

Liturgical Introductions to Scripture

**Brief introductions
to each section, each book, and each chapter
of the Bible for use in the *lectio continua*
public reading of Scripture**

Table of Contents

Preface	5
Guidelines	7
Introduction to the Bible	9
Introduction to the Pentateuch	11
Introduction to the Wisdom Books	95
Introduction to Hebrew Poetry	103
Introduction to the Prophets	143
Introduction to the Gospel & Acts	207
Introduction to the Epistles	237
Lesson Count for Each Book of the Bible	293
6-Year Plans I & II for Bible Reading	295
Bibliography	291

Preface

Might it possibly be the case that some ministers fail to read Scripture in public worship because they feel inadequately acquainted with the text? Might it also be the case that the effectiveness of the public reading of Scripture might be enhanced by succinct introductions to the chapters to be read? Behind the following work is the hunch that both of these questions ought to be answered in the affirmative. It is to promote more Scripture reading in worship services that it is offered.

My ideal is a simple single sentence introduction to a chapter in the Bible. It has proven to be difficult to achieve this ideal, but it has been my goal. Too much introduction takes up too much time, and often fails to illuminate the listener. Simplicity and brevity are best. This is a work in progress. I would appreciate input from you, particularly if you have sources that have a particular genius for brief, succinct, context-establishing and content-summarizing introductions.

Guidelines

The following guidelines are offered to help those implementing *lectio continua* Scripture reading in their churches. Consider the following.

1. *Read a chapter of each Testament in each service*, as recommended by the Westminster *Directory for the Public Worship of God*. By this we mean read not *slavishly* but *roughly* a chapter. Some chapters are long and need to be broken up into several pieces. Other sections of Scripture are not well-suited to the public reading, and so may need to be skipped over. In other words, the reading should be of *suitable* length. But the basic guideline should be a chapter per Testament per service.

2. *Read the Testament not being preached*. This guideline is proposed as a way of maintaining biblical balance. If the Gospel of Matthew is being preached in the morning service, then read Old Testament books along with the text from Matthew being preached. If the books of Samuel and Kings are being preached in the evening, then read a gospel, Acts, or an epistle alongside of the Samuel/Kings text being preached.

3. *Read passages that are accessible to the congregation*. It would probably prove unwise to begin the implementation of a program of *lectio continua* readings in the book of Leviticus. It can be done, but it is not recommended. Start with the Gospels, Acts, Psalms, Epistles, Proverbs, or an Old Testament narrative.

4. *Consistent with this, skip over (with descriptive comments) exceptionally remote or difficult texts*. Passages such as Exodus 25-31 (describing the Tabernacle and its furnishings, Joshua 15-21 (outlining the distribution of the Promised Land to the 12 Tribes), 1 Chronicles 1-9 (genealogies), Nehemiah 3 (describing the placement of workers on the walls of Jerusalem) ordinarily are best handled with a summary comment while transitioning to the next text to be read.

5. *Vary scriptural types.* It would probably be unwise to plow through one Minor Prophet after another, or straight through Old Testament narrative from Genesis to Nehemiah. Instead, vary the diet. Move from gospel to Old Testament narrative to epistle to Old Testament poetry to Acts to Old Testament wisdom and so on.

6. *Provide brief introductions to books and chapters.* By “brief” we mean normally a few sentences lasting 15-30 seconds. A few comments setting the stage of the text to be read or anticipating a difficulty in the text can do much to enhance the spiritual profitability of the reading. The following introductions have been written to provide assistance formulating these introductions.

7. *Read slowly, clearly and with nuance.* J. C. Ryle credited the reading of Scripture in the context of worship as being instrumental in his own conversion. The text was Ephesians 2:8, described by J. I. Packer as skillfully read in church “with significant pauses, thus achieving great emphasis” (J. I. Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle* [Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002], p. 27). Scripture may be read with more or less skill. Our final concern is that care be taken to read the Scripture well. The reading should not be rushed. Neither should the reading drag. The text to be read should be studied carefully enough that it can be read with comprehension and nuance, enhancing the understanding of the congregation. There is a direct relationship between the skill with which Scripture is read and the value of that reading for the listeners. Edification, after all, is the goal at which we are aiming. Substantial portions of Scripture should be read in the assemblies of God’s people because this is what God required of them in Bible times, what was practiced by the Patristic church and Reformation-era Reformed churches, and above all, because the reading of Scripture edifies the people of God.

Introduction to the Bible

The Bible consists of 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, and is an infallible role of faith and practice. The Old Testament may be divided into five sections:

The Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy)

The Histories (Joshua – Esther)

Wisdom (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)

Hebrew Poetry (Psalms & Song of Solomon)

Prophets (Isaiah – Malachi)

The New Testament may be divided into three sections:

The Gospels (Matthew – John)

Acts

Epistles (Romans – Revelation)

Written over a period of a thousand years, with dozens of writers, writing on three continents, these 66 books nevertheless form a coherent whole, teaching a unified message of God's grace to humanity in Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Pentateuch

Genesis is the first of the five books of Moses, commonly called the Law, Torah, or Pentateuch (from the Greek *pentateuchos*, meaning “five volume [book]”). The tradition of Mosaic authorship is ancient. Moses is referred to as the author of the Pentateuch by Old Testament authors (Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1; 2 Chronicles 25:4), by Jesus (John 5:46), and by Luke (24:27). He is identified within the Pentateuch as the author of particular sections (e.g. Exodus 24:3-7 and Deuteronomy).

Author

Though Genesis itself is anonymous, Moses should be understood to be its primary author.

Date and Occasion

Genesis was written some time in the fifteenth century B.C., though some place-names and grammar show later editing. Its title is taken from the Greek title *genesis*, meaning “origin.” It was written as part of the five-book Pentateuch (Gen-Deut) to explain the origins and history of God’s covenant people and their institutions (e.g. Sabbath [2:1-4] and circumcision [17:9-14]; also Passover [Ex 12], temple/tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrificial system [Ex 20-Lev 27]).

Message

Genesis traces the history of humanity from creation to the fall to the flood as a backdrop to the election of Abraham in chapter 12. The rest of Genesis is about Abraham and his descendants from Isaac, to Jacob, to Joseph, to Israel’s sojourn in Egypt. Indeed, the rest of the Bible is about Abraham’s family, chosen from out of the world in order to be a blessing to the world, supremely through his Seed, Jesus the Christ (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8,29).

Genesis 1

The six days of creation, culminating in the creation of man in the image of God, as male and female, with dominion over the creatures.

Genesis 2

The seventh day of creation (2:1-3), the creation of Adam and Eve in detail, a description of the Garden of Eden, and the establishment of the institution of marriage (2:4-25).

Genesis 3

The fall of man described and the promise of a Savior given, setting the stage for the story of the rest of the Bible.

Genesis 4

Cain, the ungodly offspring of Adam and Eve, refuses to offer worship as God required, murders Abel, the godly offspring who did (verses 1-16); evil then escalates from Cain to Lamech, and finally, the godly line through Seth is reestablished (verses 17-25).

Genesis 5, 6

Read 5:1-3; 22-32; 6:1-25

Genesis 5 records genealogy of Adam through Seth to Noah. It begins

¹ This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named Man when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

It includes Enoch, who along with Elijah are the only Old Testament saints not to experience death:

²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Genesis 6 explains the conditions that make necessary the flood, and the covenant through which Noah will be saved.

Genesis 7

Noah, the ark, and the flood.

Genesis 8

After nearly 11 months on the ark, Noah and his family disembark, and God promises never to flood the earth again. The closing verse of chapter 8 was put to effective use by

Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960) in his hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.”

Genesis 9

God announces the blessings of His covenant upon Noah, his descendants, and all creation.

Genesis 10, 11

Read Gen 11:1-11; 24-32

Genesis 10 records the descendants of Noah as they multiply and father nations. Genesis 11: the tower of Babel and the scattering of the nations (*read Genesis 11:1-11*). The descendants of Noah through the godly line of Shem, father of the Semites, leading to Abraham, are listed in verses 12-32 (*read 11:24-32*).

Genesis 12

Chapter 12 marks the great divide in the book of Genesis, and indeed the whole Bible. Humanity as a whole, the subject of chapters 1-11, recedes into the background as Abram and his descendants come into focus, where they remain the center of attention until the last chapter of the Book of Revelation. Yet they are chose and blessed, ultimately, that they might be a blessing to “all the families of the earth” (verse 3).

Genesis 13

Abram, Sarai, and Lot leave Egypt and settle in southern Palestine, the Negeb, where they prosper. Conflicts between Abram’s and Lot’s herdsmen leads to a separation. Lot, who should have deferred to his uncle, instead chose the most fertile land, a disastrous decision, bringing him into immediate proximity with the evils of Sodom. Abram settles in Canaan, the land of promise.

Genesis 14

Abram rescues Lot from the King of Elam and encounters Melchizedek, King of Salem.

Genesis 15

God promises Abram a son, countless descendants and the land of Canaan, and confirms His promise with a covenant. Abram believes these gospel promises of God and his faith is counted as righteousness (Rom 4:3ff; Gal 3:6ff; Jas 2:23ff).

Genesis 16

Abraham and Sarai fail to wait upon God and make use of unlawful means to produce an heir, leading to the birth of Ishmael through Sarai's maid Hagar and unending conflict between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac. This perhaps is the classic case of failing to wait upon God for Him to fulfill His promises according to His own timing.

Genesis 17

Circumcision is given as a sign of God's covenant with Abram, now Abraham, and the birth of a son who shall be called Isaac through Sarai, now Sarah, again is promised.

Genesis 18

Abraham is promised a son through Sarah within the year (verses 10-15); Abraham intercedes on behalf of doomed Sodom (verses 16-33).

Genesis 19

The perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah and its destruction (verse 1-29); shameful incidents involving Lot and his daughters (vv30-38).

Genesis 20

Abraham's cowardly deception courts moral disaster prevented only by the restraining grace of God.

Genesis 21

The birth of Isaac and the departure of Ishmael (verses 1-21), conflict which the Apostle Paul utilizes as an allegory of the dichotomy between law and grace, slavery and liberty, in Galatians 4:21ff. Abraham's covenant with Abimelech (verses 22-34).

Genesis 22

Abraham is tested through the offering of Isaac, his son, his only son (vv 12-16), a type which foreshadows the offering of the only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16).

Genesis 23

The death and burial of Sarah in a field purchased from Ephron of Machpelah. Middle Eastern bartering conventions are evident as Ephron offers to give Abraham the site and ultimately asks an extravagant amount, forcing Abraham to pay a face-saving price.

Genesis 24:1-28

Abraham seeks a bride for Isaac among his own people rather than the unbelieving Canaanites. The Lord leads his servant to Rebekah, a young, attractive, virtuous, and generous girl.

Genesis 24:29-67

Rebekah becomes Isaac's wife.

Genesis 25

The death of Abraham and yet the continuation of the promises of God to his descendants through the births of Jacob and Esau (verses 1-26). Esau, however, despises his birthright (verses 27-34).

Genesis 26

God reaffirms His covenant with Abraham's offspring through Isaac. He settles amongst the Philistines and prospers. Esau's waywardness continues.

Genesis 27:1-29

Rebekah and Jacob conspire to steal Esau's blessing, his right as the firstborn, another classic case of failing to wait upon the Lord for Him to fulfill His purposes (see Gen 16).

Genesis 27:30-46

Isaac and Esau learn of Jacob's deception, through whom God sovereignly fulfills the promise that the older (Esau) shall serve

the younger (Jacob), and through Jacob the promise of the Messiah shall be fulfilled. (Gen 25:23; Rom 9:10-13)

Genesis 28

Jacob sent to Mesopotamia to find a wife among the daughters of Laban, brother of his mother Rebekah, demonstrating that though confused about many things, the patriarchs and matriarchs understood the importance of marrying within the faith. We read of “Jacob’s Ladder,” connecting heaven and earth, with which Jesus identifies with Himself in John 1:51.

Genesis 29

Deceitful Jacob, whose name means to deceive or cheat, labors seven years for Rachel. He meets his match and more as he is deceived by her father Laban (verses 1-30); the birth of Jacob’s first four sons through Leah (verses 31-35).

Genesis 30:1-24

The births of the sons of Jacob, including the birth of Joseph through the heretofore barren Rachel.

Genesis 30:25-43

Jacob prospers in the service of his father-in-law Laban, though his attempts at cheating continue.

Genesis 31:1-21

Jacob, after 14 years of service, flees from Laban with all his household.

Genesis 31:22-55

Laban and his men overtake Jacob; then make a covenant at Mizpah agreeing not to harm each other.

Genesis 32

Jacob fears his encounter with his estranged brother Esau. He wrestles with God, and is given a new name, Israel, symbolic of the transformation that has taken place through this encounter with God.

Genesis 33

The reunion of Jacob and Esau results not in the feared renewed conflict but reconciliation.

Genesis 34

The evil defilement of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, renews the threat of assimilation with unbelieving neighbors and leads to the treachery of his sons, a strange series of events by modern standards which nevertheless prevents Israel from mingling with the nations.

Genesis 35

Jacob returns to Bethel, where he had earlier dreamed of the angels ascending and descending (28:10-22), where Abraham before him had previously worshiped (12:8; 13:3,4), and God reaffirms the promises of the covenant (verses 1-15); the deaths of Rachel and Isaac and the birth of Benjamin (verses 16-29).

Genesis 36:1–37:17

Read 37:1-17

Chapter 36 records the descendants of Esau (do not read).

Chapter 37: Joseph's dreams and his brother's hostile reactions to their prophetic revelation of his eventual rule over them.

Genesis 37:18-38

Joseph is sold by his brothers into slavery and taken to Egypt.

This the first stage in a pattern of exaltation – humiliation – exaltation that foreshadows that of Christ. Exalted in his father's house, Joseph now plunges into a state of humiliation.

Genesis 38

The unrighteousness of Judah, Jacob's fourth son, is exposed.

Genesis 39

Joseph is faithful in Potiphar's household, resisting the attempts of his wife to seduce him, providing as he does so a classic example of fleeing sin. Nevertheless, Potiphar imprisons Joseph. Exaltation, again, is followed by humiliation.

Genesis 40

God gives to Joseph the interpretation of the dreams of his fellow prisoners, Pharaoh's cupbearer and his chief baker.

Genesis 41:1-36

God providentially gives to Joseph the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh's dream and its meaning.

Genesis 41:37-57

Joseph's God-given wisdom is rewarded by Pharaoh: he is made the supreme ruler in Egypt under Pharaoh. His last humiliation is followed by this final exaltation, again, foreshadowing the pattern of humiliation – exaltation found in Christ

Genesis 42:1-24

The sons of Jacob encounter their brother Joseph in Egypt, some 20 years after they had sold him into slavery.

Genesis 42:25-38

Simeon is left behind as a hostage in Egypt as his brothers report the bad news to Jacob.

Genesis 43

Joseph's brothers return to him in Egypt with their youngest brother Benjamin, to the consternation of their father Jacob.

Genesis 44

Joseph entraps his brothers resulting in a death sentence for Benjamin. Judah pleads for mercy from Joseph for the sake of Jacob his father and his youngest brother Benjamin, offering his life for Benjamin's.

Genesis 45

Joseph reveals his identity to the dismay of his brothers, yet with profound grace and profound understanding of the purposes of God.

Genesis 46

(read verses 1-7)

(read verses 26-34)

Jacob and his family travel to Egypt. (read verses 1-7). Verses 8-23 list the descendants of Jacob who accompany him. We pick up the summary in 26.

Genesis 47

Israel settles in the land of Goshen as Joseph manages Egypt's resources in time of famine.

Genesis 48

Jacob blesses Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

Genesis 49

Jacob's prophetic blessing of his sons disqualifies the elder brothers Reuben, Simeon and Levi from the blessing of the firstborn, which blessing therefore falls to Judah. Judah hereafter takes the preeminent place among the tribes of Israel. From Judah shall come the name of the land (Judea), the name of the people (Jews), the kings of Israel, and ultimately the Messiah. Jacob's death is recorded as the chapter concludes (verses 28-32).

Genesis 50

Jacob is buried in the land of Canaan in the confidence that the promises of God regarding the land promised by God to Abraham will be fulfilled. Finally, Joseph expresses his strong confidence in the sovereign purposes of God.

Author

This second “book of Moses” (Mark 12:26) is also believed (with Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy) to have been written by Moses. Its name, “Exodus,” is derived from the Greek word exodus, from which we get our word “exit,” and refers to the central event of its narrative, the departure of Israel from Egypt.

Date and Occasion

It was written sometime between the exodus event itself (c. 1450-1440 B.C.) and the death of Moses (c.1406 B.C.). It was written to record for posterity the central redemptive event of the Old Testament, as God delivered His covenant people from bondage in Egypt.

Message

Exodus demonstrates that the God of the Bible is a God of redemption, who remembers His covenant promises made to Abraham and his descendants, now a multitude in Egypt, and saves them. A redeemed people are called to be a holy people, so they are placed under the obligation to obey His law, as the children of Israel travel to Mt. Sinai, where they arrive in chapter 19 and remain through the end of Leviticus. The aim of the exodus is that a holy redeemer God should dwell among a holy redeemed people. Moses’ role as mediator, deliverer, shepherd of his people, intercessor and lawgiver, all point to Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant (Deuteronomy 18:15). The redemption of Israel, its liberation from bondage, its time in the wilderness, its goal of arrival in the promised land, anticipate the Christians’ redemption in Christ and its goal of arrival in God’s kingdom in heaven.

Exodus 1

Nearly 500 years after the death of Joseph, Israel suffers in bondage under Pharaoh’s oppressive rule (perhaps Ahmosis I [1570-1546 B.C.]).

Exodus 2

The birth of Moses, his flight to Midian in the Sinai Peninsula, and God remembers His covenant.

Exodus 3

God appears to Moses in the burning bush and reveals Himself as “I am”, the self-existent, independent, self-sufficient One. God calls Moses to serve as a deliverer, to bring Israel out of bondage in Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land.

Exodus 4

Moses returns to Egypt to deliver Israel from bondage, and Aaron is to serve as his mouthpiece. The people eagerly receive their leadership.

Exodus 5

Moses appears before Pharaoh, probably Thutmose III (1504-1450 B.C.), and demands “Let my people go.” The effect is Pharaoh’s disdain, a harshening of the condition of God’s people, and their bitter complaints against Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 6

Read 6:1-13; 6:26-29

Following the discouraging result of Moses’ first encounter with Pharaoh, God pledges to honor His covenant promises to the patriarchs and deliver Israel from bondage (read 6:1-13). Following the genealogy of verses 14-25 the narrative continues in verse 26 (read 6:26-29).

Exodus 7

Moses complained at the conclusion of chapter 6 (6:29) that he is unskilled in speech and that Pharaoh will not listen to him. God responds by promising deliverance for Israel through signs and wonders and great acts of judgment (verses 1-13). The first of these: the plague of blood is visited upon the waters of the Nile (verses 14-25).

Exodus 8

The second, third and fourth plagues fall upon Egypt: frogs, gnats, and flies, leading to the conclusion of Pharaoh's magicians, "this is the finger of God" (verse 19).

Exodus 9

The fifth, sixth, and seventh plagues: livestock destroyed, boils, hail, in each case distinguishing between the people of God and the people of Egypt. Still, Pharaoh hardened his heart, refusing to let God's people go. Yet even this fulfills God's plan who declares, "for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth." (verse 16)

Exodus 10

The eighth and ninth plagues are visited upon Egypt: locusts and darkness. Pharaoh responds first by driving the one speaking truth to him from his presence, and then with false repentance, and again driving Moses from his presence, hardening his heart even as God hardens his heart.

Exodus 11–12:20

The tenth and final plague, death of Egypt's firstborn, is threatened and Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are instituted.

Exodus 12:21-50

Passover is observed. The death angel destroys Egypt's firstborn, while he passes over the homes which have the blood of the lamb upon the lintels and doorposts, and the exodus from Egypt begins.

Exodus 13

The annual feast of unleavened bread and the consecration of the firstborn are instituted (verses 1-16); the LORD's leading of the children of Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night is recounted (verses 17-22).

Exodus 14

Israel crosses the Red Sea in the context of both internal dissension and external threat, as God supernaturally delivers His people.

Exodus 15

The victory “song of Moses” (verses 1-21); the journey continues to Sinai and continues through Shur, Marah, and Elim (verses 22-27).

Exodus 16

The LORD provides the children of Israel manna from heaven, a type of Christ, who is the bread of life (John 6:25-58).

Exodus 17

As the exodus continues, the LORD provides water for a grumbling people through the striking of a rock upon which God stands with a rod of judgment (v 6). “The rock was Christ,” says the Apostle Paul, the smitten God who provides that which saves His people (1 Corinthians 10:4). The chapter concludes with the children of Israel defeating the sons of Amalek, as long as Moses prevails for them in prayer (vv 8-16).

Exodus 18

Moses listens to the counsel of his father-in-law Jethro, finding relief from the overwhelming burden of his work by enlisting able men who will help in the work of judging Israel.

Exodus 19

The children of Israel arrive at Mt. Sinai and prepare to meet with God, the solemnity of the occasion underscored by lightning and thunder, by fire and smoke, the mountain itself trembling, and access to its slopes strictly limited.

Exodus 20

From atop Mt. Sinai God delivers His law to Moses, summarized by the Ten Commandments, the only part of the Bible written on tablets of stone by the finger of God.

Exodus 21-23

Read 23:20-33

Various moral and ceremonial laws are given from Mt. Sinai in chapters 21-23. Beginning at 23:20 God promises conquest of the land and prosperity if the children of Israel will obey His voice (read 23:20-33).

