God has nothing more to say until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1: 1).

THE DATE AND AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

The word Malachi means 'My Messenger' but it is impossible to say whether this is the translation of the name or a description of the prophet's role in proclaiming the Word of God. All scholars are agreed that the book is to be dated after the return from the 70 years' Exile in Babylon; about 420 BC would be fitting. The Jews have returned under Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel and the Temple has been rebuilt.

THE BURDEN OF THE MESSAGE

Malachi is very concerned about the neglect into which the service of God's House had fallen and the first part of the book (chapter 1 verse 1 - chapter 2 verse 17) is particularly addressed to the PRIESTS on the subject of Zion's profanity.

He is also concerned, however, in the second part (chapter 3 verse 1 - chapter 4 verse 6), with Zion's prosperity and so encourages the PEOPLE with the hope of a glorious future prospect.

SOME DETAILS TO NOTICE

- a. The questioning of God that takes place. 'WHEREIN' is found in chapter 1 verses 6,7, chapter 2 verse 17, chapter 3 verses 7,8. Notice also 'YE SAY' - arguments which the prophet answers.
- b. The fact that anything less than a perfect offering is no offering at all (chapter 1 verses 8,13,14). See Deuteronomy 15: 21.
- c. The priests are merely doing their job for what they can get out of it (chapter 1 verse 10).
- d. The charge that the priests have forsaken the COVENANT made centuries ago (chapter 2 verses 4 -8).
- e. Their twisted thinking regarding the prosperity of the wicked (chapter 2 verse 18), and the certainty of judgement.
- f. When the Lord comes there will be a searing purifying of the priesthood (chapter 3 verses 1-3), resulting in an acceptable offering once more (chapter 3 verse 4). There will also be judgement on the moral and social life of the nation (chapter 3 verse 5).
- g. As a result of this return to God, He will receive that which is His due in the tithes, and they will receive their reward in outpoured blessing (chapter 3 verses 8-10).
- h. Chapter 3 verses 16-18 may be regarded as a commentary on the words of 2 Timothy 2: 19 - 'The Lord knoweth them that are His'.

FINALLY

One cannot help noticing that Malachi anticipates the coming of the Lord, which is to be preceded by the coming of Elijah (chapter 4 verse 5). The fulfilment of this prophecy is identified with the coming of John the Baptist by our Lord in Matthew 11: 10,14.

In his proclamations, Malachi shows himself truly to be MY MESSENGER, yet he indicates the coming of a GREATER MESSENGER, who is the Lord Himself (chapter 3 verse 1; chapter 4 verse 2).

FURTHER INFORMATION

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