Exodus 24

The children of Israel affirm their covenant with God, sealed with the blood of sacrifice, and confirmed with a meal (v. 11).

Exodus 25-31

Read 31:1-18

Still atop Mt. Sinai directions are given to Moses for the furnishings of the tabernacle: the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the golden lampstand (ch 25); the curtains of linen, the curtains of goats hair, the veil and screen (ch 26); the bronze altar, the court of the tabernacle, and the oil for the lamp (ch 27); and the garments of the priests (ch 28). Directions are also given for the consecration of the priests and the offering of sacrifices (ch 29); the altar of incense, the anointing oil, and the incense (ch 30). We pick up the narrative in chapter 31 with the appointment of skilled craftsmen and the consecration of the Sabbath (read 31:1-18).

Exodus 32:1-18

As Moses delays on Mt. Sinai, Aaron and the people of Israel worship the “Golden Calf.” Moses intercedes on behalf of God’s rebellious people, anticipating as he does the mediation of Christ on our behalf.

Exodus 32:19-35

Moses shatters the tablets of the law upon observing the idolatry of the children of Israel with the “Golden Calf.”

Exodus 33

Israel is commanded to leave Sinai without God’s gracious presence. Moses’ intercession restores fellowship with God.

Exodus 34

The covenant, disrupted through the incident of the “golden calf,” is restored, as Moses is given a glimpse of “the backsides” of God (KJV). This is a seminal self-revelation of God, the substance of which his repeated eleven times in the Old Testament, and the more distant echo of which is heard many times more.

Exodus 35-40

Read 39:42–40:38

While chapters 25-31 gave instructions for the tabernacle, chapters 35-39 describe its actual construction, though in a different order: contributors (35), the skilled workers (36), the ark of the covenant, the table, the lampstand, the altars of incense (37), the altar of burnt offerings, the bronze basin, the court (38), the priestly garments (39).

We join the narrative at 39:42, as the tabernacle is erected according to the LORD’s command, approximately 9 months after the arrival at Sinai (recorded back in chapter 19), and the glory of the LORD fills the tabernacle. This is the point of all the details: fellowship with God; God dwelling with His people.

We note further the complex details and arrangements required of the people of God if they are to approach God and contrast that with the profound but simple way of approach, the “new and living way” that is ours in Christ Jesus (Heb 9:1-15ff; 10:19-25).

We note as well the emphasis upon all being “just as the LORD had commanded Moses.” While theirs was characterized by greater ritual complexity, we are no less required to worship God “according to Scripture.”

Leviticus

Author

As is the case with the rest of the Pentateuch, Moses is the author. Its name is the Latin form of the Greek title, “about the Levis.”

Date & Occasion

Leviticus picks up where Exodus leaves off. The children of Israel are at Mt. Sinai, where they have been since Exodus 19, and God is continuing to reveal His “statutes and ordinances and laws” to Moses (1:1; 7:37,38; 26:46; 27:34).

Message

Though probably the most challenging book of the Old Testament for modern readers, its concepts of sin, sacrifice, and atonement are foundational for the rest of the Bible, particularly for the New Testament interpretation of the death of Christ. The central message of Leviticus is “you shall therefore be holy; for I am holy” (11:45). It is primarily concerned with the sacrifices which must be offered for atonement to be made if a holy God is to dwell with a sinful people. The whole book, from priesthood to sacrifice, anticipates our great High Priest; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Leviticus 1–7

Read 1:1-14; 7:37,38

Chapters 1–7 record directions for the various offerings: burnt, grain (2), peace (3), sin (4), guilt (5:1–6:6), ordination (6:7–7:10), and peace (7:11-38).

Leviticus 8

The consecration as priests of Aaron and his sons.

Leviticus 9

Aaron offers the first Levitical sacrifices, the glory of the LORD appearing to all the people, and His fire consuming the offerings.

Leviticus 10

The unauthorized ministrations of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, are rejected (verses 1-11), and his remaining sons Eleazar and Ithamar falter as well (verses 12-20), reminding us of both the difficulty of transmitting our faith to our children and of the necessity of serving and worshiping God only according to His commandments.

Leviticus 11–16

Read 16:1-34

Chapters 11–15 distinguish between what is “clean,” and therefore fit for God’s presence, and what is “unclean,” typically what is unhealthy and abnormal and therefore unfit for God’s presence: contact with certain animals, various skin diseases, and the aftermath of bodily emissions. Chapter 16 describes the priestly rituals for the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): the preparation of the high priest, the scape goat, the sacrificial offerings, all of which anticipate the work of Christ (Hebrews 9:6-28; 13:11-13), whose once-for-all atonement renders the old covenant system obsolete.

Leviticus 17, 18

Read 18:1-5; 19-30

The place of sacrifice is restricted to the tent of meeting and the eating of blood is prohibited.

‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’ (17:11)

Unlawful moral and religious practices are outlined in chapter 18. Read 18:1-5; 18:5-18 outlaws marriage (as sexual relations) with close relatives; Read 18:19-30.

Leviticus 19

The people of God are to be holy as God is, and love their neighbors.

Leviticus 20

Read verses 22-27

Civil and ecclesiastical penalties are given for many of the moral and religious offenses identified in chapter 18, including child sacrifice, sorcery, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality, concluding in verses 22-27 with a further call to be holy because God is holy.

Leviticus 21–24

Read 24:10-23

Ritual requirements touching ceremonial cleanliness for priests, rules of sacrifice, the observance of the various annual feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Atonement, and Booths), the maintenance of tabernacle lamps and bread, and, beginning at 24:10, the penalty for blasphemy and the law of vengeance, the *lex talionis*.

Leviticus 25

Read 25:1-22

The Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee. The chapter closes with rules concerning property, lending money, and slavery.

Leviticus 26:1-39

The promise of blessing for obedience (verses 3-13) and warnings of curses for disobedience (verses 14-39).

Leviticus 26:40–27:34

Read 26:40-46

In chapter 26 forgiveness is promised to the people of God, even in the context of judgment, if they will repent (Read 26:40-46). Chapter 27 provides rules for vows and tithes, followed by this concluding summary:

These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai. (27:34)

Author

The fourth “book of Moses,” or the book of the law, the Torah, like the preceding three, was written by Moses (e.g. 33:2). Its name is taken from its title in the LXX, *arithmoi* or Numbers, though its Hebrew title, more aptly, is “in the wilderness.”

Date & Occasion

Written some time in the 40 years before Moses’ death in about 1406 B.C., Numbers picks up where Leviticus left off, with the people of Israel encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai. God’s revelation of His law to Moses is now complete and they are about to decamp and continue their circuitous journey to the promised land.

Message

Numbers tells the story of the failure of the Exodus generation to believe God and records the consequent 40 years of wilderness wandering. Commenting directly on the story of Numbers, the Apostle Paul says:

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

The lesson of Numbers is this, he says:

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Both the “goodness” of God in preserving His people and His “severity” in judging a whole generation are on clear display. (Rom 10:22)

Numbers 1–6

Read 1:1-4; 6:22-27

Having completed the portable tabernacle, further steps are taken to prepare the people of God for their journey and finally to occupy the Promised Land. (Read 1:1-4)

A census of the tribes is taken (chapter 1), the order of encampment and march outlined (chapter 2), the Levites are numbered and their duties described (chapters 3,4), the camp protected from defilement (5), and the Nazirite vow described (6:1-21). We conclude with the Aaronic benediction. (Read 6:22-27)

Numbers 7–10

Read 9:15–10:13; 10:29-36.

Preparations for the journey from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land continue as offerings for the tabernacle are received (chapter 7), the Levites are consecrated (chapter 8) and Passover is celebrated (chapter 9). Beginning at 9:15 the means by which God would guide His people are described: supernaturally by cloud, by command through Moses, and as announced by trumpet. (Read 9:15–10:13) Following the list of the ordered march in 10:14-28, they at last depart from Sinai (Read 10:29-36).

Numbers 11

As the children of Israel begin their journey from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land, the people complain, Moses, a type of Christ the mediator intercedes. God provides manna, quail, and additional men to help bear the burden of leadership.

Numbers 12

Moses' sister, Miriam, and his brother, Aaron, challenge his authority.

Numbers 13

Read 13:1-3; 13:16-33

A leader from each tribe is chosen to participate in spying out the land of Canaan and report back (Read 13:1-3). Their names are given in verses 4-15. Two reports are brought back, a “bad report” discouraging entry into Canaan, and a good report delivered by Caleb, urging “go up at once and occupy.” We rejoin the narrative in verse 16 (Read 13:16-33).

Numbers 14:1-19

The people of Israel listen to the “evil” report of the spies returning from Canaan, the report that there were “giants” in the land of promise, and they rebel.

Numbers 14:20-45

God judges the rebellion and unbelief of the people of Israel with 40 years of wilderness wandering, excluding from the Promised Land the exodus generation.

Numbers 15–16:24

Read 16:1-24

Amidst Israel’s failures, chapter 15 confirms that the nation will yet inhabit the Promised Land, while chapter 16 records the rebellion of Korah and the Kohathites.

Numbers 16:25-50

God judges the rebellious followers of the Korah as the ground opens and swallows the rebels alive.

Numbers 17

The blooming of Aaron’s staff provides further confirmation to the rebellious that Aaron and his descendants are the true priests of God. Scottish theologian and delegate to the Westminster Assembly George Gillespie (1613-1648) entitled his defense of *jure divino* (divine right) Presbyterian church government *Aaron’s Rod Blooming*.

Numbers 18–20

Read 20:1-29

The duties of priests and Levites and the laws of purification are given in chapters 18 and 19. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the blood of Christ is more effective in its purifying cleansing power than “the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer.” The ordinances of chapters 18 and 19 “sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,” but the blood of Christ, offered “without blemish to God,” is able to “cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:13,14).

We pick up the narrative in chapter 20, nearly 40 years after the punishment inflicted in chapter 14. As the period of wandering is now coming to an end, we are told of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron, and of the punishment of Moses, for striking the rock from which God promised to bring water, rather than simply speaking to it, for the Rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

Numbers 21

As the children of Israel approach the Promised Land, they defeat a series of Canaanite kings, destroying them, as God's agents of vengeance, because the iniquity of the Amorites was now complete (Gen 15:16). When Israel grumbles against God and Moses, He provides a bronze serpent, a type of Christ, as a way of delivering them from His judgments (cf. John 3:14-16).

Numbers 22

As the children of Israel arrive at the plains of Moab, 25 miles northeast of Jerusalem, still on the other side (east) of the Jordan River, King Balak of Moab hires Balaam, a famous sorcerer, to curse Israel. (See 2 Pet 2:15,16)

Numbers 23

The sorcerer Balaam is taken to the mountains surrounding the Israelite encampment on the plains of Moab, where he twice blesses, rather than curses, the children of Israel. (cf. Jude 11) Despite Balaam's duplicity, he makes one of the great confessions of the Bible: "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?"

Numbers 24

The sorcerer, Balaam, overlooking the Israelite encampment on the plains of Moab, 25 miles northeast of Jerusalem, blesses the children of Israel a third and fourth time, to the dismay of Balak, King of Moab. His blessing includes the promise of a ruler from the descendants of Jacob who will save Israel, doubtless fulfilled in Christ.

Numbers 25

The Moabites and the Midianites lure Israel into idolatry with Baal of Peor. The zeal of Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, for God and true religion is dramatically demonstrated.

Numbers 26–27

Read chapter 27

Preparations to enter the Promised Land are undertaken: a second census is recorded in chapter 26 (following that of 40 years earlier recorded in chapter 1). In the concluding 27th chapter Moses is given a glimpse of the promised land. A question of inheritance is answered and Moses' successor is named.

Numbers 28–31

Read 31:1-12.

Previously given instruction regarding daily, weekly, monthly, and annual sacrifices (feasts) is summarized in chapters 28 and 29, and instruction on vows (previously given in Leviticus 27) is expanded in chapter 30. Vengeance is taken on the Midianites in chapter 31, for their attempts to curse Israel through Balaam (Num 22-25), and especially for the “sin of Peor,” which brought a plague upon Israel killing thousands (Num 25:1-9), Moses explains:

“Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.” (Num 31:16)

Numbers 32

Controversy arises surrounding the decision of the tribes of Reuben and Gad to settle in Gilead, on the other side of the Jordan, sometimes referred to Transjordan. The occasion leads to the profound warning of Moses to those vulnerable to temptation, “be sure your sins will fund you out” (v. 23).

\

Numbers 33–36

Read 33:1-4, 50-56; 36:13

Chapter 33 recounts the various stages of Israel's exodus from Egypt. (Read 33:1-4; 50-56)

Chapter 34 describes the boundaries of the 12 tribes in the Promised Land and lists the tribal chiefs. Chapter 35 details the cities for the Levites and the cities of refuge. Chapter 36 records further rules for female heirs, adding to those of 27:1-11. Finally we read the concluding verse of Numbers. (Read 36:13)

Note:

Because we read Leviticus–Numbers, we read of Nadab and Abihu offering “strange fire” before the Lord, and being struck dead (Lev 10); of the necessity of blood atonement (Lev 16,17); the moral code governing relationships (Lev 18); of the Aaronic benediction (Num 6); of the leaders sent to spy out the land of promise; of the good and bad reports that they returned (Num 13,14); of the 40 years of wilderness wandering (Num 14ff); the ground opening and swallowing up Korah and his followers (Num 16); of the blooming of Aaron's rod (Num 17); of the lifting up of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Num 21); of the blessings and curses of Balaam and his donkey (Num 22–24); as well as many laws of God, ceremonial, civil, and moral.

Deuteronomy

Author

Moses is identified in Deuteronomy itself as the author, written sometime shortly before his death in 1406 B.C.

Date & Occasion

Having journeyed from Egypt to Mt. Sinai in *Exodus*; remained at Mt. Sinai in *Leviticus* as the law of God continued to be given; having wandered in the wilderness for 40 years in *Numbers*; and having successfully concluded the conquest of the Transjordan region (also in *Numbers*); the children of Israel are now on the edge of the Jordan River, ready to cross over and possess the Promised Land. Moses rehearses Israel's recent history and gives the Law a second time, hence the name, *Deuteronomy*, from the LXX *Deuteronmion*, Greek for "Second Law."

Message

Deuteronomy is quoted over 50 times in the New Testament, a number exceeded only by the Psalms and Isaiah. Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell address to Israel, combining historical review with exhortation from the Law. It also anticipates Christ as the coming prophet whose voice, Moses exhorts, must be heard (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). The importance of knowing this book can be seen in Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, all three of which he answered with scriptural citations from Deuteronomy. (Mt 4:1-11; Dt 8:3, 6:16, 6:13)

Deuteronomy 1:1-25

Moses reviews Israel's recent history in chapters 1-4. In chapter 1 he outlines Israel's 150-mile journey from Horeb (Sinai) to Kadesh-barnea from which the spies were sent out, a mere 100 miles south of Jerusalem's future site.

Deuteronomy 1:26-46

Moses continues his review of Israel's recent history from its refusal to possess the land of Canaan and the resulting 40-year banishment in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 2

Moses continues his review of Israel's recent past from the 38 years in the wilderness to the beginning of the two-year military campaign to clear out the Transjordanian.

Deuteronomy 3

Read 3:1-8; 3:18-29

Moses continues his overview of Israel's recent past, in chapter 3 reviewing the conquest of northern Transjordanian that is the eastern side of the Jordan, kingdoms ruled by Sihon and Og, frequently celebrated as the first-fruits of the conquest of the Promised Land (eg. Josh 2:6; 9:10; 12:2; etc; Ps 135:11; 136:19; read 3:1-8). Verses 9-17 give some interpretive detail. We then read of the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land. (Read 3:18-29)

Deuteronomy 4:1-24

Moses exhorts Israel to keep God's commandments and warns the nation to flee idolatry. Notice the emphasis on God's self-revelation in words: at Sinai "you saw no form; there was only a voice" (v. 12; see vv. 15, 16, 23; 25; also vv. 36).

Deuteronomy 4:25-49

Moses warns of God's judgment upon idolatry and urges obedience to His commandments.

Deuteronomy 5

Having completed his first address, reviewing Israel's recent history from Mt. Sinai to its present station on the verge of crossing the Jordan and entering into the Promised Land, Moses in this second address expounds the way of life for the community in covenant with God, beginning with the Ten Commandments, originally given at Sinai 40 years before as recorded in Exodus 20.

Deuteronomy 6

Moses announces the great *confession*, the *Shēmā*, named for the first Hebrew word in the seminal affirmation of faith, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one," and the great *commandment*, to love God, along with the duty of parents to teach God's commandments to their children.

Deuteronomy 7

God commands a war of iconoclasm and annihilation against the Canaanites, a civilization so evil that God's justice can no longer tolerate its continued existence. Israel is to be the agent of its destruction, an utterly unique and irrepeatable task that a nation has ever been assigned to undertake. He promises a faithful Israel both victory and prosperity founded upon God's determination to favor His elect people, whom He loves because He loves (vv 6,7).

Deuteronomy 8

Moses urges Israel to *keep* God's commandments, to *remember* His provision during the 40 years in the wilderness, and *not forget* in the coming prosperity that they are sure to enjoy in the fruitful Land of Promise as God gives His people the power to make wealth.

Deuteronomy 9

Moses reminds the people of Israel that they will not possess the land because they are more righteous than those whom they will drive out, but because of the Canaanites wickedness. Moses catalogues the stubborn unbelief and provocation of the people of Israel during the exodus from Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10

Moses recounts the second time that God wrote his Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. He urges Israel to fear, obey, love, and serve the LORD, yet warning of His curse if they do not.

Deuteronomy 11

Moses promises the blessing of God in the Land of Promise if Israel will fear, obey, love and serve the LORD.

Deuteronomy 12

Read 12:1-14; 29-32

The 12th chapter of Deuteronomy begins a new section which extends to the end of chapter 26, in which Moses shifts from a general call to obedience and faithfulness to specific rules and regulations.

Chapter 12 restricts sacrificial offerings to the central shrine (read 12:1-14). Verses 15-28 give rules about eating meat not devoted to God; verses 29-32 warn against idolatry (read 12:29-32).

Deuteronomy 13

Moses warns of the enticements of false prophets and the seductions of false gods, which they must resist.

Deuteronomy 14

Read 14:22-29

Rules regarding clean and unclean animals are provided in verses 1-21, and rules regarding tithes beginning in verse 22.

Deuteronomy 15

The Sabbatical year and forgiveness of debts are described in verses 1-11; the release of Hebrew slaves after six years of servitude is mandated in verses 12-18; the consecration of the firstborn is described in verses 19-23.

Deuteronomy 16:1-17

Rules regarding the three pilgrimage feasts: Passover, Weeks, and Booths.

Deuteronomy 16:18–17:20

Laws regarding the execution of justice by judges, priests, and kings.

Deuteronomy 18

How provision for Levitical priests is to be made, and the promise of a coming prophet like Moses, ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Acts 3:22-26).

Deuteronomy 19–20

Read 19:15–20:20

Deuteronomy 19–20 records laws concerning cities of refuge, witnesses of crimes, and warfare. We pick up the narrative at verse 15.

Deuteronomy 21–25

Read 24:1–25:4

Chapters 21–24 record various laws, moral, ceremonial, and civil.

Deuteronomy 26

Directions concerning the offering of first fruits and tithes. This closes the 2nd section (of three) of Deuteronomy which began with Chapter 12. It concludes with strong affirmation that the Lord is the God of His people, and they are His treasured possession.

Deuteronomy 27

Chapter 27 begins a third section, even a third address in this book of farewells, which extends through chapter 30. Moses commands that a covenant renewal ceremony be held when Israel crosses the Jordan River. The law was to be published on plastered stones, half of the people were to stand on Mt. Ebal and half on Mt. Gerizim, as the blessings and curses of the law were to be announced.

Deuteronomy 28:1-24

Moses' description of the ceremony of covenant renewal to be conducted once the Jordan River is crossed continues. Chapter 27 described a "liturgy" of curses, chapter 28 a liturgy of blessings in verses 1-14, followed by further curses in verses 15-68.

Deuteronomy 28:25-68

Read 28:25-51; 58-68

Moses' description of the curses to be pronounced at the ceremony of covenant renewal to be conducted once the Jordan River is crossed continues.

Deuteronomy 29

Moses, still in Moab (on the other side of the Jordan) calls for a renewal of the Sinai covenant. (Horeb)

Deuteronomy 30

Moses describes the path of restoration when the people of God are judged for their sin, and urges them to choose life. This concludes Moses' third address in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 31

Chapter 31 marks the beginning of the final section of Deuteronomy, in which Moses provides for the transition of leadership after his death.

Deuteronomy 32:1-27

The Song of Moses, contrasting the mighty acts of God in the Exodus with Israel's waywardness, is given as a testimony against future unbelief and faithlessness.

Deuteronomy 32:28-52

The conclusion of the Song of Moses in which God promises vengeance upon His wayward people.

Deuteronomy 33

The final blessing of Moses upon the tribes of Israel.

Deuteronomy 34

Moses views the Promised land from atop Mt. Pisgah, and dies in the land of Moab. (Read 34:1-12.) No prophet arose like Moses until Jesus the Messiah, who with even greater signs and wonders delivered His people from an even greater bondage (Matthew 4:23-25; Acts 3:22-26; 7:37).

Introduction to Historical Books

Joshua is the first of a collection of books known as the “historical books,” which extends from Joshua to Esther, and covers the history of Israel from the conquest of Canaan to the return from exile in Babylon. At the same time Joshua also picks up where Deuteronomy left off, and so the “historical books” can be seen as continuing the story of the Pentateuch which began with creation, and continued from Noah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and the sojourn in Egypt, Moses and the exodus, and now records the conquest of the land of promise.

Author

The author of Joshua is unknown, though according to one tradition Joshua himself is both the main character and author of the book that bears his name.

Date & Occasion

There are a number of theories about when Joshua was written. Internal evidence, as well as its relation to Deuteronomy which precedes it and Judges which follows it, indicates a date just prior to Joshua's death (around 1400 B.C.) and before Saul (c. 1050 B.C.). It was written to record the mighty acts of God in the conquest of the Promised Land, as well as to challenge Israel to consolidate its victory over the Canaanites.

Message

The main message of Joshua is the fulfillment of the promise of God to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 12:7) despite the faithlessness of the generation that fell in the wilderness (Numbers 13,14; Deuteronomy 1:26-36). Joshua, as the leader of the conquest of Israel's enemies, prefigures the work of Christ who likewise "conquers all His and our enemies" (Shorter Catechism #26).

Joshua 1

God commissions Joshua to lead the people of God across the Jordan and into the Promised Land (verses 1-9). Particular instructions are given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, whose land had already been conquered on the east side of the Jordan River (verses 10-18).

Joshua 2

Rahab the prostitute hides the spies sent by Joshua to investigate Jericho.

Joshua 3

Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land.

Joshua 4

Israel completes the crossing of the Jordan River and memorializes the event with twelve stones taken from the midst of the Jordan.

Joshua 5

As Israel begins new life in the land of promise the sacraments are administered: the new generation of men are initiated into the covenant through circumcision, and Passover, the covenant meal celebrating redemption, is celebrated. Finally, the captain of the hosts of the Lord reminds Joshua of whose cause he (Joshua) is to champion.

Joshua 6

The fall of Jericho marks the beginning of Israel's wars of annihilation. Israel serves as God's agent of judgment on a Canaanite people whose evil is so great that God can no longer tolerate their continued existence (cf. Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-27; Deuteronomy 9:4,5; Revelation 19:1).

Joshua 7

Israel's victory at Jericho is followed by defeat at Ai brought on by the sin of Achan.

Joshua 8

Defeat is followed by victory, as Ai falls to Israel. The covenant is renewed at Mt. Ebal where Abraham built an altar upon hearing the original covenant promise (Genesis 12:1-7).

Joshua 9

The Gibeonites deceive Israel and so are spared from destruction.

Joshua 10:1-21

Five kings of southern Canaan join forces in opposition to Israel and with the help of divine intervention are overthrown.

Joshua 10:22-43

The annihilation of the cities of southern Canaan is completed, as God through Israel purges the land of evil so great that He could no longer tolerate its continued existence.

Joshua 11

Having completed the conquest of southern Canaan, Joshua moves his armies northward and battles an alliance of northern Canaanite kings. Note the refrain, they did just as the Lord had commanded them through Moses.

Joshua 12–14

Read 14:6-15

Chapter 12 summarizes Israel's conquests under Moses (verses 1-6) and Joshua (verses 7-24) and the complete fulfillment of the promises of God (11:23; cf. 21:45). Chapter 13:1-7, however, describes the incompleteness of the actual possession of the land and the enemies which remained to be subdued. Chapters 13:8–21:45 describe the distribution of the land of Canaan to the 12 tribes. We will read of Caleb's request in chapter 14.

Joshua 15–18

Read 17:12–18:10

Chapters 15-17 describe the distribution of the land of Canaan to Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh. The latter, however, voice a complaint and Joshua urges faithful obedience.

Joshua 19–22:9

Read 21:43–22:9

The distribution of the land to the remaining six tribes is completed in chapter 19, cities of refuge are established in chapter 20, cities and pasturelands are allocated to the tribe of Levi in chapter 21 and the tribes settling east of the Jordan return to their land.

Joshua 22:10-34

The eastern tribes' (Reuben, Gad, Manasseh) altar of witness is misunderstood and the zeal of Joshua's generation of Israelites is displayed.

Joshua 23

Joshua's final charge to Israel's leaders.

Joshua 24

Israel returns to Shechem, where God first promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, and reaffirms the covenant with the LORD God of Israel.

Author

The author of Judges is unknown. The title “Judges” refers to the 12 leaders God raised up to lead Israel. It is somewhat misleading in that these leaders were not “judges” in a strictly judicial sense, but typically are portrayed exercising military and political authority.

Date & Occasion

The date of composition is also unknown, though it covers the period from right after Joshua and the conquest of the Canaan to right before Samuel and the anointing of Saul as Israel’s first king. That is it covers a period of about 350 years from about 1400 B.C. to about 1050 B.C.

Message

Judges contrasts sharply with Joshua. Whereas Joshua focuses on the successful conquest of Canaan, Judges reveals the failure of Israel to occupy and control Canaan. Conflict with the inhabitants, be they Moabites, Midianites, Amorites, or Philistines are constant. Whereas Joshua’s generation was faithful, Judges reveals what happens when a generation arises that “(does) not know the LORD or the work that He had done for Israel” (2:10). Judges reveals a distressing pattern: the people of God enjoy peace and prosperity, they fall into sin and idolatry, God sends oppressors, the people of God cry out for deliverance, God sends a Gideon or a Samson to deliver them. They enjoy again a period of peace and prosperity, and then fall into sin once more and the cycle repeats itself.

This failure to remain faithful points to the need of a king. Israel’s terrible sins occur, we are told, because “there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). While the situation will improve some under the monarchy, ultimately Judges points to the need of Messiah, the rule of King Jesus, to establish the people of God in righteousness and faithfulness.

Judges 1:1-21

The continuing conquest of the land of Canaan after the death of Joshua, particularly the successes of the tribe of Judah.

Judges 1:22-36

Joseph alone among the tribes of Israel enjoys success in driving out the Canaanites like that enjoyed by Judah (1:22-26; compare Judah 1:1-20). The failure of the other tribes is recounted in verses 27-36 (see Deut 7:1,2; 20:16-20).

Judges 2

The tragic pattern of the book of Judges is explained: a new generation arises that doesn't "know the Lord," is faithless, is delivered over to plunderers, and for whom God raises up judges to deliver them.

Judges 3

The "judgeships" of Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, and the distressing cycle of idolatry oppression by foreigners, the sons of Israel crying out to the Lord, and God sending His deliverer, is now clearly established.

Judges 4

The judgeship of Deborah, a time when the men of Israel fail to lead Israel, and consequently the honor for victory in battle goes not to a man, but to a woman, Jael the wife of Heber, into whose hands God delivers the Canaanite commander, Sisera.

Judges 5

The Song of Deborah and Barak celebrating their victory over the Canaanites.

Judges 6:1-24

The call of Gideon.

Judges 6:25-40

Gideon destroys the altar of Baal and requests the sign of the fleece.

Judges 7

The Lord leads Gideon in his defeat of Midian with a meager force of 300 men.

Judges 8:1-21

Following up the great victory of Judges 7, Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna, two Midian kings. The Lord's role in this military engagement is less obvious.

Judges 8:22-34

Gideon refuses the monarchy, affirming "the Lord will rule over you." Yet he is corrupted by a "golden ephod," that is, an idol, and upon his death, all Israel whores after Baal.

Judges 9:1-21

Abimelech, the son of Gideon (Jerubbaal) is made king by the leaders of Shechem through treachery (vv 1-6). Jotham, sole survivor of Abimelech's murderous coup, prophetically denounces Abimelech and Shechem, predicting their destruction (vv 7-21).

Judges 9:22-57

Jotham's prophecy of the destruction of Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem is fulfilled, as they devour each other in warfare.

Judges 10

The judgeships of Tola & Jair and a new cycle of disobedience and oppression.

Judges 11:1-28

Jephthah the son of Gilead is sought to lead Israel.

Judges 11:29-40

Jephthah's defeat of the Ammonites and his foolish vow.

Judges 12

Jephthah's conflict with Ephraim and the judgeships of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

Judges 13

The birth of Samson is announced by the angel of the Lord, which is perhaps to be understood as a pre-incarnational visitation of the Son of God.

Judges 14

Samson's foolish decision to marry a Philistine woman, foreshadowing a future decision which will prove his undoing.

Judges 15

Samson defeats the Philistines and judges Israel for 20 years.

Judges 16:1-17

Samson is seduced, nagged, and betrayed by Delilah.

Judges 16:18-31

The capture, humiliation, and death of Samson.

Judges 17

Micah of Ephraim, that is, of the territory, makes an idol in the name of the Lord, ordains his son as a priest, and implicates a Levite in his apostasy. This is yet another indication of the anarchy of this period when "there was no king in Israel."

Judges 18

The Danites become involved in the apostasy of Micah of Ephraim by taking his idol and Levite.

Judges 19

The religious and moral deterioration at a time when "there was no king in Israel" and "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" is vividly illustrated. Israel's moral decline is seen in the brutal murder and dismemberment of the Levite's concubine.

Judges 20:1-23

Israel determines to avenge the murder of the Levite's concubine which the Levite calls an "abomination and outrage" (v 6), and which all Israel calls an "evil" and "outrage" committed by "worthless fellows" which must be purged from the land. Yet Israel fails in its first attempt.

Judges 20:24-48

Israel avenges the murder of the Levite's concubine on its third attempt, devastating the tribe of Benjamin.

Judges 21

Israel's moral deterioration when it had no king and "everyone did what was right in its own eyes" is illustrated in the use of murder & kidnapping to supply the need of wives for the sons of Benjamin.

Author

The book of Ruth, named for its principle character, was written by an unknown author, though rabbinic tradition held that it was the prophet Samuel.

Date & Occasion

Date and occasion of writing are similarly unknown and a number of alternatives have been suggested. A time earlier in the period of the monarchy may be the best theory. Its primary aim may be to show the redemptive purposes of God in establishing the Davidic line.

Message

Set in the period of the judges, the grace of God is demonstrated in the salvation of the Moabitess, Ruth and her redemption by her kinsman Boaz. The grace of God is further manifested in God's chosen King David, who is descended from Perez, the offspring of incest (4:12,18; Genesis 38:26), and Ruth, a foreigner, a Gentile. Ultimately Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is a Jew descended from Ruth and the Moabites (4:22; Matthew 1:5).

Ruth 1

Ruth, a foreigner from Moab, insists upon leaving her native land in order to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi in her move back to Israel, determined to make Naomi's people and God her own.

Ruth 2

Ruth meets a close relative of her mother-in-law Naomi, Boaz, who shows kindness to Ruth.

Ruth 3

Ruth joins Boaz at the threshing floor where Boaz determines to redeem and marry her.

Ruth 4

Boaz redeems and marries Ruth, who gives birth to Obed, grandfather of David, from whom would come the Messiah.

Author

The author(s) of 1 & 2 Samuel (they were originally one book) are not identified and are unknown. They derive their name from the chief character of the opening chapters, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, Samuel.

Date & Occasion

The date of writing is also uncertain. Sections of 1 & 2 Samuel may have been written at the time of the events narrated and only later put in final form, perhaps as late as the Babylonian captivity (after 587 B.C.). As for the dates of the events narrated, Samuel would have been born about 1100 B.C., David's reign over a united Israel about 1000 B.C., Solomon's reign about 960 B.C.

Message

The Reformation Study Bible refers to 1 & 2 Samuel as "masterpieces of literature" (374). 1 Samuel focuses on Saul's rise to power and subsequent rejection. 2 Samuel is wholly taken up with David's reign as king.

The opening chapters (1–7) continue the theme of Judges as "everyone does what is right in his own eyes," despite Samuel's best efforts. The people demand a king (chapter 8), a requirement incompatible with God's kingship over Israel but one accommodated by a merciful God. Saul starts well, but proves to be a disappointment and is rejected by God, even as David rises from obscurity to prominence. David becomes God's ideal king, but even he is deeply flawed, pointing to a greater than David who is also a son of David who will rule both Israel and the nations in righteousness (Matthew 1:1ff).

1 Samuel 1

Hannah's tears are answered in the birth of Samuel, and her vow is honored in his dedication at the temple.

1 Samuel 2:1-11

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prays her “song” of thanksgiving.

1 Samuel 2:12-22

God’s favor toward Samuel contrasted with the house of Eli, rejected by God primarily because of the dishonorable and immoral behavior of Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas and their father’s failure to restrain them.

1 Samuel 3

The LORD reveals Himself to young Samuel, establishing him as a prophet in Israel.

1 Samuel 4

The ark of God is captured in battle, the priest Eli falls to his death, and his newborn grandson is named Ichabod, meaning, “the glory has departed.”

1 Samuel 5

The ark of God humbles the Philistine god Dagon and afflicts the Philistines wherever it is moved.

1 Samuel 6

The terrified and afflicted Philistines return the Ark of the LORD to Israel in such a way that demonstrates that their plagues were no mere coincidence, but by the hand of the God of Israel.

1 Samuel 7

The judgeship of the prophet Samuel, or, Samuel judges Israel.

1 Samuel 8

Israel foolishly demands a king, and though the prophet Samuel warns them of future trouble, the LORD consents to their demands.

1 Samuel 9

Saul, a Benjamite, is identified by Samuel as the one designated by God to serve as Israel’s first king.

1 Samuel 10

Saul is anointed and proclaimed as king.

1 Samuel 11

Saul leads Israel to victory over the Ammonites, their enemies to the east, and Saul is confirmed as king at Gilgal, which probably was located about 20 miles north of Jerusalem.

1 Samuel 12

The prophet Samuel's farewell address, marking the end of the period of the judges.

1 Samuel 13

King Saul offers an unauthorized sacrifice and, as a consequence, is rejected by God.

1 Samuel 14:1-23

Saul's son Jonathan initiates a daring raid on the Philistines.

1 Samuel 14:24-52

King Saul's foolish vow weakens Israel's attack and endangers his son Jonathan.

1 Samuel 15

The Lord rejects Saul as king for his selective obedience declaring through the prophet Samuel, "to obey is better than sacrifice" (v. 22).

1 Samuel 16

David anointed by the prophet Samuel and serves in Saul's court.

1 Samuel 17:1-30

The Philistine champion Goliath taunts the armies of Israel.

1 Samuel 17:31-58

David fights the Philistine champion Goliath.

1 Samuel 18

David's friendship with Jonathan, his success in Saul's service, and his marriage to Saul's daughter Michal.

1 Samuel 19

King Saul attempts to kill David, whom increasingly he sees as a rival to his throne.

1 Samuel 20:1-23

Jonathan and David plan a means of confirming if Saul intends to kill David.

1 Samuel 20:24-42

Jonathan warns David of Saul's intention to kill David.

1 Samuel 21

David and his men eat the Temple's holy bread, normally reserved for the priests alone, and flee from Saul to the land of the Philistines.

1 Samuel 22

King Saul kills the priests at Nob for assisting David and his men in their flight from Saul (ch. 21).

1 Samuel 23

David saves the Israelite city of Keilah from Philistine attack and flees from Saul into the wilderness.

1 Samuel 24

David spares King Saul's life.

1 Samuel 25:1-21

The prophet Samuel dies. Nabal insults David while Abigail his wife prepares to intervene.

1 Samuel 25:22-43

Abigail's intervention forestalls violent confrontation between David and Nabal.

1 Samuel 26

David spares King Saul a second time.

1 Samuel 27

David flees to the Philistines.

1 Samuel 28

King Saul seeks Samuel's counsel through the witch at En-dor.

1 Samuel 29

The suspicious Philistines, to whom David had fled to escape Saul, reject David.

1 Samuel 30

The wives and children of David and his men are taken capture by marauding Amalekites.

1 Samuel 31

The deaths of King Saul and his sons.

Message

2 Samuel picks up where 1 Samuel left off, with the death of King Saul. The entire book is devoted to the reign of David: his consideration of power and enthronement (1:1–5:5); the capture of Jerusalem and the promise of an everlasting dynasty (5:6–10:19); David’s sin and its consequences (11–20); and epilogue (21–24).

2 Samuel 1:1-16

David learns of the deaths of King Saul and his son Jonathan.

2 Samuel 1:17-27

David’s lament for King Saul and his son Jonathan who were killed battling the Philistines. “Tell it not in Gath”(v 20), the capital city of the Philistines, is a plea that God’s enemies not hear of their defeat, this setback of the people of God.

2 Samuel 2

After King Saul’s death, David is anointed King over the tribe of Judah, while Ish-bosheth is made king over the remainder of Israel. Conflict between them begins.

2 Samuel 3:1-21

Abner, Ish-bosheth’s leading warrior, joins with David.

2 Samuel 3:22-39

Joab, David’s leading warrior, murders Abner, who had attempted to switch sides and join David. David mourns his death.

2 Samuel 4

Ish-bosheth, son of Saul and King of Israel excepting Judah, is murdered.

2 Samuel 5

David is anointed king over all Israel at Hebron, and establishes Jerusalem as his residence.

2 Samuel 6

The ark of God is brought to the tabernacle in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 7:1-17

God promises to build David's house and establish his throne forever, a promise fulfilled finally in "great David's greater Son."

2 Samuel 7:18-29

David's prayer of thanksgiving for God's promise to build his house and establish his throne forever, a promise fulfilled in the Messiah, the son of David, the Christ.

2 Samuel 8

David's victories in war and the officials who serve in his court, foreshadowing the victory of Christ and the glory of His Kingdom.

2 Samuel 9

David's kindness to Mephibosheth, the disabled son of Saul.

2 Samuel 10

David avenges the humiliation of his servants, defeating Ammon and Syria.

2 Samuel 11

The sin of David & Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 12

The prophet Nathan rebukes David for his sin in relation to Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah the Hittite.

2 Samuel 13:1-19

David's son Amnon violates his half-sister Tamar, as David's reign begins to unravel.

2 Samuel 13:20-39

Absalom, son of David, avenges the violation of his sister Tamar by murdering his half-brother Amnon, as the temporal judgments of God upon David's sin continue.

2 Samuel 14

Absalom, son of David and murderer of his brother Amnon, returns to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 15

As the temporal judgments of God upon David continue, Absalom conspires to seize the crown and forces his father David to flee Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 16

David flees Jerusalem as Absalom his son seizes his house and violates his concubines, wickedly fulfilling what Nathan had prophesied would happen as a temporal judgment upon David.

2 Samuel 17

David's loyal counselor Hushai thwarts the counsel of Ahithophel.

2 Samuel 18:1-15

Absalom the son of David is killed in the attempt to seize the throne.

2 Samuel 18:16-30

David learns of his son Absalom's death.

2 Samuel 19:1-23

David is reconciled to those who sided with Absalom during the rebellion.

2 Samuel 19:24-43

The process of reconciliation continues following Absalom's rebellion.

2 Samuel 20

The rift between the northern tribes and Judah, introduced at the end of Ch. 19, erupts into open conflict, as Sheba, of the tribe of

Benjamin, leads yet another rebellion against David, who is supported by Judah alone.

2 Samuel 21

David avenges the wrongs committed against the Gibeonites, and continues in his wars with the Philistines.

2 Samuel 22:1-25

Chapter 22 recalls a song of deliverance written by David years before when he was pursued by Saul. It is also recorded, with minor variations, as Psalm 18.

2 Samuel 22:26-51

The conclusion of David's song of deliverance.

2 Samuel 23

Read 23:1-23; 39

The last words of David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," and the mighty acts of his mighty men (read 23:1-23). Verses 24-38 list a number of other warriors, concluding in v. 39 (read 23:39).

2 Samuel 24

David conducts a census of the people of Israel, and is punished accordingly. 2 Samuel ends with David building an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah (or Ornan) on Mt. Moriah, site of Abraham's offering of Isaac (Genesis 22:2) and future site of the temple (1 Chronicles 22:1; 2 Chronicles 3:1).

1 & 2 Kings

Author:

The author of 1 & 2 Kings is unknown. The traditional view was that Jeremiah was the author of 1 & 2 Kings, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. Most scholars see 1 & 2 Kings as part of a historical narrative that begins with Joshua, includes Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings, and was written by a common author or group of writers.

Date & Occasion:

Because 2 Kings ends with Judah's exile to Babylon in 587-86, and yet makes no mention of the return from exile, it is likely to have been written around the midpoint of the exile or 560-550 B.C. Another view is that it was written before the exile, with the final chapter describing the exile being added later.

Message:

Traditionally classified with Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel as one of the "former prophets," the narrative history of 1 & 2 Kings is more than history, but even primarily theology. It provides a message from God about God: His holiness, worship, judgments, mercy, and His faithfulness to His covenants.

1 Kings 1:1-27

Verses 1-4 may be seen as a test of a mid-eastern monarch's potency and therefore of his capacity to rule a nation, a test in no way endorsed by Scripture and instead condemned by the 7th commandment. On the other hand, other scholars argue that it was common in the ancient world to warm the bodies of the elderly with the body warmth of youth, without sexual connotation. Either way, David's son Adonijah plots to succeed his father to the throne. Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet take counter measures to prevent this conspiracy from succeeding.

1 Kings 1:28-53

Solomon is anointed king, succeeding his father David, thereby foiling Adonijah's plot to seize the throne.

1 Kings 2:1-25

The death of King David is followed by another and final attempt by Adonijah to usurp Solomon's succession to the throne by asking for that which according to Middle Eastern custom was the right of the king's successor: the right to make one of David's wives his own (cf. Absalom with his father's concubines, 2 Sam 16:22, 23).

1 Kings 2:26-46

Following the death of Adonijah and the suppression of his attempted usurpation of Solomon's succession to his father David's throne, Solomon consolidates his rule.

1 Kings 3:1-15

At a crucial juncture at the outset of his reign, King Solomon asks not for riches or long life but for wisdom.

1 Kings 3:16-28

Solomon's wisdom, for which he has prayed, is tested.

1 Kings 4

(read vv. 20-34)

Solomon's officials are listed in verses 1-19, and beginning in verse 20 we are given an account of his reign, wealth, and wisdom, pointing us to the "greater than Solomon," our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Kings 5

Preparations for the building of the temple begin.

1 Kings 6:1-13

Construction of the temple in Jerusalem begins. The unit of measure, the cubit, is about 18 inches (a foot and a half), or 45 centimeters; liquid measure is a cor, about six bushels or 220 liters.

1 Kings 6:14-37

The construction and decorating of the temple in Jerusalem is completed, the whole project requiring seven years.

1 Kings 7

(read 7:1-14; 51)

Solomon builds his palace (read 7:1-14). Verses 15-50 provide on account of the furnishings made for the temple, the summary of which we will read in verse 51.

1 Kings 8:1-21

The ark of the covenant of the LORD is brought into the temple in Jerusalem. God dwells among his people.

1 Kings 8:22-53

Solomon's prayer dedicating the temple

1 Kings 8:54-66

At the dedication of the temple Solomon offers his concluding benediction and celebrates with sacrifices and a great feast.

1 Kings 9

The LORD appears to Solomon a second time, restating the covenant promises, this time clarifying their conditionality: "If you will walk before me... with integrity uprightly" (vv 1-9). Verses 10-28 record a summary of Solomon's building projects.

1 Kings 10:1-13

The Queen of Sheba visits King Solomon, a visit which anticipates the visitation of the wise men to Christ (Ps 72).

1 Kings 10:14-29

Solomon's great wealth and wisdom, which anticipates the richness and wisdom of Christ (Col 2:3).

1 Kings 11:1-22

Solomon's pagan wives turn his heart away from the LORD God of Israel, and the Lord, in response, raises up adversaries against him. Solomon, it is now clear, is not the anointed son of David,

the Messiah, who would save Israel. The nation must await the arrival of the Greater than Solomon.

1 Kings 11:23-43

The LORD God of Israel raises up adversaries against Solomon because of his involvement with false gods, and warns of the coming division of the kingdom of Israel.

1 Kings 12:1-24

Rehoboam, son of David and successor to his throne, listens to foolish counsel and his kingdom is divided in 930 B.C., leaving only Judah and Benjamin under his authority.

1 Kings 12:25–13:10

Jeroboam, king over the northern tribes of Israel, institutes idolatrous worship in Bethel and Dan, and is denounced by a man of God.

1 Kings 13:11-34

The prophet from Judah who obediently had denounced Jeroboam king of Israel is punished for his subsequent disobedience.

1 Kings 14:1-20

Ahijah the prophet who had prophesied of Jeroboam's rise to power now foretells his doom and the destruction of his house.

1 Kings 14:21-31

Rehoboam, son of David, brings the judgment of God upon the southern kingdom Judah for his toleration of idolatry.

1 Kings 15:1-24

The reigns of two Judean Kings are recounted: the three-year reign of Abijah (913–910B.C.) and forty-one-year reign of Asa in Judah (910–869 B.C.).

1 Kings 15:25–16:7

The reigns of two Israelite Kings are recounted: the two-year reign of Nadab (909–908 B.C.) and the 24-year reign of Baasha (908–886 B.C.).

1 Kings 16:8-28

The reigns of three kings of Israel are recounted: the two-year reign of Elah (886–885 B.C.), and the seven-day reign of Zimri his assassin (885 B.C.); a four-year civil war, and the 12-year reign of Omri the assassin of Zimri (885–874 B.C.).

1 Kings 16:29–17:7

Ahab son of Omri becomes king in Israel in 847 B.C., and marries the wicked pagan Jezebel. His reign marks a low point in the history of Israel, a crisis of such proportions that God raises up an Elijah to deal with it.

1 Kings 17:8-24

Elijah multiplies food for the hungry and raises the dead to life, foreshadowing the works of Christ.

1 Kings 18:1-19

After three years of drought and famine, Elijah confronts wicked Ahab, king of Israel, and challenges him to a showdown at Mount Carmel.

1 Kings 18:20-46

Elijah's victory on Mt. Carmel over the prophets of Baal.

1 Kings 19

Elijah flees from Jezebel and despairs of his life. His flight takes him south to Mt. Horeb (Sinai) where he despairs of life again, and where God meets him in “a still small voice.”

1 Kings 20:1-25

King Ben-hadad of Syria provokes a war with King Ahab of Israel.

1 Kings 20:26-43

King Ben-hadad of Syria provokes a second war with King Ahab of Israel. God gives Ahab the victory, but he fails to obey God's command, and instead, spares Ben-hadad.

1 Kings 21

King Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard, and with Jezebel plots to murder Naboth and confiscate his property.

1 Kings 22:1-28

The prophet Micaiah foretells King Ahab's defeat and death in his third war against Syria.

1 Kings 22:29-53

The Syrians defeat the coalition army of Judah and Israel, King Ahab is killed in battle, as prophesied by Elijah, as punishment for his treachery in the case of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kg 21:19). He is succeeded by his son, Ahaziah.

2 Kings

Remembering that 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book, sharing the same author(s) and date of composition (probably about the mid-point of the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon [c. 560–550 B.C.]), we continue its account of the monarchies in Judah and Israel.

2 Kings 1

King Ahaziah of Israel, son of Ahab and Jezebel, is rebuked by Elijah for his idolatry in 852 B.C.

2 Kings 2

Elijah is taken to heaven accompanied by a chariot of fire. His mantle falls upon Elisha his successor.

2 Kings 3

King Jehosaphat of Judah and King Jerhoram of Israel crush a Moabite rebellion.

2 Kings 4:1-17

Elisha exercises a Messianic ministry of miracles: aiding a widow in her distress and healing a barren womb.

2 Kings 4:18-43

Elisha performs Messianic miracles: raising the dead and feeding the hungry, anticipating what Jesus Christ will do in His earthly ministry.

2 Kings 5

Naaman, a captain of the Syrian army, is healed of leprosy by the Christ-like Elisha while Gehazi's greed is punished.

2 Kings 6:1-23

As Elisha's miracles continue, a great Syrian army surrounds Elisha and his servant in Dothan, God demonstrates that "those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (verse 16).

2 Kings 6:24–7:2

Elisha promises that the terrible siege of Samaria in which terrible atrocities occurred will end. He promises that commodities that had become impossibly rare and expensive shall soon become plentiful and cheap.

2 Kings 7:3-20

Four lepers discover that through divine intervention the Syrian army has fled leaving behind plenty for the famished people of Israel (Samaria), even as Elisha had promised in 7:1.

2 Kings 8

The restoration of the Shunamite woman's land, the murder of king Ben-hadad of Syria (verses 1-15); the eight-year reign of Jehoram in Judah (848–841 B.C.) and the one-year reign of Ahaziah in Judah (841 B.C.) (verses 16-29).

2 Kings 9:1-16

Anarchy continues in the northern kingdom of Israel, as Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, is anointed king of Israel at the direction of Elisha and sets out to assassinate Joram, the then reigning king, in order to put an end to the abominations of the house of Ahab and Jezebel.

2 Kings 9:17-37

Jehu, a commander in Israel's army and anointed king at the direction of Elisha, assassinates Joram, king of Israel, Ahaziah king of Judah, and Queen Jezebel, mother of Joram and wife of the late King Ahab.

2 Kings 10:1-17

Jehu, anointed king of Israel by one of the sons of the prophets, destroys the household of Ahab, brutally eliminating future challenges to his rule from his offspring. Thus was the judgment on the house of Ahab prophesied by Elijah fulfilled (1 Kg 21:21-26).

2 Kings 10:18-36

Having destroyed the offspring of Ahab, Jehu now destroys the prophets of Baal and begins a reign that lasts 28 years in Israel (841–814 B.C.).

2 Kings 11

Joash, sole surviving descendant of David, is anointed king of Judah in defiance of the wicked Queen-mother Athaliah. Baalism is destroyed in Judah, the Davidic monarchy saved, and true religion preserved.

2 Kings 12

Jehoash/Joash's 40-year reign in Judah (835–796 B.C.) and the repairs to the temple he initiated. Note the integrity of those who repaired the temple: no accounting was necessary, "for they deal faithfully" (v 15).

2 Kings 13:1-13

Two kings of Israel: Jehoahaz's 17-year reign (814–798 B.C.) And Jehoash/Joash's 16-year reign (798–782 B.C.).

2 Kings 13:14-25

The death of Elisha.

2 Kings 14:1-16

The first fourteen years of Amaziah's reign in Judah (796–782 B.C.), his wars with Edom and with Jehoash of Israel.

2 Kings 14:17-29

The last fifteen years of the reign of Amaziah in Judah (782–767 B.C.) and the 41-year reign of evil King Jeroboam II in Israel (793–753 B.C.).

2 Kings 15:1-22

The 52-year reign of Azariah (also called Uzziah) in Judah (792–740 B.C.) and three evil kings of Israel: the short reigns of Zechariah (753 B.C.), Shallum (752 B.C.), and the ten-year reign of Menahem (752–742 B.C.), as Israel continues in its downward spiral to destruction.

2 Kings 15:23-38

The short reign of Pekahiah in Israel (742–740 B.C.), the 20-year reign of Peltah (752–732 B.C.), during which Tiglath-pileser of Assyria captures and carries off portions of the northern kingdom, Israel, into captivity (733–732 B.C.), and 16-year reign of Jothan in Judah (750–735 B.C.)

2 Kings 16

The 16-year reign of wicked King Ahaz in Judah (735–715 B.C.), during which Syria is destroyed by Assyria at the instigation of Ahaz. Having allied himself with the Assyrians, he then mimics them, wickedly instituting unauthorized Assyrian forms and practices in God's temple.

2 Kings 17:1-23

Finally the judgment of God falls on wicked Israel. In the ninth year of King Hoshea (722–722 B.C.), Assyria conquers and deports the northern kingdom Israel, which is never again to rise.

2 Kings 17:24-41

The Assyrians resettle the northern territories of Israel, hereafter called Samaria, with their subjects from other lands, who mingle the fear of the LORD with the service of their idols. Their syncretism, that is, idolatry, continues through the centuries and confronts Jesus when over 700 years later he greets the woman at the well in Samaria (Jn 4).

2 Kings 18:1-18

Faithful King Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.), son of wicked King Ahaz, rids Judah of idolatry and does what is right in the eyes of the LORD. In the 14th year of his reign (701 B.C.) King Sennacherib of Assyria attacks Judah and besieges Jerusalem.

2 Kings 18:19-37

Jerusalem, surrounded and besieged by the Assyrians, is threatened by Rabshakeh, an official of the Assyrian king.

2 Kings 19:1-19

Following the threats of the Assyrian official Rabshakeh, Hezekiah seeks the prayers of the prophet Isaiah and offers his own prayer for deliverance.

2 Kings 19:20-37

Hezekiah's prayer is answered: Isaiah's prophesy in 701 B.C. of the destruction of the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and the return of Sennacherib to Nineveh is fulfilled. Verse 28 provides a vivid picture of the sovereignty of God, as God bridles Assyria and turns it back to where it came.

2 Kings 20

King Hezekiah prays for healing and recovers from a mortal illness. Subsequently he greets envoys from Babylon and foolishly shows them all the treasures of his kingdom.

2 Kings 21

Two Judean Kings: Hezekiah's son Manasseh, his long and evil reign of 55 years (697–642 B.C.); and the short and evil reign of Amon his son (642–640 B.C.).

2 Kings 22

Good King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh, initiates the repairs of the temple, and in the process discovers the long-neglected scrolls of the "Book of the Law," probably the book of Deuteronomy.

2 Kings 23:1-20

On the basis of the "Book of the Covenant," probably the book of Deuteronomy, Josiah attacks idolatry and reforms the practice of religion in Judea.

2 Kings 23:21-37

Josiah continues his reforms, restoring the Passover as commanded in the Book of the Covenant, until killed in battle, ending his 31-year reign in 609 B.C. He is succeeded by his sons Jehoahaz (609 B.C.) and Jehoiakim (609–698 B.C.)

2 Kings 24

Because Jehoiakim resists Babylonian rule, Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar on March 16, 597. The king, his household, skilled workers, warriors, and temple treasures are deported to Babylon, and Zedekiah is made king in his place.

2 Kings 25

Jerusalem is recaptured by the Babylonians in July of 586 B.C. and the population is deported. Yet 2 Kings ends on a hopeful note, as thirty-seven years later, in March of 561 B.C., the first mercy is experienced by the exiles, as Evil-merodach, King of Babylon, releases Jehoiachin, King of Judah, from prison.

Author

The author of 1 & 2 Chronicles is unknown, though Jewish tradition regarded Ezra as the author of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Luther (1483–1546) followed the tradition of Jerome (ca. 342–419), translator of the Latin Vulgate, in referring to these writings as “The Chronicle of the entire sacred history.” From this the convention of calling the author “the Chronicler” developed. The author worked from a number of sources referred to throughout the text, biblical and extra-biblical.

Date & Occasion

The Chronicles were written after the release of the Judean exiles from Babylon in 538 B.C. and, probably given the absence of Hellenistic influences, before the conquests of Alexander (ca. 331 B.C.). Some scholars date Chronicles to as early as the time of the reconstruction of the temple under Zerubbabel (c. 520–515 B.C.), though the majority place it within the broader period of 515–400 B.C. Though it parallels the history of Israel recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings, it does so with the aim of encouraging and guiding the exiles returning from Babylon as they seek to restore the kingdom.

Message

1 & 2 Chronicles present the pattern of life that the returned exiles are to establish by recalling pre-exilic Israel in a more idealized form than that found in Samuel–Kings. For example, David’s sin with Bathsheba is omitted. Emphasis is given to the Davidic kingship, the temple and priesthood, and the close connection between faithfulness and blessing on the one hand, and infidelity and judgment on the other. In the end the Chronicles point to the Messiah, who alone fulfills the Davidic ideal (Luke 1:32; Romans 1:3), who alone is the perfect sacrifice and priest (Hebrews 9:11–28; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 John 2:2), and who consequently fulfills the purpose of the temple (John 2:19–22), and in whom the people of God are fully reconstituted (Galatians 3:14,29; 4:28).

1 Chronicles 1–9

The Chronicler establishes the legitimacy of the claim of the returning exiles to be God’s chosen people by tracing their genealogy from Adam forward through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 tribes to the returning exiles. Extended treatment is given to David’s descendants because of the importance of a legitimate monarchy (chapters 2–4), and to Levi’s descendants because of the importance of reestablishing a legitimate priesthood (the 81 verses of chapter 6).

1 Chronicles 10

We pick up the story of Israel in chapter 10 with the Chronicler’s account of the death of Saul and his sons.

1 Chronicles 11

Read 11:1-25

David is anointed King at Hebron by “all Israel” and he leads the conquest of Jerusalem, then a Jebusite city (read 11:1-25). Verses 26-47 continue the list of David’s “mighty men” (these verses may be skipped).

1 Chronicles 12

Read 12:1,2, 8, 14-22, 38-40

The listing of David’s mighty men continues: verses 3-7 provide a number of their names (read 12:1,2). We pick up again at verse 8 (read 12:8): the list of names continues in verses 9-13. We continue at verse 14 (read 12:14-22): verses 23-37 record the number of troops from each tribe who came to Hebron to support the establishment of David’s monarchy. We continue at verse 38 with the Chronicler’s emphasis upon the “single mind” of “all Israel” when David’s monarch was established (read 12:38-40).

1 Chronicles 13

Tragedy strikes when the ark of God is improperly transported, upon a cart, contrary to specific scriptural direction (see 15:13-45; Ex 25:14) from Kiriath-jearim in Judah part of the way to Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 14

David's growing prestige and power.

1 Chronicles 15

Read 15:1-16, 25-29

The ark of God is properly transported to Jerusalem with great rejoicing: verses 17-24 list the musicians, singers, and gatekeeper. The account of the parade-like celebration continues at verse 25 as the ark is transported from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 16:1-22

The establishment of authorized worship in Jerusalem with sacrifices, Levitical choirs, instrumentalists, and psalmody (Psalms 105, 96, and 106 were sung). Verses 8-22 contain the text of Psalm 105:1-15.

1 Chronicles 16:23-43

The inaugural celebration of authorized worship concludes with the singing of Psalms 96 and 106 (the parts of the Psalms recorded probably indicating the singing of the whole Psalm: verses 23-33 = Psalm 96:1-13a; verses 34-36 = Psalm 106:1,47,48), and the establishing of the pattern of daily morning and evening sacrifices offered with "sacred song" and instrumental music.

1 Chronicles 17

The next 13 chapters are concerned with the preparations for the building of the temple. In chapter 17 David is commissioned not to build but to prepare for the construction of the temple that will take place under his son. David provides a beautiful example of humble praise in verses 16-27.

1 Chronicles 18

David's military victories over the Philistines, the Moabites and others contribute to the security and wealth necessary for the construction of the temple.

1 Chronicles 19

David's victory over the Ammonites and their Syrian allies contributes to the political security necessary for the building of the temple.

1 Chronicles 20

David again subdues both the Ammonites and Philistines, thereby further establishing the political security necessary for the building of the temple.

1 Chronicles 21:1–22:1

David's census brings trouble to the nation of Israel, but God brings good from evil. His sin leads to the discovery of the site at which the temple will be built in the days of Solomon.

1 Chronicles 22:2-19

David gathers workmen and materials, and charges his son Solomon to build the temple, "the house of the LORD (our) God" (v. 11).

1 Chronicles 23

Read 23:1-6, 13b

Temple preparations continue as David organizes the Levites. Verses 7-13a and 14-23, which we will skip over, list the names of the Levitical households by their heads and sons.

Read 23:24-32.

1 Chronicles 24–28:8

Read 28:1-8

Preparations for the work of the temple continue as David organizes the priests (chapter 24), the musicians "who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals" (25:1ff), the gatekeepers and the treasurers (chapter 26), and the military and other leaders (chapter 27), and charges them in chapter 28:1-8.

1 Chronicles 28:9–21

David turns over to Solomon the plans for the temple and charges him to complete its construction.

1 Chronicles 29

1 Chronicles concludes with the offerings collected for the temple, David's great prayer of dedication, his death, and the succession of Solomon to the throne.

2 Chronicles

Originally one book with 1 Chronicles, the Chronicler continues his account of the history of Israel from Solomon through the exile and return, focusing primarily on the southern kingdom of Judah and the Davidic monarchy as he writes to encourage the reestablishment of kingship and temple in the post-exilic era.

2 Chronicles 1

Solomon's worship, wisdom and wealth at the outset of his reign.

2 Chronicles 2

Solomon prepares to build the temple in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 3

Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 4

The furnishings and decorations for the temple are completed, as prescribed (v 20).

2 Chronicles 5

The ark of the covenant is brought into the completed temple in Jerusalem with blood sacrifices and sung praise, culminating with the presence of God among His people: "and the glory of the Lord filled the house of God" (v 4).

2 Chronicles 6:1-21

At the dedication of the just completed temple in Jerusalem Solomon blesses the people and prays.

2 Chronicles 6:22-42

Having praised God for His faithfulness and immensity, Solomon continues his prayer of dedication at the inaugural service in the temple in Jerusalem, concluding with Psalm 132, verses 8-10 of which are recorded in verses 41-42.

2 Chronicles 7

The conclusion of the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord and the fire from heaven, the Lord's promises and warnings.

2 Chronicles 8

Solomon's accomplishments at the 20-year mark of his reign (950 B.C.) are reviewed while his failings, recorded in 1 Kings, are omitted. This is in keeping with the Chroniclers more idealized account of Israel's history.

2 Chronicles 9

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon representing the Davidic monarchy at its height, and anticipating the adoration of the Magi (Mt 2:1-12).

2 Chronicles 10

Solomon's son and successor, Rehoboam, forsakes the counsel of the wise older men in favor of that of his foolish young companions, leading to a revolt and the consequent division of the nation into the southern kingdom, Judah, and the northern kingdom, Israel.

2 Chronicles 11

Rehoboam (930–917 B.C.), after forfeiting his rule over the northern tribes, secures his rule over the southern kingdom, Judah, now obeying the word of the LORD and receiving His blessing. Not only does he follow in the good example of David and Solomon (v 17), but also the bad, procuring for himself many wives and concubines (vv 18-21).

2 Chronicles 12

Rehoboam's abandonment of the law of the LORD leads to hardship; when he humbles himself, the Lord's anger is turned away.

2 Chronicles 13

Rehoboam's son Abijah succeeds him to the throne (913–910 B.C.) and wins a great victory over Jeroboam and the northern

kingdom of Israel. We are reminded of the tragedies that take place when the people of God are divided.

2 Chronicles 14

Asa succeeds his father Abijah to the throne and reigns for 41 years (910–869 B.C.). He does what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 15

Religious reform and revival under King Asa (910–869 B.C.).

2 Chronicles 16

After 35 years of righteous rule, Asa turns from seeking the LORD to trusting in man for victory in battle and the health of his body in the last 6 years of his reign (874–869 B.C.).

2 Chronicles 17

Jehoshaphat succeeds his father Asa to the throne and reigns for 24 years (872–848 B.C.).

2 Chronicles 18

King Jehoshaphat of Judah's disastrous alliance with King Ahab of Israel, the northern kingdom.

2 Chronicles 19

King Jehoshaphat (reigns 872-848 BC) establishes a system of courts in Judah to enforce the Law of God.

2 Chronicles 20

Judah's King Jehoshaphat responds to a vast Canaanite military threat with prayer and the LORD delivers Judah from its enemies. "We do not know what to do," he prays, "but our eyes are on you" (v 12).

2 Chronicles 21

Jehoram succeeds his father Jehoshaphat to Judah's throne and rules for eight years (848–841 B.C.). His evil reign brings the condemnation and judgment of God.

2 Chronicles 22

Ahaziah the son of evil king Jehoram succeeds his father to Judah's throne and rules for one year (841 B.C.). He is succeeded by his mother Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab of Israel, who destroys the entire Davidic line, save one, Joash.

2 Chronicles 23

Jehoiada the priest covenants with military leaders, Levites and heads of households to crown as King Joash, the only surviving descendent of David, in defiance of Athaliah the queen.

2 Chronicles 24:1-16

Joash begins to reign at the age of seven in 835 B.C. and compliments the reforms of Jehoiada the priest with the restoration of the temple which had been deteriorated under Queen Athaliah.

2 Chronicles 24:17-27

Following the death of Jehoiada the priest, King Joash and all Judah return to idolatry with disastrous consequences, reminding us that the work of reform is never complete, but a task that each generation must undertake.

2 Chronicles 25

Amaziah succeeds his father King Joash to the throne of Judah and reigns for 29 years (796–767 B.C.). He begins well (vv.1-15) but his success leads to pride and his downfall (vv. 16-23).

2 Chronicles 26

Uzziah (Azariah) succeeds his father Amaziah to the throne of Judah and reigns for 52 years (792–740 B.C.). Like his father he begins well but pride proves his undoing.

2 Chronicles 27–28:4

Jotham succeeds his father Uzziah to the throne and rules well for 16 years (750–736 B.C.). He is succeeded by his son Ahaz. Idolatry brings God's judgments upon Judah during his 16 years on the throne (735–715 B.C.).

2 Chronicles 28:5-27

The idolatry of King Ahaz brings defeat to Judah at the hands of Syria, Israel, and the Assyrians, leading to further idolatry.

2 Chronicles 29:1-19

Good King Hezekiah succeeds his evil father Ahaz to the throne of Judah and reigns for 29 years (715–686 B.C.). He repairs the damage done to the temple during his father's reign.

2 Chronicles 29:20-36

Hezekiah reopens the temple (which had been closed during the reign of his father Ahaz) and restores its worship. Note the connection between the offering of sacrifices and the singing of God's praises.

2 Chronicles 30

Hezekiah reunites the southern kingdom of Judah and the remnant of the northern kingdom, represented as Ephraim and Manasseh (v. 1, 10) in the observance of Passover, a meal of covenant renewal for the whole people of God.

2 Chronicles 31

Hezekiah organizes the priests and the collection and storage of the tithes., facilitating the renewal of the ministry of the church during this time revival.

2 Chronicles 32:1-19

The faithfulness of Hezekiah and the revival in Judah does not mean a trouble-free reign. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, lays siege to Jerusalem and taunts Judah and the God of Israel.

2 Chronicles 32:20-33

Through Hezekiah's prayer, the LORD delivers Jerusalem from the Assyrian armies that surround it.

2 Chronicles 33

Evil King Manasseh succeeds his good father Hezekiah to the throne and reigns 55 years (697–642 B.C.), the longest of any king of Judah. He reverses the reforms of his father and

reintroduces Canaanite idolatry, including child sacrifices. This results in deportation by the Assyrians, while his humble repentance leads to partial restoration. His equally evil son Amon succeeds him to the throne (642–640 B.C.) and follows not the good example of his father's repentance but the bad example of his idolatry.

2 Chronicles 34:1-21

Good King Josiah succeeds his wicked father Amon to the throne and reigns 31 years. He restores the reforms of his great grandfather Hezekiah, cleaning the land of idolatry, and restoring the Temple and its worship. Finally the Book of the Law of the LORD, probably Deuteronomy, is discovered.

2 Chronicles 34:22–35:6

King Josiah and the people of Judah covenant together to keep the LORD's commandments written in the newly discovered Book of the Covenant, and prepare to seal or ratify their commitment through the covenant meal, the Passover.

2 Chronicles 35:7-27

A Passover of unprecedented scope is kept by King Josiah and the people of Israel, as they confirm their covenant with God.

2 Chronicles 36

Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, the three sons of Josiah, and grandson Jehoiachin, are each deposed and deported through a series of Babylonian invasions between 605 and 586 B.C., finally ending with the destruction of Jerusalem, the exiling of the survivors, and the removal of its treasures. Yet 2 Chronicles ends on a hopeful note, the proclamation of Cyrus 70 years later ordering the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the return of the Judean exiles in 538 B.C.

Author

The Hebrew Priest Ezra is traditionally held to be the author of Ezra and Nehemiah, which originally were one book.

Date & Occasion

Ezra is believed to have been written between 430-400 B.C., the same period as: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. He records the story of the return from exile in Babylon of those who had been deported there following the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. He writes to encourage the continuing work of reestablishing Israel in the land of promise.

Message

Above all Ezra writes of the sovereignty of God, of God working sovereignly through human agents (e.g. Cyrus, King of Medo-Persian Empire) in order to honor His covenant promises, save His covenant people, and restore true worship.

Ezra 1

Cyrus, King of Persia and conqueror of Babylon, issues a proclamation in 538 B.C. allowing the Judean exiles to return to Judah and requiring that the house of the LORD be rebuilt.

Ezra 2, 3

Read 2:68–3:13

Chapter 2 lists the numbers and families of the returning exiles. Chapter 3 tells of the rebuilding of the altar and the temple. We join Ezra's account at 2:68 (read through end of chapter 3).

Ezra 4

Opposition to the rebuilding of the temple succeeds in causing extended delays from the time of King Cyrus (530's B.C.) until the second year of the reign of King Darius (520 B.C.)

Ezra 5

At the prodding of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the reconstruction of the temple resumes in 520 B.C. after a long delay.

Ezra 6

Persian King Darius reissues Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and orders that its reconstruction be completed without delay. It is completed in 515 B.C., four years after the work was renewed, 20 years after the work was begun (3:8), and 70 years after Solomon's temple was destroyed.

Ezra 7

Sixty years after the completion of the temple, or about 458 B.C., Ezra arrives from Babylon with the support of King Artaxerxes of Persia in order to teach the Law of the LORD.

Ezra 8

Read 8:21-36

Verses 1-14 record the names of the heads of households who accompanied Ezra and verses 15-20 the names of the Levites who were persuaded to return. Beginning at verse 21 we read of preparation for the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezra 9

Four and a half months after Ezra's arrival he faces a crisis: some of the returning Judeans had intermarried with unbelievers.

Ezra 10

Read 10:1-19,44

The leadership and then the whole assembly of Israel agrees to "put away" their pagan wives.

Author

Both Ezra and Nehemiah were believed to have been written by Ezra.

Date & Occasion

Ezra wrote in the period of 430–400 B.C. Together the books of Ezra and Nehemiah provide the record of Judah's return from exile in Babylon (where they have been since Jerusalem's fall in 587), beginning with the Persian Emperor Cyrus' decree to return recorded in Ezra 1. Nehemiah 1 picks up the story with Nehemiah in Babylon receiving a discouraging report in 446 of the lack of progress among the returnees in Jerusalem who were struggling to reestablish Israel in the land of Palestine.

Message

The sovereignty of God, who so governs the nations and guides history that His covenant promises to His beloved people cannot fail. Israel *shall* be reestablished in the land of promise.

Nehemiah 1

Ninety-two years have passed since Cryus' decree permitting the Hebrew exiles to return to Canaan. Twelve years have passed since Ezra joined them in 458 B.C. Now 446 B.C., Nehemiah hears a discouraging report about the slow progress of the work in Jerusalem and prays.

Nehemiah 2

King Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Judah to help rebuild the city (445 B.C.).

Nehemiah 3, 4

Read chapter 4:1-21

Chapter 3 lists the names of those who undertook the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem demonstrating that the project involved the whole people of God, great and small, skilled and unskilled.

Chapter 4 – opposition to Nehemiah comes out into the open as Sanballat, governor of Samaria, the area north of Judah, and Tobiah, governor of Ammon, east of Judah, mock and threaten those working on the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 5

Problems caused by external enemies give way to problems originating from within the people of God, particularly relating to usury.

Nehemiah 6:1–7:4

Israel's enemies conspire to prevent the completion of the wall surrounding Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 7:5–8:18

Read 7:5-6; 8:1-18

Following the completion of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah consults the register of the exiles who had returned: (read 7:4-6) Verses 7-73 list the returnees and some of their resources. In Chapter 8 the renewal of the covenant begins with Ezra's reading of the Law of God.

Nehemiah 9:1-21

The reading of the Law of God is followed by the confession of sin, the first part of which is a prayer of praise for creation and redemption.

Nehemiah 9:22-38

The children of Israel continue in their praise of God's redemption of Israel in verses 22-25, leading to the confession of the nation's sins in verses 26-38 as a prelude to the renewal of the covenant.

Nehemiah 10

Read 1a, 28-39

Following the reading of the Law in chapter 8 (i.e. the terms of the covenant) and the confession of sin in chapter 9 (i.e. acknowledging failure to keep the terms of the covenant) the

covenant is renewed in chapter 10. (Read v. 1a) A list of names follows in verses 1b-27. (Read verses 28-39)

Nehemiah 11–12

Read 12:27-47

Chapters 11 and 12 provide lists of names: of those who were chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem, of those who were to live outside of Jerusalem, and of the priests and Levites. We return to the narrative at 12:27 with the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 13

Having completed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and renewed the covenant, Nehemiah returned to the Persian court in 433 B.C. for an unspecified time (v. 6). When he returned he found problems previously resolved had reappeared, proving the need for the church to be *semper reformanda*.

Author & Date

Author is unknown, but given his knowledge of Persian court, customs, and geography likely to be a Hebrew living in Susa, capital of the Persian empire, likely in the 4th or 5th century B.C.

Occasion

Esther is set in the context of the Persian court at a time of threatened persecution at the hand of a royal officer named Haman. It traces the responses to the challenge on the part of Mordecai and his adopted daughter Esther, neither of whom are particularly devout, but both of whom rise to the occasion believing that God has placed them in positions of influence and opportunity “for such a time as this” (4:14).

Esther 1

Queen Vashti’s refusal to obey King Ahasuerus leads to consternation among the princes of Persia, lest all the women of Persia refuse to obey their husbands.

Esther 2

Esther, a Jewish girl being raised by her close relative Mordecai, is chosen to succeed the disfavored Vashti as queen of the Persian King Ahasuerus.

Esther 3

The evil royal official Haman, enraged by Mordecai’s refusal to bow before him, plots the annihilation of the Judean exiles throughout the Persian Empire.

Esther 4

Mordecai urges Esther to appeal to King Ahasuerus to rescind his edict commanding the annihilation of the Judean exiles throughout the Persian Empire, reminding her that it may be that she was placed in her high position “for such a time as this” (4:14).

Esther 5

Esther prepares a feast for the king and the wicked Haman, while Haman prepares gallows for Mordecai.

Esther 6

The king honors Mordecai for prior service that had gone unrecognized, through the same Haman who had been plotting Mordecai's death.

Esther 7

Esther pleads with King Ahasuerus to save her people and exposes Haman as the one planning their destruction.

Esther 8

The king rewards Esther and Mordecai, revokes Haman's edict of annihilation, and permits the Judean exiles to defend themselves.

Esther 9:1-19

The Judean exiles in Susa and throughout the Persian Empire destroy their enemies and celebrate their victory.

Esther 9:20-10:3

Queen Esther and Mordecai institute a new annual holiday, the feast of Purim, to celebrate the victory of the Judean exiles over their enemies in the Persian Empire.

Introduction to the Wisdom Books

Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are typically classified as wisdom literature. The distinctive characteristic of wisdom literature is that it teaches truth not by command, as in the Law, not by threats and promises, as in the prophets, but by observation and reflection. The wisdom books provide divinely-inspired conclusions about life based on shrewd awareness of the nature of things: nature itself, humanity, society, and God. They provide not so much commands as counsel; not so much rules as practical advice. They say, “given what we know about God, and about the way things work and how people are, here is what you must do.” Always, it is “the fear of the LORD” that is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

Author

The author of Job is unknown. Though about Job, the author was likely a skillful unnamed poet of Israel.

Date & Occasion

Though the date of writing is unknown, its classical Hebrew places it after 1500 B.C. and before the end of Solomon's era, or perhaps even later when Hebrew wisdom writing was at its peak. It was written to address the question of why the righteous at times suffer in a manner or to an extent that appears unjust.

Message

Job and his “friends,” rather his tormenters, share the simplistic view that all suffering is a result of personal sin. On that basis Job complains that God is unjust in making him suffer and his counselors insist that he must be guilty. The book of Job confirms that the righteous often do suffer, not merely for their personal sins, but for reasons hidden from them and known only to God. Conversely the wicked often in this world seem to get away with their evil. Though this pattern often is perplexing to the people of God, God's goodness is affirmed and patience is the necessary response (Jas 5:11). Job teaches us to love God not for His benefits but for His own sake. According to Luther, Job is “magnificent and sublime as no other book of Scripture.”

Job 1

Satan is allowed to test righteous Job, a man blessed by and devoted to God.

Job 2

Satan is allowed to test Job further, this time afflicting his body, yet culminating in Job's stirring affirmation of his faith in God.

Job 3

Amidst his terrible suffering, Job bitterly laments the day of his birth.

Job 4

Eliphaz opens the first circle of speeches, which extends to chapter 14, as Job and his friends debate the reasons for his suffering. Eliphaz insists that the innocent do not suffer.

Job 5

Job's "friend" Eliphaz continues his speech maintaining that the innocent do not suffer, and Job should recognize that God is disciplining him because of his sin.

Job 6

Job replies to Eliphaz: my complaint is just, my suffering is unjust.

Job 7

Job continues his reply to Eliphaz, now addressing himself to God: leave me alone, he pleads (v 16).

Job 8

Bildad mocks Job and answers him simplistically: suffering is a result of sin; seek God and mercy and He will restore you and your suffering will end.

Job 9

Job replies to Bildad, affirming God's wisdom and power in verses 1-13, but questioning His justice in verses 14-35, and voicing the need for an "arbiter" in verse 33, a role fulfilled by "the one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim 2:5).

Job 10

Job continues his reply to Bildad, now addressing himself to God, complaining of the injustice of his suffering.

Job 11

Zophar, the most severe of Job's "comforters," now enters the discussion, misapplying truth by assuming guilt where there is none.

Job 12

Job replies to Zophar, his most severe critic, with a “blast of sarcasm” (RSB) and an extended affirmation of God’s sovereignty.

Job 13

Job’s reply to Zophar continues, Job chastising his friends as “worthless physicians,” and beginning in verse 20 to address his complaint directly to God (as he had in chs. 7 & 10).

Job 14

Job continues to complain directly to God, pointing out the brevity and difficulty of ordinary life and looking for vindication beyond the grave. This concludes Job’s reply to Zophar, begun in chapter 12.

Job 15

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have each had an opportunity to respond to Job and, in turn, have heard Job’s responses (chs. 4-14). Chapter 15 begins a second circle of speeches and responses, in turn, from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (chs. 15-21). In chapter 15 Eliphaz returns to his earlier theme, insisting with greater vehemence and sarcasm that only the guilty suffer.

Job 16

Job answers his “miserable comforters” and their “windy words” complaining of God’s mistreatment of him and reaffirming his innocence.

Job 17

Job concludes his answer to Eliphaz complaining, “where then is my hope?” (v 15).

Job 18

Bildad delivers his second speech, rebuking Job’s disrespect for his “comforters,” counting them as “cattle” and “stupid” (v 3) and reaffirming that God makes only the wicked to suffer.

Job 19

Because Job believes that only the wicked suffer, he accuses God of wronging him: of injustice, of stripping him of honor, of alienating him from friends and relatives, of so afflicting him that he escapes death only by “the skin of (his) teeth” (v 20); and yet he affirms, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (v 25), language made familiar to many by Handel’s *Messiah*.

Job 20

Zophar, in his second speech, describes the terrible fate of the wicked, but misapplies this truth to Job, whom even God says is righteous (1:1, 8).

Job 21

Job closes the second cycle of speeches firmly rejecting that the wicked always, or even typically, suffer for their sins. He contemptuously rejects their counsel as “empty nothings” (v 34).

Job 22

The third circle of speeches begins in chapter 22 and extends through chapter 27. For the third time Eliphaz and Bildad will speak and Job will respond, though this time Zophar remains silent. Eliphaz lists the sins of which he alleges Job is guilty and calls him to repent. “Is not your evil abundant?” he asks (v 5).

Job 23

Job grows confident of his ultimate vindication: though tested, he shall “come out as gold” (v 6).

Job 24

Job complains that justice is unevenly applied. The wicked thrive and inflict suffering on the innocent, and God seems to do nothing.

Job 25,26

Bildad’s final speech repeats the themes of God’s purity and human worthlessness, yet as was consistent with Job’s

“friends,” without a hint of God’s grace. Job’s response follows in chapter 26.

Job 27

Job concludes his response to his “comforters,” maintaining that only the wicked suffer in this world, insisting that God has mistreated him, and defending his integrity to the end. This concludes the third cycle of speeches.

Job 28

Job begins an extended monologue which continues through chapter 31. In chapter 28 he considers the elusiveness of true wisdom.

Job 29

Job looks back to his days of virtue, prosperity, and influence, when God looked upon him with favor and men looked upon him with respect.

Job 30

Job laments that all the good that he once enjoyed, which he reviewed in chapter 29, has now been taken from him.

Job 31

Job’s final protest of innocence and cry for vindication. He repeats “If I...” 16 times, conditional statements that acknowledge that if he had done these things, his suffering would be just. However, he has not, therefore suffering is unjust.

Job 32

The young man Elihu speaks for the first time. His monologue continues through chapter 37. He comes closer to the truth than have either Job or his friends.

Job 33

Elihu introduces the themes of redemptive suffering and mercy, truths unknown to Job and his friends.

Job 34

Elihu defends God's goodness and justice, demonstrating, as is typical of young men, great certainly, but not great depth.

Job 35

Elihu answers Job's accusations.

Job 36

Elihu extols God's power and righteousness and cautions restraint in suffering.

Job 37

Elihu highlights Job's limitations as measured by God's greatness.

Job 38

The LORD answers Job "out of the whirlwind" characterizing his complaints as "words without knowledge" and asking him questions about ultimate things, thereby highlighting his ignorance.

Job 39

The LORD continues asking Job questions which highlight the limitations of his knowledge.

Job 40

Job drops his demand for vindication and is reduced to silence as God continues His cross-examination.

Job 41

The LORD's cross-examination of Job which began in chapter 38 continues, consisting of questions which highlight the absolute distinction between God and man, and consequently the limitations of his knowledge.

Job 42

Job repents in "dust and ashes" of his presumption in challenging God, the LORD rebukes his friends, and Job's prosperity is restored.

Introduction to Hebrew Poetry

Poetry may be found throughout the Old Testament. It may be found sprinkled throughout the historical narratives (e.g. Miriam's, Hannah's, and Deborah's songs), and in the Wisdom literature (e.g. Job), and in extended passages in the Prophets.

Only two books of the Bible may properly be considered poetic: Psalms and Song of Solomon. We should note Hebrew poetry rarely consists of rhymes, but is normally thematic and is expressed through a variety of types of parallelism, successive lines sometimes duplicating, sometimes extending, and sometimes repeating an idea by way of antithesis. Hebrew poetry also features alliteration and meter.

Author

David, the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1), is the most frequently cited author of the Psalms, with nearly two-thirds of the total being attributed to him. Also identified as authors are Moses (1), Solomon (2), the sons of Korah (12), Asaph (12), and Ethan the Ezrahite (1). A number of Psalms have no designated author.

Date & Occasion

The Psalms were written over a period of several centuries beginning with Moses (Psalm 90) and ending perhaps with the period after the exile from Babylon (e.g. Psalm 126). A number of the Psalms (14) reference historical occasions in the superscriptions, but these are not part of the original text. Regardless, whatever their historical occasion the Psalms are general enough that they can be used in a variety of settings.

Message

The word “Psalm” means song. The Psalms are songs composed for use in the worship of Israel and later in the church. Together they form both the hymn book and prayer book of the people of God in the Old and New Testaments. The Psalter is divided into 5 books (Psalms 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150), and scholars commonly distinguish 6 Psalm genres: Praise, laments, thanksgiving, confidence (or trust), kingship, and wisdom. The Psalms are both comprehensive and holistic. Luther regarded the Psalter as “a little Bible.” Calvin called it “an anatomy of all parts of the soul;” Augustine, reflecting the outlook of Jesus and the New Testament writers (e.g. Luke 24:44; Matthew 27:46; 22:41-46; Hebrews 2:12), urged that “the voice of Christ and His church is well-nigh the only voice to be heard in the Psalms.” It teaches us both how to pray and what to sing to God.

Psalm 1

The first Psalm, a wisdom Psalm, should be understood as an introduction or “preface” (Henry) to the whole Psalter,

describing the blessedness that comes from meditating upon Psalms, and contrasting that with the path of the wicked.

Psalm 2

One of the most clearly Messianic and frequently cited in the New Testament of the Psalms. We hear its echo at Jesus' baptism (verse 7; cf. Matthew 3:17), and at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17), and it is cited as predictive of the crucifixion (verses 1-2; cf. Acts 4:25-38), the resurrection (verse 7; cf. Acts 13:33), and reign of Christ (verse 9; cf. Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Though initially applied to David, Solomon, and their successors, it looks beyond them to a greater than David or Solomon.

Psalm 3

A Psalm of David which expresses deep trust in circumstances of deep distress, which, according to the superscription, was written "when (David) fled from Absalom his son."

Psalm 4

Spurgeon entitled the previous Psalm "The Morning Hymn" (see verse 5) and this one "The Evening Hymn" (see verse 4). Some of the concerns of Psalm 3 continue in Psalm 4, in perhaps the same setting (that of his flight from Absalom). A Psalm of David

Psalm 5

A morning Psalm and prayer (verse 3), offered in a time of distress. Verse 9 was cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:13 in support of his argument for the universality of human depravity. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 6

The first of seven "penitential psalms" (with 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), prayed by one who is "greatly troubled" yet in the end, trusting God (verses 9,10). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 7

According to the superscription, written on the occasion of the false accusations of one Cush, a Benjamite (i.d. unknown),

against David, made to Saul, always eager to believe the worst about David. It has been called “the song of the slandered saint.” A Psalm of David.

Psalm 8

The excellency of God contrasted with the insignificance yet exalted destiny of humanity, ultimately realized in the God-Man Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:6-8). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 9

Psalms 9 and 10 form a single (though incomplete) acrostic. They should be read as companion psalms, each dealing with “wrestling faith” (Motyer), each struggling with the opposition of the wicked. Thanksgiving and praise in verses 1-12 turns to lament and plea in verses 13ff. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 10

The complaint begun in verse 13 of Psalm 9 continues as the psalmist complains of the active oppression of the wicked and the passive response of God, calling upon God to arise and act.

Psalm 11

In a time of great danger the case for flight (verses 1-3) is rejected in favor of the way of trust (1a, 4-7). A Psalm of David, Spurgeon entitled it, “The Song of the Steadfast.”

Psalm 12

The 12th Psalm contrasts the false and flattering words of man (verses 1-4) with the flawless and reliable words of the LORD (verses 5-8). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 13

The psalmist’s experience of circumstances of unrelieved distress evoke the ancient cry of the people of God: “How long, O LORD.” Yet “agitation is brought into the place of intercession and emerges in exultation” (Motyer, 494). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 14

The psalmist condemns the universal depravity and practical atheism of humanity. Psalm 14 is cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:10-12 in his summary of his case for the necessity of the gospel. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 15

Psalm 15 describes the practical holiness required of those who would enjoy fellowship with God. Though the righteousness described ultimately is fulfilled only in Christ, the psalmist and we can speak meaningfully of the believer's imperfect fulfillment of these standards and distinguish that from failure to fulfill these standards. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 16

A Messianic Psalm, a Psalm rich in devotional expression, and a Psalm of David. Verse 10 is frequently cited in the New Testament as prophetic of the resurrection of Christ (e.g. Matthew 22:41-45; Acts 2:31; 13:34-38).

Psalm 17

The superscription entitles Psalm 17 "a prayer of David," reminding us that the Psalter is not only a hymnbook but a prayerbook. The likely setting is 1 Samuel 23:25, when David was surrounded by Saul's men (verse 11). The Psalm is a plea for refuge and vindication.

Psalm 18:1-24

A Psalm of David, which according to the superscription was written on an occasion when "The LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul."

Psalm 18:25-50

David concludes this Psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from Saul and all his enemies. Verse 49 is cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:9 as prophetic of the day when the Gentiles would "Glorify God for His mercy."

Psalm 19

The 19th Psalm praises God for His self-revelation first in creation (verses 1-6), then in Scripture (verses 7-10), and concludes with the soul's response (verses 11-14). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 20

The occasion of this Psalm may be worship on the eve of battle. It is possible to discern the voice of the priest in verses 1-4,5c, praying on behalf of a warrior/worshiper who has just presented his sacrifice. Verses 5ab, 6-9 are in turn a prayer by the worshiper for victory in battle. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 21

A royal Psalm in which the king looks back to a victory won in verses 1-7 and looks forward to a future victory in verses 8-12, the latter of which is final and universal. A Psalm of David whose meaning is fulfilled ultimately in the triumph of the Davidic Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 4:1,2; 5:6-14).

Psalm 22

A profound lament. The psalmist complains of abandonment by God, a cry which Jesus made his own on the cross (Matthew 27:46). The suffering about which the psalmist is perplexed and pleads in verses 1-21 results in the universal praise of verses 22-31. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of the shepherd David, who saw in his youthful vocation a metaphor of God's care for His people. It is a Psalm of confidence or trust of one who is walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

Psalm 24

If Psalm 22 is the Psalm of Messiah's *cross*, and Psalm 23 is the Psalm of the Good Shepherd's *crook*, Psalm 24 is the Psalm of the Messiah's *crown*. The earth is His, He is able to stand in the

holy place (verse 3), and for Him the gates of Jerusalem and the gates of heaven shall open. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 25

The second of seven penitential Psalms (along with Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 130, 143) and an irregular acrostic. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 26

This vigorous assertion of integrity should be understood not as a claim of sinlessness (see Psalms 6, 32, 51, 130, etc.) but rather as a claim of innocence of the crimes of which others have falsely accused him. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 27

The 27th Psalm, though set in a time of trouble, is rich in devotional language as David expresses his trust and confidence in the LORD and his desire for the LORD, whose beauty he longs to behold and whose face he is eager to seek.

Psalm 28

The troubling, even life-threatening occasion of Psalms 26 and 27 continues as David cries to the LORD, his rock, strength, and refuge, for deliverance from evildoers.

Psalm 29

The 29th is a Psalm of the Storm, God's glory being seen in its thunder and lightening. The cadences of the Psalm, even in English, "march to the tune of thunderbolts," as Spurgeon said. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 30

The occasion of Psalm 30 would appear to be prosperity induced pride which the LORD chastened. A Psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance whose central thought is found in verse 5: *For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.* A Psalm of David.

Psalm 31

The 31st Psalm is both a plea for deliverance from enemies and bodily afflictions and an expression of strong confidence in God, our rock of strength, our stronghold, our fortress, our guide (verses 2-3), the Sovereign One in whose hands are our times (verse 15). A Psalm of David. It teaches us to pray in the mist of crises, and assures of the efficacy of doing so (Motyer).

Psalm 32

The third of seven penitential Psalms, Luther, Matthew Henry, and Spurgeon have all labeled this an evangelical Psalm, containing the promise of righteousness to those who repent and believe (verses 1,2; cf. Romans 4:6). Perhaps written in the aftermath of David's sin with Bathsheba, it moves from the problem of sin and its resolution through prayer to prayer as the means of solving all of life's problems. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 33

A Psalm of praise, rejoicing in the LORD for His righteousness and goodness (verses 4,5), for His works of creation (verses 6-9), providence (verses 10-17), and redemption (18-22).

Psalm 34

According to the superscription this Psalm was written when David feigned madness before the Philistine King Abimelech, an incident recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. It is an incomplete and slightly irregular acrostic. Written in a time of crisis, it is a strong affirmation of trust in the LORD.

Psalm 35

The 35th Psalm is a cry of the innocent righteous to be delivered from the wicked, avenged, and vindicated. Jesus cited verse 19 to explain the world's unjustified hatred of him (John 15:25). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 36

Psalm 36 contrasts the evil of the wicked in verses 1-4 with the lavish goodness of God in verses 5-12. Entitled "The Song of Happy Service" by Spurgeon, it is a Psalm of David.

Psalm 37:1-20

An alphabetic acrostic and a wisdom Psalm, the 37th urges the people of God not to “fret” about the prosperity of the wicked, for God will destroy them, and the meek shall inherit the earth. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 37:21-40

David continues to urge the people of God not to fret because of the success of the wicked, but to wait upon the LORD.

Psalm 38

The third of the seven penitential Psalms combines confession of sin with vivid descriptions of its malignant impact upon one’s health and relationships. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 39

This complaint of God-inflicted suffering that approaches death (verse 4) is at the same time a meditation on the brevity and vanity of human life. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 40

The 40th Psalm may be seen as the fulfillment of the patient waiting of Psalms 38 and 39. The psalmist rejoices in answered prayer (verses 1-5), recommits himself to obedience and public testimony (verses 6-10), and prays for deliverance from continuing troubles (verses 11-17). A Psalm of David, ultimately fulfilled in Christ who alone is able to set aside ritual sacrifices and fulfill the obligations of the law of God (verses 6-8; cf. Hebrews 10:5-7).

Psalm 41

The 41st is the Psalm of a righteous man upon his sickbed whose suffering is compounded by the attacks of his enemies and the betrayal of his friends. A Psalm of David whose 9th verse was applied by Jesus to Himself in anticipation of Judas’ betrayal (John 13:18).

Psalm 42 & 43

The second of the five books within the Psalter begins with Psalm 42. The 42nd and 43rd Psalms were probably originally one Psalm. The refrain of 42:6, repeated in 42:11 and 43:5, divides the two Psalms into 3 equal parts. The psalmist, separated from the place of worship and surrounded by enemies, longs for the presence of God with “an intensity . . . that rebukes our feeble love” (Motyer, 513).

Psalm 44

Motyer entitles Psalm 44, “When life is unfair and God is asleep” (415). The psalmist recalls the past blessing of God (verses 1-8) which he contrasts with his present experience of abandonment and distress which defies explanation or justification (verses 9-26).

Psalm 45

This is a royal Psalm, “a Song of Love,” according to the superscription, and a Messianic Psalm probably written on the occasion of a royal wedding. It presents an idealized picture of the King which clearly looks beyond the sons of David to *the* Son of David. Verses 6 and 7 are quoted in the New Testament to prove the superiority of Christ.

But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. (Hebrews 1:8)

Psalm 46

Psalm 46 is among the best known and most beloved songs in the Psalter. Sometimes called “Luther’s Psalm,” his Reformation anthem, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” is based upon it. Spurgeon entitles it “The Song of Holy Confidence.”

Psalm 47

Psalm 47 may be associated with the transportation of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6) or with some great military victory. It anticipates the ascension of Christ and the

consummation of His rule over all the nations, even their incorporation as “the people of the God of Abraham” (verse 9).

Psalm 48

Psalm 48 celebrates the beauty of Mt. Zion (verses 1-3), unscathed in the aftermath of its threatened destruction (verses 4-8), secure in God’s love and provision (verses 9-14). It is a Psalm of the church, the true and heavenly Zion (Hebrews 12:22).

Psalm 49

A wisdom Psalm that considers the futility of riches, reminds us, essentially, that we can’t take it with us, that death overtakes rich and poor, wise and foolish alike.

Psalm 50

The 50th Psalm is in the prophetic tradition, envisioning all the earth being summoned to God’s judgment seat (verses 1-6) as He rebukes Israel for its religious formalism (verses 7-15) and its hypocrisy (verses 16-23).

Psalm 51

On an occasion of grievous, personal sin, David turns to prayer. The fourth of seven penitential Psalms (along with 6, 25, 32, 38, 130, 143), a Psalm of David, written according to the superscription “when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” The repentance of verses 1-15 is followed in verses 16-19 with acceptable burnt offerings, that is, sacrifice of renewed commitment and religious observance.

Psalm 52

According to the superscription, Psalm 52 was written on the occasion when Doeg the Edomite informed Saul of Ahimelech the priest’s harboring and provisioning the fleeing David (1 Samuel 21:1-9). Saul responded by slaughtering Ahimelech and his whole household by the hand of the same Doeg (1 Samuel 22:8-23). More a wisdom reflection upon the end of wickedness than a prayer, it is a Psalm of David.

Psalm 53

Psalm 53 is almost an exact replica of Psalm 14, a meditation on human depravity. It is cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:10-12 to clinch his argument for the universality of human evil and the need for a Savior. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 54

At a time of betrayal, David turns to prayer. According to the superscription, this Psalm was written by David when the “Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, ‘Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?’” (1 Samuel 23:19ff; 26:1ff). That is, David in his flight from Saul finds himself in Ziph in southern Judah, now betrayed by the men of his own tribe, even though he had previously rescued one of their border towns from the Philistines (1 Samuel 23:1ff). This prayer for vindication should be understood against the background of betrayal and treachery.

Psalm 55

David turns to prayer, morning, noon, and night (verse 17), as he laments persecution by enemies (verses 1-8) and betrayal by friends (verses 12ff; cf. Psalm 41:9). He finds in prayer what is necessary to sustain him (verses 22,23)

Psalm 56

In a moment of crisis, David turns to prayer. According to the superscription, Psalm 56 was written by David “when the Philistines seized him in Gath,” probably the incident recorded in 1 Samuel 21:101-2 when David fled to Gath and feigned insanity in order to escape. Once more in crisis, David turns to prayer, where he finds confidence and hope.

Psalm 57

At a time of great danger, David turns to prayer. According to the superscription this psalm was written by David “when he fled from Saul, in the cave,” probably the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1-4 or perhaps 1 Samuel 24). David seeks refuge in

prayer and sees in the cave divine provision as it becomes for him “the shadow of Your wings” (verse 1) and a place of praise.

Psalm 58

At a time of injustice, David turns to prayer. This psalm is a complaint against unjust judges (or “rulers” as the NIV translates “gods” in verse 1), and a cry for their removal and the establishment of justice. The strong imprecations of verses 6-9 are reserved for those who are irreversibly committed to evil.

Psalm 59

At a time of life-threatening trouble, David turns to prayer. Written, according to the superscription, “when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him,” a trap from which David escaped through an upper room window, aided by his wife Michal (15—19:11ff). David pleads his innocence, for deliverance, and for the destruction of his evil enemies.

Psalm 60

At a time of setback and defeat, David turns to prayer. The superscription associates this Psalm with the victory over Edom “in the valley of Salt” (2 Samuel 8). But apparently there were initial defeats as Edom opportunistically attacked Israel in the south while David and the army were engaged in conflict with the Syrians in the north. David complains of divine rejection (verses 1-3, 9,10), pleas for victory (verses 4,5,11,12), and receive divine assurances of triumph (verses 6-8).

Psalm 61

Psalm 61 is a plea to God to be heard in prayer that expresses strong confidence in God’s protection and care. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 62

Under attack by enemies who pretend to be friends, David looks in prayer only to God, his rock, salvation, and fortress, for comfort and vindication.

Psalm 63

The superscription places David in the wilderness of Judah, perhaps in flight from Absalom (2 Samuel 15:13ff). His physical deprivations in the desert provide a metaphor for his soul, as he thirsts and yearns for the presence of God, to whom he clings in prayer in the face of mortal danger.

Psalm 64

Attacked by enemies who conspire to destroy him, David turns to God in prayer to protect and preserve his life, confident of the ultimate ruin of the evildoers (verses 7-10).

Psalm 65

The immediate occasion of Psalm 65 would appear to be rain sent by God in answer to prayer, perhaps at a time of drought (verse 9; cf. 2 Samuel 21:1-14). It celebrates both God's work in redemption (verses 1-8) and in the realm of nature (verses 9-13). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 66

The psalmist summons all the earth to praise God for His mighty redemptive acts in bringing Israel out of Egypt (verses 1-12) and then himself models the worship which he calls others to offer (verses 13-20).

Psalm 67

Sometimes called the "Missionary Psalm," it calls for all peoples and nations to praise God.

Psalm 68

The 68th Psalm celebrates the victory of God over His enemies and his fatherly care for His people (e.g. verses 5,6). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 69

As he sinks in a deep mire and the flood waters overwhelm him, David turns to prayer. Both his zeal for God (verse 9) and his suffering (verse 21) are prophetic of the experience of the Messiah, the Christ.

Psalm 70

Facing mortal danger, David looks to God for help through prayer, in words nearly identical to Psalm 40:13-17.

Psalm 71

Now an older man, the psalmist recalls a lifetime of reliance upon God, and prays for continuing protection from enemies.

Psalm 72

Psalm 72, the last psalm of Book 2 of the Psalter, is a royal Psalm “of Solomon,” according to the superscription, that is, concerning Solomon, a son of David. David’s prayerful aspirations and ideals for Solomon point to a future Messianic Son of David in whom his prayer shall be realized.

Psalm 73

Psalm 73 marks the beginning of Book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-83). The psalmist describes his struggle with reconciling the justice of God with the prosperity of the wicked (verses 1-16), an incongruity resolved only when in the presence of God he perceives their end (verses 17-28).

Psalm 74

Psalm 74 is a lament for the destruction of the temple, probably written in the immediate aftermath of the Babylonian conquest in 586BC.

Psalm 75

The psalmist gives thanks for the certainty and equity of God’s judgment.

Psalm 76

The psalmist celebrates God’s past and future victories over His enemies.

Psalm 77

Profoundly disturbed, the psalmist finds no comfort in God. Yet he returns again to the place of prayer, remembers the LORD’S wonders of old, and finds cause for hope.

Psalm 78: 1-18

The psalmist recalls the events of the exodus and wilderness wandering in response to his opening admonition to “tell the congregation the glorious deeds of the Lord,” to the end that “they shall not be like their fathers, as stubborn and rebellious generation” (verses 4, 8).

Psalm 78:39-72

The psalmist continues his review of the events of the exodus and wilderness wandering, highlighting God’s mighty work and Israel’s unbelief and disobedience, to the end that the “coming generation” not repeat the mistakes of their fathers (verses 1-8).

Psalm 79

The destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in 587 is the occasion of the ancient lament, “how long, O Lord?” (verse 5).

Psalm 80

The psalmist addresses God as Shepherd (verses 1-6) and Vinedresser (verses 7-19) and the people of God as flock and vine at a time of divine rejection and national devastation. The heart of his prayer may be found in the refrain thrice repeated: “O God, restore us, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we will be saved” (see also verses 7,19).

Psalm 81

The feast (verse 3) which provides the occasion of this Psalm could be either Passover (Exodus 12:18) or Booths (Lev. 23:29), both of which are essentially “exodus remembrances” (Motyer 538). The people of God are bidden to praise God (verses 1-5a). The voice shifts to the first person singular in verses 5b-14 as God reminds His people of his law and promises and their unbelief.

Psalm 82

The psalmist summons all rulers and authorities to exercise justice without partiality.

Psalm 83

Threatened by loud and allied enemies (listed in verses 6-8), the psalmist pleads that God break his silence and intervene as He had in times past (verses 9-11).

Psalm 84

The psalmist yearns for the presence of God which he experienced in connection with the temple and which parallels in experience in the assembly of the saints. Spurgeon entitled it “the Pearl of the Psalms.”

Psalm 85

Past mercies are remembered as the people of God suffer under God’s *present* judgments and pray for *future* blessings. The psalmist anticipates a day when “righteousness and peace kiss,” a promise realized in Christ.

Psalm 86

At a time of trouble, David turns to prayer (verses 1-7), combining praise (verses 8-10), teachability (verse 11), thanksgiving (verses 12, 13), and petition for deliverance (verses 14-17).

Psalm 87

Psalm 87 celebrates Zion, or Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God, and anticipates the inclusion of the nations, even of Israel’s ancient enemies (verse 4) as among her inhabitants.

Psalm 88

The most despairing of all the Psalms, the psalmist complains both that he suffers as a result of God’s immediate agency and at the same time God refuses to hear his pleas for help. Aside from the invocation (verse 1), the Psalm ends where it begins in unresolved anguish, and yet, in the place of prayer.

Psalm 89:1-29

The 89th Psalm divides into two distinct sections. Verses 1-37 celebrate the righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, and faithfulness of God in establishing both the created order and especially in establishing the covenant with David and his

descendants. Yet, in verses 38-52, he complains that God has removed that covenant with David and pleads for its restoration.

Psalm 89:30-52

This second reading of Psalm 89 continues in verses 30-37, the celebration of God's faithfulness in establishing a permanent covenant with David and his descendants, but begins in verse 38 to the end to complain that God seems to have abandoned that covenant and pleads for its restoration. When the promises of God and the circumstances of life seem to contradict, the psalmist turns to the place of prayer.

Psalm 90

As to the superscription this is "a prayer of Moses, the man of God." An extended meditation on man's mortality and God's eternity, the setting may well be Moses's own generation, doomed to wander in the wilderness. Psalm 90 is the first Psalm of Book Four of the Psalter (Psalms 90-106).

Psalm 91

A Psalm of trust whose original setting may have been the battlefield. The psalmist finds safety in the LORD who is a shelter, refuge, fortress, shield, buckler, and dwelling place. The LORD like a mother bird covers him with her pinons and hides him under her wings. Note that the voice shifts to the first person in verses 14-16, as God pledges to guard his loyal servant, a promise fulfilled supremely in Christ (see especially verses 11-12).

Psalm 92

The psalmist contrasts the righteous who delight in singing the praises of God and in contemplating His works with the uncomprehending wicked who are doomed to perish.

Psalm 93

This short Psalm is the first in a group of Psalms (93-100) that celebrates the LORD's reign as King.

Psalm 94

The psalmist calls upon the LORD to execute just vengeance upon the wicked.

Psalm 95

The 95th Psalm is a call to worship the LORD, the creator and possessor of all (verses 1-7a); yet it closes a warning to hear His voice (verses 7b-11).

Psalm 96

A royal Psalm, the 96th Psalm calls all the earth, all the nations, all families, and all peoples to sing praises to the LORD.

Psalm 97

A royal Psalm, the 97th Psalm calls on all the earth to acknowledge the LORD'S righteous reign.

Psalm 98

A royal Psalm, the 98th Psalm calls upon the earth to sing praises to the LORD for His salvation, His rule and His coming judgment.

Psalm 99

A royal Psalm, the 99th Psalm calls upon all the peoples of the earth to praise the LORD God, emphasizing in particular His holiness, as repeated three times in the refrain.

Psalm 100

A royal Psalm, identified in the superscription as "a psalm for giving thanks," the 100th calls upon all the earth to sing the LORD'S praises. Note that the worship of God begins with sung thanksgiving and praise.

Psalm 101

A royal psalm and a Psalm of David, the king pledges a life of personal obedience and to root out evil from his kingdom, a promise which the son of David, Jesus Christ, alone can fulfill.

Psalm 102

A royal Psalm, recognizing the LORD as “enthroned forever” (verse 12), yet one which according to the superscription is a “a prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord.”

Psalm 103

A Psalm of thanksgiving for the benefits of redemption.

Psalm 104

A Psalm of praise for God’s work of creation and providence.

Psalm 105

Whereas Psalm 104 praises God for creation and providence, Psalm 105 praises God for redemption, recalling Israel’s history from Abraham through the exodus.

Psalm 106

Psalm 106 recalls the exodus and wilderness wandering, contrasting Israel’s unbelief and sin with the LORD’S lovingkindness and faithfulness.

Psalm 107

The 107th Psalm is a Psalm of thanksgiving for the LORD’S lovingkindness (*hesed*) in rescuing his people from various kinds of trouble: captivity (verse 3), deprivations of the desert (verses 4-9), imprisonment (verses 10-16), foolishness (verses 17-22), and storms at sea (verses 23-32).

Psalm 108

Psalm 108 is composed of two previous Psalms, 57:7-11 and 60:5-12, with only minor variations. The places named in verses 7-8 are cited as a means of indicating dominion over the whole land of Israel, and in verse 9 Moab, Edom and Philistia are Israel’s principal enemies over which victory is promised.

Psalm 109

Falsely accused before a corrupt court, the psalmist prays for a reversal of roles and of intended outcomes and the imposition of divine justice. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 110

Among the most clearly Messianic of psalms and most frequently cited in the New Testament, its original composition may have been at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem (or Zion, verse 2), when David would have inherited the royal tithes of Jerusalem's kings, including the priesthood "according to the order of Melchizedek (verse 4). Finally, though, David looks beyond himself to his greater son, Jesus, the Messiah.

Psalm 111

The 111th is a psalm of praise for God's redemptive works. It is also an acrostic psalm, each of 22 lines starting with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Psalm 112

Like Psalm 111, Psalm 112 is an acrostic psalm, but whereas the theme of the 111th is the *works* of God, the theme of the 112th is the *man* of God.

Psalm 113

The 113th praises God both for his transcendence (verses 1-6), and His presence with His people (verses 7-9). This is the first of what is called the "Egyptian Hallel," that is, the psalms of praise sung in connection with the Passover observance (Psalm 113-118), undoubtedly sung by Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26).

Psalm 114

Using subtle, poetic imagery, the second of the "Egyptian Hallel" describes the power of God's self-manifestation in the exodus.

Psalm 115

The third of the psalms of the "Egyptian Hallel," Psalm 115 calls upon worshippers to glorify God and forsake idols.

Psalm 116

The fourth psalm of the "Egyptian Hallel," Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from death to which the psalmist responds with praise and with sacrificial offerings.

Psalm 117

The shortest of the psalms and the shortest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 117 calls the nations to worship the Lord (see also Psalm 15:7-11).

Psalm 118

The last of the “Egyptian Hallel” (Psalms 113-118), Psalm 118 was used in connection with the conclusion of Passover observance and so, most suitably, is among the most clearly Messianic of the Psalms. Jesus may have concluded the Last Supper with the singing of this Psalm (Mark 14:26).

Psalm 119

The longest psalm and largest chapter in the Bible. It is divided into 22 stanzas, each designated alphabetically by the succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The eight lines of each section begins with the same letter. Eight words are used to express the psalm’s central theme: law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, ordinances and the word.

Psalm 119:1-16 (Aleph and Beth)

Each line of verses 1-8 begins with the first Hebrew letter, Aleph; each line of verses 9-16 begins with the second Hebrew letter, Beth. The psalmist commends meditation upon God’s word.

Psalm 119:17-32 (Gimel and Daleth)

Each line of verses 17-24 begins with the third letter, Gimel; each line of verses 25-32 begins with the fourth Hebrew letter, Daleth. The psalmist yearns to know God’s law.

Psalm 119:33-48 (He and Waw)

Each line of verses 33-40 begins with the fifth letter, He; each line of verses 41-48 begins with the sixth Hebrew letter, Waw. The psalmist prays for understanding of God’s commandments.

Psalm 119:49-64 (Zayin and Heth)

Each line of verses 49-56 begins with the seventh letter, Teth; each line of verses 57-64 begins with the eighth Hebrew letter, Heth. The psalmist is comforted by God's word.

Psalm 119:65-80 (Teth and Yodh)

Each line of verses 65-72 begins with the ninth letter, Teth; each line of verses 73-80 begins with the tenth Hebrew letter, Yodh. The psalmist perceives how affliction has intensified his desire to know and keep God's word.

Psalm 119:81-96 (Kaph and Lamedh)

Each line of verses 81-88 begins with the eleventh letter, Teth; each line of verses 89-96 begins with the twelfth Hebrew letter, Lamedh. Through persecution and suffering, the psalmist is sustained by God's word.

Psalm 119:97-112 (Mem and Nun)

Each line of verses 97-104 begins with the thirteenth letter, Mem; each line of verses 105-112 begins with the fourteenth Hebrew letter, Nun. God's word makes us wiser than our teachers; it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Psalm 119:113-128 (Samekh and Ayin)

Each line of verses 113-120 begins with the fifteenth letter, Samekh; each line of verses 121-128 begins with the sixteenth Hebrew letter, Ayin. God's word upholds the righteous in their conflicts with the wicked.

Psalm 119:129-144 (Pe and Tsadhe)

Each line of verses 129-136 begins with the sixteenth letter, Pe; each line of verses 137-144 begins with the seventeenth Hebrew letter, Tsadhe. God's law imparts light and understanding; it is righteous and true.

Psalm 119:145-160 (Qoph and Resh)

Each line of verses 145-152 begins with the eighteenth letter, Qoph; each line of verses 153-160 begins with the nineteenth

Hebrew letter, Resh. The psalmist rises early that he may meditate upon God's law.

Psalm 119:161-176 (Sin, Shin, and Taw)

Each line of verses 161-168 begins with the twentieth and twenty-first letters, Sin and Shin; each line of verses 169-176 begins with the twenty-second Hebrew letter, Taw. The psalmist loves and delights in God's law.

Psalm 120

Psalms 120-134 form another collection of psalms (see Psalms 113-118, the Egyptian Hallel) known as "the Songs of Ascents." These were believed to be psalms sung by pilgrims at festival times on their way up to Jerusalem, Mount Zion. The collection begins with the pilgrim far from Zion, symbolically at least, in Meshech in Asia Minor, and in Kedar in Arabia, where he encounters the opposition of the ungodly.

Psalm 121

The second of the fifteen "Song of Ascents," the pilgrim looks for help to the hills of Zion, to Jerusalem, and the LORD who never sleeps or slumbers.

Psalm 122

The third of the fifteen "Song of Ascents," the pilgrim rejoices as he arrives at the gates of Jerusalem, most prized of cities, location of the house of the LORD.

Psalm 123

The fourth of the "Song of Ascents," the pilgrim lifts his eyes from the hills of Zion (Psalm 121) and God's throne in the temple (Psalm 122) to God's true throne in the heavens (Psalm 145:8-27), from where he looks expectantly for mercy.

Psalm 124

The fifth of the "Songs of Ascents," that is, psalms sung by pilgrims traveling up to Jerusalem at festival time. It is a psalm of thanksgiving to God for deliverance from the dangers of

earthquake (3b), flood (4a), beast of prey (6), and fowler (7). A Psalm of David.

Psalm 125

The sixth of the “Song of Ascents” likens the safety of the people of God to the stability of Mount Zion, the LORD surrounding His people even as the mountains surround Jerusalem.

Psalm 126

The seventh of the “Song of Ascents,” the psalmist recalls with gratitude an occasion when the LORD suddenly and unexpectedly delivered Jerusalem (Zion) from some great ordeal.

Psalm 127

The eighth “song of Ascents,” is “of Solomon,” and therefore either “written by” or “concerning” Solomon, warns of the futility of human endeavors, whether building a house, guarding a city, or earning a living (verses 1, 2).

Psalm 128

The ninth “song of Ascents,” the 128th Psalm continues the theme begun at the end of Psalm 127, of the blessings that flow from Mount Zion (Jerusalem): fruitful labor, a fruitful marriage, and long life.

Psalm 129

The tenth “song of Ascents,” Psalm 129 curses those who have afflicted Israel and who hate Mount Zion to which the pilgrims are journeying.

Psalm 130

The eleventh “song of Ascents,” Psalm 130, like Psalm 129, is a prayer that arises out of great suffering. But this time the psalmist looks not outward to enemies as the cause, but inward to his own sin. This is also the sixth of the “penitential psalms.”

Psalm 131

The twelfth “song of Ascents,” the pilgrim likens his heart in relation to God to that of a weaned child, contented and at rest with his mother.

Psalm 132

The thirteenth “song of Ascents” the pilgrim recalls the promises that God’s presence would be known in the temple and that David’s descendants would rule from Zion forever, a promise fulfilled in Christ.

Psalm 133

The fourteenth “song of Ascents” is a prayer by the pilgrim for unity and refreshing fellowship among those worshipping at Zion.

Psalm 134

The fifteenth and final “song of Ascents,” is a call to worship, the pilgrims calling the priests to “bless the LORD” (verses 1, 2) who in turn bless the assembled worshipers (verse 3).

Psalm 135

Psalm 135 is a hymn of praise for God’s works of creation, providence, and redemption.

Psalm 136

The 136th Psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving which traces God’s works from creation (verses 1-9) to the exodus redemption (verses 10-22) to the present (verses 23-26).

Psalm 137

Written from the exile in Babylon after 587 BC, the psalmist yearns to return to Jerusalem (verses 1-6) and pronounces bitter imprecations against the enemies of Zion (verses 7-9).

Psalm 138

The first of eight Psalms of David, Psalm 138 is a hymn of thanksgiving for answered prayers (verse 3).

Psalm 139

David explores the personal implications of God's omniscience and omnipresence.

Psalm 140

Psalm 140 is a plea for protection from the evil intentions of one's enemies. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 141

David prays that the LORD will restrain his own evil inclinations as he seeks protection from the traps laid by the wicked. Note that David orders his prayer life according to the pattern of the temple sacrifices and understands its spirituality (verse 2).

Psalm 142

According to the superscription, Psalm 142, like Psalm 57, was written by David "when he was in the cave," hiding from Saul (see especially 1 Samuel 22:1; 24:3). At this time of life-threatening danger, David turns to prayer.

Psalm 143

The last of the "penitential psalms" (see also 6, 25, 32, 51, 130, 138,), David pleads for mercy, guidance, and deliverance at a time of mortal danger.

Psalm 144

Set in the midst of conflict, Psalm 144 at once looks back to past victories (verses 1-4), pleads for present deliverance (verses 5-11) and prays for future prosperity (verses 12-15). A psalm of David.

Psalm 145

The superscription of Psalm 145 calls it "a song of praise." It is an acrostic psalm, each line beginning with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, minus the letter nun. A psalm of David.

Psalm 146

The last five psalms begin with the word, "Hallelujah," or "praise the Lord" and so have been called the "Great Hallel,"

bringing the psalter to a close with a crescendo of praise. Psalm 146 praises the Lord's trustworthiness.

Psalm 147

The second of the psalms of the "Great Hallel," the setting of Psalm 147 may be the post-exile period in which Jerusalem was being rebuilt. It extols the greatness of God.

Psalm 148

The third of the psalms of the "Great Hallel," Psalm 148 calls upon all creation to "praise the Lord."

Psalm 149

The fourth psalm of the "Great Hallel," verses 6-9 suggest a martial setting, perhaps as a song sung in celebration of a military victory. Like Psalm 148, it is a summons to worship.

Psalm 150

The fifth and final psalm of the "Great Hallel," it brings the Psalter's crescendo of praise to a climatic summons to "praise the LORD."

Author

Authorship of the collection of wise sayings that we call Proverbs is attributed to Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:10), to Agur (chapter 30) and Lemuel (chapter 31). Though Solomon wrote and spoke many proverbs, his role may have been more one of leadership in initiating their compilation (cf. 1 Kings 4:29-34).

Date & Occasion

It is impossible to give the book of Proverbs a definitive date through the scholars though nothing requires that it have reached its present form prior to the Exile (587 B.C.).

Message

Proverbs teaches us God's truth not so much by way of commandment as by wise observation. Wisdom, according to Proverbs, is understanding the nature of things and acting accordingly. Most of our decision-making falls "between the lines" of scriptural commands. What it means for a husband to love his wife at any given moment is a wisdom issue. The command is to love her and this he must do. The specifics of response are where wisdom lies. True wisdom is found in understanding the nature of God, the nature of the created order, human nature, the nature of human relations, and the nature of a given occasion and choosing behavior or the path that is suited or corresponds to the reality discerned. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God incarnate (1 Corinthians 1:24). In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:2,3). By His Spirit He guides us in wisdom's way.

Proverbs 1:1-19

Chapter 1 begins a long section which extends to the end of chapter 9, which might be subtitled "wisdom's instructions." These instructions are a preface to the one sentence proverbial sayings which make up most of the rest of the collection (Chapters 10-22; 25-29). Verses 1-7 are a sort of "prologue" providing the purpose of the entire collection and verses 8-19 a

warning regarding the enticement of sinners who would lead one to forsake wisdom.

Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom is personified as calling to the foolish and warning them to heed her counsel before it's too late, while promising security and comfort to those who heed her call.

Proverbs 2

A father instructs his son in the value of wisdom in guiding one in the ways of God and righteousness, and in guarding one from evil, particularly sensuous evil.

Proverbs 3

A father instructs his son to trust in the LORD with all his heart. The word "teaching" is the Hebrew word *torah*, ordinarily translated "law." God's law is His fatherly instruction for his people.

Proverbs 4

A father instructs his sons to be attentive to his "teaching," his *torah*, typically translated "law," to get wisdom and to walk in its way, and avoid the path of the wicked.

Proverbs 5

A father warns his son against immorality.

Proverbs 6

A father's practical warnings against debt, sloth, and adultery and his urging his son to heed his mother's "teaching," her *torah*, again, the ordinary word for "law." God's law is for His people motherly instruction.

Proverbs 7

A father commends wisdom as a guard against the adulteress and the inevitable devastation that results from listening to her loud voice. We are warned thereby to free both physical and spiritual adultery of the importance of loyalty to marriage and to the church.

Proverbs 8

Wisdom is personified as calling to the simple to come to it and learn. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this portrait of wisdom personified (1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 1:15,16; Hebrews 1:1-4).

Proverbs 9

Wisdom and folly are both portrayed as women extending invitations to enter their homes and partake of their food, wisdom's leading to insight, folly's to death.

Proverbs 10

Proverbs 10:1–22:10, entitled “the proverbs of Solomon” consists mainly of single-sentence proverbial sayings based upon observation and experience. Chapter 10 consists mostly of paired opposites, contrasting the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked.

Proverbs 11

Proverbial sayings which contrast both the *ways* of the wicked and righteous and their *ends*. These proverbs describe the inevitable harm that comes to the wicked, and the certain blessing that comes to the righteous.

Proverbs 12

Proverbial sayings which contrast both the *ways* of the wicked and righteous and their *ends*. These proverbs describe the inevitable harm that comes to the wicked, and the certain blessing that comes to the righteous.

Proverbs 13

Proverbial sayings which contrast both the *ways* of the wicked and righteous and their *ends*. These proverbs describe the inevitable harm that comes to the wicked, and the certain blessing that comes to the righteous.

Proverbs 14

Proverbial sayings which contrast both the *ways* of the wicked and righteous and their *ends*. These proverbs describe the inevitable harm that comes to the wicked, and the certain blessing that comes to the righteous.

Proverbs 15

Wise observations are made, beginning with the use of the tongue, and the ways and ends of the righteous and wicked are contrasted.

Proverbs 16

The path of wisdom is related to a right understanding of the ways of God.

Proverbs 17

The way of wisdom is identified not so much by commands but observations of the way things work in God's world.

Proverbs 18

The writer describes the ways of the foolish and makes wise observations about how things work in the world, especially in connection with speech.

Proverbs 19

"The proverbs of Solomon," begun in 10:1 continue. Wise observations about life are made and the ways of the righteous and wicked are contrasted.

Proverbs 20

Wise observations about life are made, as from a father to his child, as the ways of the righteous and wicked are contrasted.

Proverbs 21

Fatherly observations about life are made as the ways of the righteous and wicked are contrasted.

Proverbs 22

The contrasting pairs comparing the wise and the foolish which have been featured since Proverbs 10:1 and labeled “the proverbs of Solomon” give way at 22:16 to “the words of the wise,” counsel touching many areas of life, which continue through Proverbs 24:22.

Proverbs 23

Wise instruction touching many areas of life continues.

Proverbs 24

The “words of the wise” continue to verse 22, where they give way to more “sayings of the wise.”

Proverbs 25

More “proverbs of Solomon” are found in chapters 25–29, joining those of 10–22:16 apparently recovered during Hezekiah’s reign in Judah (715–686 B.C.) and recorded for posterity. This chapter focuses on one’s words and the company one keeps.

Proverbs 26

The fool, the sluggard, meddlers, and deceivers are given detailed description.

Proverbs 27

Wise instruction regarding the righteous and the wicked, touching a range of issues.

Proverbs 28

Wise observations frequently touching wealth and poverty, rooted in the fear of the Lord and obedience to His law.

Proverbs 29

The wise and foolish, the righteous and wicked, are contrasted, particularly as applies to the dealings of a ruler, concluding the “proverbs of Solomon” recorded in chapters 25-29.

Proverbs 30

Proverbs 30 records the wise sayings of Agur, the son of Jakeh. His identity is unknown. As with the preceding chapters, his proverbs are based on wise observations as to how things work in God's world.

Proverbs 31

Proverbs 31 records the wise sayings of an unknown King Lemuel as taught to him by his mother. They are designed to equip a prince for the task of ruling righteously and include the importance of finding "an excellent wife." The ideals of such a wife has inspired believing women for generations, even as they have guided men in search of a wife. The book of Proverbs concludes where it began, with the "fear of God" as the foundation of all wisdom (1:7; 31:30).

Author

The author is identified as “The Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem” (1:12). Traditionally this has been interpreted as indicating Solomon, which fits well with the descriptions of his unsurpassed wisdom (1:16) and unrivaled wealth (2:4-9). Others, however, have argued that Ecclesiastes was authored in a later time by a different author writing in the wisdom tradition of Solomon.

Date & Occasion

If written by Solomon, it would date sometime during the years of his reign (970–93 B.C.). If a later date, the scholars speculate a time after the Hebrew exile in Babylon, late in the 6th century or early 5th century B.C. Its aim is to demonstrate through experience that meaning and satisfaction in life comes only through faith in God.

Message

The “preacher,” *Qoheleth* (Hebrew) or *Ecclesiastes* (Greek) looks at life “under the sun” or “on earth,” that is, life without reference to God or eternity and concludes “all is vanity” and “striving after the wind.” The believer’s response to the experience of injustice, meaninglessness, and futility in this world is to work hard, enjoy life, and trust God, knowing that in Christ our labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Ecclesiastes 1

The futility of life, work, and wisdom “under the sun,” apart from God, in an existence which terminates in death, and in which all ultimately is forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 2

The futility of pleasure, possessions, accomplishments, and wisdom in light of death (verses 1-23); and the consequent priority of common pleasures (verses 24-26).

Ecclesiastes 3

There is an appropriate time for every human activity (verses 1-8); the priority of eating and drinking and enjoying one's work even in light of eternity and the unknown (verses 9-22).

Ecclesiastes 4

The futility of life "under the sun," meaning life considered from the perspective of this world only, without reference to God and eternity.

Ecclesiastes 5

The fear and reverence of God is commended, the futility of accumulated honors and riches is asserted, and the priority of common pleasures is urged.

Ecclesiastes 6

The futility of worldly pleasures, riches and honor are again declared. They do not last and they do not satisfy.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Proverbial sayings contrasting wisdom and folly.

Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

Observations about the way of wisdom in this world.

Ecclesiastes 8

Wisdom and the fear of God are commended and their limits recognized in a fallen world in which the righteous and wicked often suffer the same end.

Ecclesiastes 9

Given the inescapable reality of death, enjoyment of the common pleasures of life is urged.

Ecclesiastes 10

The way of the wise man and the fool is contrasted.

Ecclesiastes 11

Wise counsel is given concerning a variety of circumstances, while reminding us of the vanity, the futility of life in this world.

Ecclesiastes 12

The preacher concludes urging us to fear God and keep His commands from the days of our youth and until our end in this world inevitably comes.

Song of Solomon

Author

The traditional view is that Solomon is the author of the song that bears his name. But since the phrase “of Solomon” can mean “by Solomon” or “for Solomon,” the author cannot be identified with certainty.

Date & Occasion

If written by Solomon it would have been written in the mid-10th century B.C. Otherwise both the date and occasion are difficult to identify. At one level it is a celebration of martial love and intimacy. At another level it has been interpreted as an allegory of Christ’s love for His bride, the church, the people of God (cf. Jer 2:2; Hos 12:14-20; Eph 5:22ff). Authors from the Fathers to Bernard of Clairvaux to the Reformers to the Puritans (such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards) to modern interpreters (e.g. Hengstenberg and Keil) have taken this view. It has been known variously as “Song of Solomon,” “Song of Songs,” and “Canticles” (from the Latin word for “song”).

Message

The love celebrated in Song of Solomon is characterized by sacrifice, desire, and commitment. It is written in verse with rich imagery and highly sensual language. It has been described as a “rhapsody of love” and a “romantic fantasy.” It provides a beautiful picture of the pain, longing, and pleasure of marital intimacy, best understood as that between country girl and her shepherd groom, and by extension, between the church and Christ.

Song of Solomon 1

The bride/church confesses her love for her Shepherd-groom (whom she imagines to be a king) and he his love for her. Her dark skin indicates long labor in the fields and a lower class background.

Song of Solomon 2

The bride/church likens herself to a “rose of Sharon,” that is, a wildflower. She delights in her beloved who brings her into a “banqueting house;” and whose “banner over me (is) love.” She imagines a rendezvous with her Shepherd-groom, whom she likens to a gazelle.

Song of Solomon 3

The bride/church dreams of the consummation of her love, and of her wedding day, which she imagines as a royal occasion, and her groom as the magnificent Solomon/the greater than Solomon.

Song of Solomon 4

The groom praises the beauty of his bride/church, now inaccessible to him.

Song of Solomon 5

The bride/church first dreams of a rendezvous with her Shepherd-groom in a garden of love, but awakens to realize he is not to be found, as the dream turns into a nightmare of separation. Yet the bride/church affirms of her groom, “My beloved is distinguished among ten thousand” (v 10).

Song of Solomon 6

The Shepherd-groom and his bride express their delight in each other. The bride/church exclaims of her groom, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (v 3).

Song of Solomon 7

The Shepherd-groom continues to express delight in his bride/church (vv 1-7) and they imagine the consummation of their love (vv 8-13).

Song of Solomon 8

The longing of love, as yet unconsummated, is once more expressed (vv 1-7). “Love is strong as death” (v 6). The song ends with final memories and concluding counsel.

Introduction to the Prophets

Isaiah is the first book in a section of the Bible known as the “Prophets,” that stretches from Isaiah all the way to the end of the Old Testament. Traditionally they are divided into two sections. First, the five “major prophets” (“major” not because of importance but large size): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Second, the twelve “minor prophets” (“minor,” not because of unimportance but relative small size): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The prophets were the mouthpiece of God (cf. Exodus 4:12-16; 7:1,2). Their work can be divided into three main periods.

1. *The early non-writing prophets* (pre-8th century B.C.): Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha may serve as prominent examples.
2. *The pre-exilic prophets* (7th & 8th centuries B.C.) who prophesied around the two great crises of this period: the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah); and the fall of Judah to the Babylonians (Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah).
3. *The exile and post-exilic prophets* (4th–6th centuries) who prophesied during the exile (Ezra and Daniel) and during the period of the restoration to Canaan (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

Through the prophets God called the people of God to repentance and faithfulness, and encouraged their faith and hope. They were silent from Malachi until John the Baptist, who served as forerunner to the Great and Final Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Author

Isaiah was called to a prophetic ministry and ministered in Judah for 40 years. He was aristocratic by birth, well-educated and well-connected. He was married and a father of several children. Whereas Jeremiah was a reluctant, even a “weeping” prophet, Isaiah seemed to have been eager, even to have loved his calling: “Here am I, send me” (6:3). According to tradition he was martyred by being sawn in two.

Date & Occasion

The opening verse of Isaiah tells us that Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of the Judean Kings Uzziah (d. 740 B.C.), Jothan (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (729–686 B.C.). This was a time of threatening Assyrian imperialism and Judean unfaithfulness, of the northern kingdom’s destruction (722 B.C.) and the southern kingdom’s narrow escape.

Message

Isaiah’s message is one of judgment and hope. The first half (chapters 1-35) is mainly about God’s judgment of Israel through the Assyrian invaders. The second half (chapters 40-66, with chapters 36-39 as a bridge between the two sections) is mainly about hope: hope of return from exile, of the destruction of their enemies (chapters 46, 47), and of salvation through a coming Servant of the LORD (chapters 42ff), who would bring justice and light to the Gentiles (chapters 42, 49) and take away sin and guilt (52:13–53:12), fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36).

Isaiah 1:1-9

Isaiah 1–5 serves as a sort of preface to the whole book, leading up to chapter 6 and Isaiah’s call. It introduces all the major themes. Chapter 1:1-9, the wickedness of Judah is denounced.

Isaiah 1:10-31

The LORD declares His hatred of liturgical correctness joined to unrighteousness, of religious ritual without moral reform.

Isaiah 2

Isaiah prophesies of a glorious future when the nations shall come to Zion to be instructed in the ways of the God of Jacob (verses 1-6) and when the haughty and proud shall be humbled.

Isaiah 3:1–4:1

The LORD's judgment upon Judah: a dearth of leadership and the devastation of its women.

Isaiah 4:2–5:7

The LORD's branch and the LORD's vineyard.

Isaiah 5:8-30

Six woes are pronounced against Israel for greed, drunkenness, and other sins.

Isaiah 6

Isaiah's vision of God and call to the ministry, 740 B.C.

Isaiah 7

Chapters 7-11 are set in the context of a military alliance of Syria and Israel against Judah and the resulting wars of 734-732 B.C.. Isaiah reassures a terrified Ahaz that they shall not succeed, that Judah shall be spared, ultimately by the Messiah, Immanuel (see Matthew 1:22, 23).

Isaiah 8

Isaiah prophesies of the coming Assyrian invasion.

Isaiah 9:1-7

The LORD promises that one day deliverance will come for the people of God through the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:8–10:4

The LORD's judgment upon the northern kingdom Israel, called Ephraim, and its capital, Samaria.

Isaiah 10:5-19

Assyria, though the instrument of God's judgment upon Israel, "the rod of My anger," shall be destroyed for its arrogance.

Isaiah 10:20-34

The LORD promises that a remnant of Israel will survive the Assyrian's onslaught and return.

Isaiah 11

Though the Davidic tree is but a stump, from it shall come the righteous Messiah, His "peaceable kingdom," and a reconstituted Israel.

Isaiah 12

The second Exodus announced in chapter 11 will be accompanied by a new hymn., corresponding to the Song of Moses, sung at the first Exodus (Exodus 15).

Isaiah 13

Chapters 13-23 record a series of oracles directed at the nations beginning with Babylon and Assyria, the great empires and centers of culture.

Isaiah 14:1-23

Isaiah continues his oracle of Babylon's destruction when the day of the Lord comes.

Isaiah 14:24-32

Oracles against Assyria and Philistia, the latter, Israel's ancient enemy. The year of King Ahaz's death (and of the oracle against Philistia) is between 727 and 715 B.C.

Isaiah 15

Oracle against Moab, Israel's neighbor east of the Dead Sea.

Isaiah 16

Isaiah concludes his oracle against Moab.

Isaiah 17

Oracle against Damascus, capital city of Syria.

Isaiah 18

Oracle against Cush, that is, Nubia, the region of southern Egypt and beyond, extending to Ethiopia.

Isaiah 19

Oracle concerning Egypt, its judgment (verses 1-15) and its blessing (verses 16-25).

Isaiah 20

The setting of chapter 20 is in 711 B.C., at the time that the Philistine city of Ashdod rebelled against Assyria and was crushed by Sargon. Isaiah delivers an enacted parable of nakedness and grief, representing the coming destruction of Egypt and Cush (southern Egypt to Ethiopia, Nubia), fulfilled by Assyrian King Esarhaddon in 671 B.C.

Isaiah 21

A second oracle of the fall of Babylon (see chapters 13 and 14), concerning Dumah and Arabia.

Isaiah 22

An oracle of judgment concerning the “valley of vision,” that is, Jerusalem, because it has forgotten God.

Isaiah 23

An oracle concerning Tyre, a major commercial port north of Israel, and Sidon, another prominent Phoenician port (“ships of Tarshish” were ships capable of sailing to Tarshish, regarded as the ends of the earth [verse 1]). This ends the section which began in chapter 11 recording the oracles concerning the nations.

Isaiah 24

Chapters 24-27 are sometimes called the “little apocalypse,” as Isaiah describes the day of the LORD as a time of judgment (chapter 24), and redemption (chapters 25-27).

Isaiah 25

God’s triumph over His enemies and rescue of His people is celebrated.

Isaiah 26

A song of redemption in celebration of God’s salvation is sung.

Isaiah 27

The future restoration of Israel is promised.

Isaiah 28:1-14

Chapters 25-35 continue the theme of judgment and salvation. In chapter 28 judgment is pronounced on Ephraim on the occasion of its fall to the Assyrians (722 B.C.).

Isaiah 28:15-29

Isaiah prophesies of Israel’s coming redemption through “a precious cornerstone,” a promise fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ (cf. Psalm 118:22; Romans 9:33, 10:4; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8).

Isaiah 29:1-14

An oracle of woe against Jerusalem, anticipating the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

Isaiah 29:15-24

An oracle of woe against Jerusalem’s sages.

Isaiah 30:1-17

Oracles of woe against those who seek help from Egypt rather than from the LORD.

Isaiah 30:18-33

Though judgment is coming, yet the LORD will bind up the brokenness of His people and heal their wounds.

Isaiah 31

An oracle of woe against those who trust in warriors and weapons instead of God.

Isaiah 32

The rule of the righteous king is described (verses 1-18) and complacent women are warned of impending disaster (verses 9-20).

Isaiah 33

The sixth and final oracle of woe of this section (chapters 28-33) is directed against Assyria, whose destruction will be Israel's restoration and the LORD's exaltation.

Isaiah 34

The day of the LORD shall be a day of destruction for the nations, represented by Edom, Israel's ancestral enemy.

Isaiah 35

The redemption, return, and transformation of Israel is described, a promise fulfilled through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:2-6, 12:22; Mark 7:37; Luke 7:21, 22).

Isaiah 36

Chapters 36-39 are an historical bridge connecting the two halves of Isaiah, chapters 1-35 and 44-66. They record the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy, that the Assyrians would surround Jerusalem but that the LORD would then deliver a remnant of His people by destroying the besieging army. The narrative begins about 715 B.C. Much of this content can also be found in 2 Kings 18:13–20:19.

Isaiah 37:1-20

Isaiah's reassurance and King Hezekiah's prayer that Jerusalem shall not fall to the Assyrian army.

Isaiah 37:21-38

The LORD answers Hezekiah's prayer and destroys the Assyrian army and its King Sennacherib.

Isaiah 38

The LORD hears Hezekiah's pleas for healing and extends his life.

Isaiah 39

Envoys from Babylon come to Jerusalem seeking support in their rebellion against Assyria. Hezekiah foolishly shows them his arms and wealth.

Isaiah 40:1-11

Chapters 40-55 from the final section of the book of Isaiah. Originally addressed to those taken captive and exiled in a foreign land, they promise rescue and restoration that finally will come through God's suffering Servant, the Messiah. In verses 1-8 Isaiah proclaims comfort for the people of God and prophecies of a voice that will cry in the wilderness, a prophecy fulfilled by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3, 4; Luke 1:76; 3:4,5; John 1:23).

Isaiah 40:12-31

The incomparable greatness of the Lord God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 41

The people of God are promised the help of their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, who is contrasted with worthless idols.

Isaiah 42

Chapter 42 presents the first of four "Servant Songs" found in chapters 40-55, celebrating the Servant of the LORD, the Messiah.

Isaiah 43

The LORD alone is God and Savior.

Isaiah 44:1-20

Isaiah scorns the worship of idols.

Isaiah 44:21–45:13

The sovereign LORD redeems Israel through Persian King
Cyrus, His anointed.

Isaiah 45:14-25

The righteous LORD, the only Savior.

Isaiah 46

The true God contrasted with lifeless idols.

Isaiah 47

An oracle of judgment against Babylon, soon to fall and never
rise again.

Isaiah 48

An appeal to Israel to believe God's word and heed His
commandments.

Isaiah 49

The second of the four "Servant Songs," the LORD's servant is
called Israel (verse 3) but clearly transcends Israel (verses 1-7).
The restoration of Israel is promised in verses 8-26. Verse 15
has been beautifully rendered in William Couper's hymn,
"Hark, My Soul, it is the Lord," while verse 16 provided the
inspiration for the last stanza of Toplady's "A Debtor to Mercy
Alone."

Isaiah 50

Verses 4-11 record the third of Isaiah's four "Servant Songs."
Israel's suffering amidst her captors foreshadows the suffering
of the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:26; John
19:1).

Isaiah 51

Israel is called to look back to its founders, to the law of God, and to the LORD's creative and redemptive acts, that it might find comfort and confidence in these.

Isaiah 52:1-12

The salvation of Zion is promised.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

The last of the four "Servant Songs," focusing on the redemptive suffering of the LORD's servant, far transcending Israel and pointing to the suffering of *the* Servant, the Messiah, the Christ.

Isaiah 54

As a result of Messiah's suffering (chapter 53), an enlarged and unending covenant of peace shall be established.

Isaiah 55

The suffering of the Messiah in chapter 53 results in the growing church of chapter 54 and the gospel call of chapter 55.

Isaiah 56

Chapters 56-66 form the last great section of Isaiah's prophesy. They focus on an Israel restored to Zion, addressing both its glory (chapters 60-66) and its shame (chapters 56-59).

Isaiah 57

Addressing perhaps the flagrant apostasy of Manasseh's reign (2 Kings 21), idolatry is condemned in verses 1-13, while comfort is extended to the contrite in verses 14-21.

Isaiah 58

Formal religious ritual without social conscience is condemned in verses 1-12, while careful and joyful religious observance is urged in verses 13,14.

Isaiah 59

Human depravity, elaborated in verses 1-15a and cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:15-17, finds its answer only in the Redeemer described in verses 16b-21, as Isaiah concludes his description of Zion's shame.

Isaiah 60

The focus shifts in chapters 60-66 from Zion's shame (chapters 55-59) to Zion's glory. Isaiah portrays the return of despised Israel to Zion and the inflow of the nations a model of the greater world-wide gathering of converts into the church of Christ.

Isaiah 61

The song of the LORD's anointed, the Spirit-endowed Servant of the LORD, first sung by Isaiah but fulfilled by Jesus (Luke 4:17-21; 7:22).

Isaiah 62

The LORD's determination to perfect Zion and His call to her watchmen to importunity on her behalf.

Isaiah 63:1-14

The LORD avenges the nations, represented by Edom (verses 1-6), and His former mercies are remembered (verses 7-14).

Isaiah 63:15–64:12

An extended prayer for renewed mercy for God's forlorn people, among the most eloquent intercessions of the Bible.

Isaiah 65

The LORD's willingness to be found by those who seek Him and His rejection of those who forsake Him (verses 1-16); the promise of a new heavens and a new earth (verses 17-25).

Isaiah 66

Isaiah concludes his prophesy with a final vision of a renewed Zion and the ingathering of the nations.

Author

Jeremiah, a priest from Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin is identified as the author of the prophesy bearing his name. Known as the “weeping prophet” (see 8:18–9:2), Jeremiah, though bold in public, is periodically despondent in private, as revealed in a series of passages known as his “confessions” (11:8-20; 12:1-4; 15:10-18; 17:14-18; 18:19-23; 20:7-18). Often opposed by the authorities and others and his life frequently threatened (e.g. 11:8-23; 18:18; 26:8; 36:19; 38:6), yet by the end of his life his fame had spread even to Nebuchadnezzar, who made special provision for him when Jerusalem fell (39:11-14). He ministered for over 40 years.

Date & Occasion

Jeremiah received his call in 625 B.C. during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.), the reforming king. His warnings of judgment began then and extended through the reigns of Jehoahaz (609), Jehoiakim (609–598), Jehoiachin (598–597), and Zedekiah (597–586). This was a tumultuous time, when Assyria fell to the Babylonians (612 B.C.), the first deportations of Judeans in 605, and the invasions of Nebuchadnezzar in 597 and 586 B.C., the last of which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of its population to Babylon.

Message

Jeremiah begins with a call to repentance in order to avoid the judgment that otherwise would come (e.g. 7:1-15) and ends with the warning that the time for repentance is past and judgment is now determined (19:10,11). He also preaches a message of hope, but only on the other side of judgment, as he prophesies of the fall of Babylon (fulfilled in 539 B.C.), the return of a remnant from exile, and the establishment of a new covenant (33:31-34), a promise fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 8:8).

Jeremiah 1

The call of the prophet Jeremiah, 626 B.C.

Jeremiah 2:1-19

In chapters 2-20 Jeremiah warns Judah of judgment and calls for repentance. In chapter 2 Judah's idolatry is condemned.

Jeremiah 2:20-37

Judah's lust for idols is compared to a donkey in heat.

Jeremiah 3

Faithless Judah is likened to a shameless whore and yet is promised mercy if it will repent.

Jeremiah 4:1-18

Judah is called to break up the fallow ground before the wrath of God should come and it is too late.

Jeremiah 4:19-31

Jeremiah anguishes over Judah's coming desolation; Judah is likened to a forsaken woman.

Jeremiah 5:1-13

Because the poor and the great alike refuse to repent, pardon for Jerusalem is impossible.

Jeremiah 5:14-31

Jeremiah warns that judgment shall come upon Judah through a foreign power.

Jeremiah 6:1-15

Jeremiah warns that Jerusalem shall be besieged and destroyed, and warns against the false prophets who promise "'peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (verse 14).

Jeremiah 6:16-30

Jeremiah calls Judah back to the "ancient paths" (verse 16).

Jeremiah 7:1-20

Jeremiah condemns a formal religion that is unaccompanied by moral reform or uncleansed of idolatry.

Jeremiah 7:21-34

Jeremiah urges the priority of obedience over religious ritual, condemns idolatry, and warns of judgment.

Jeremiah 8

Jeremiah condemns the wise men, prophets, priests, and the whole people, and grieves their desolation asking, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (that is, no healing medicine, no comfort in Israel?) (verse 22).

Jeremiah 9

Jeremiah weeps for Jerusalem’s desolation and explains to the wise that destruction comes upon Judah because of disobedience.

Jeremiah 10

The true God contrasted with idols.

Jeremiah 11

In chapters 11-13 the covenantal aspects of Judah’s idolatry are highlighted. Judah has broken the covenant with God ratified at Sinai. Jeremiah is commanded not to pray for covenant breaking Judah, while the men of Anathoth, Jeremiah’s home town, are warned of judgment for their opposition to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 12

Jeremiah complains in prayer that the wicked prosper seemingly by the hand of the LORD.

Jeremiah 13:1-14

Judah is likened to a ruined loincloth, and to jars filled with wine.

Jeremiah 13:15-27

Judah is threatened with exile.

Jeremiah 14

Judah suffers with drought and famine, and God will no longer hear the pleas of His people. The lying prophets are denounced: Judah shall perish by the sword.

Jeremiah 15

Following Jeremiah's complaints (14:19-22), the LORD refuses to relent of his promised judgment (verses 1-9); and Jeremiah complains this time of his persecutors (verses 10, 15-18) and the LORD promises protection (verses 19-21).

Jeremiah 16

The LORD prohibits marriage, mourning, and feasting for Jeremiah as a sign of Judah's dismal future.

Jeremiah 17:1-13

The sin of Judah.

Jeremiah 17:14-27

Jeremiah prays for deliverance (verses 14-18) and the LORD promises His blessing if Jerusalem will keep the Sabbath day holy (verses 19-27).

Jeremiah 18

The metaphor of the potter and the clay is employed in verses 1-17; Jeremiah's adversaries plot against him in verses 18-23.

Jeremiah 19

Israel is likened to an earthen jar that is broken.

Jeremiah 20

As Pashhur, a leading priest, persecutes Jeremiah, he bitterly laments his suffering as a prophet and yet recognizes his inward and inescapable compulsion to speak.

Jeremiah 21

In chapters 21-29 Jeremiah prophesies of salvation only through exile. In chapter 21 (597–586 B.C.) Jeremiah prophesies to King Zedekiah that Jerusalem shall fall to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and counsels surrender.

Jeremiah 22:1-10

The house of David is urged to do justice and righteousness.

Jeremiah 22:11-30

The sons of King Josiah are denounced: Shallum, Jehoiakim, Coniah.

Jeremiah 23:1-22

The LORD promises to set careful shepherds over His people and to raise up a righteous branch for David to reign as king (verses 1-8); and the lying prophets are denounced (verses 9-22).

Jeremiah 23:23-40

Jeremiah continues to denounce the lying prophets.

Jeremiah 24

Following the first large deportation by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., Jeremiah is shown a vision of two baskets of figs.

Jeremiah 25:1-14

The scene shifts back to 605 B.C. when Babylon first began attacking in Palestine. Jeremiah predicts 70 years of captivity for Judah and punishment for Babylon.

Jeremiah 25:15-38

The nations around the vicinity of Judah and to the ends of the earth shall be forced to drink along with Judah the cup of God's wrath.

Jeremiah 26

Jeremiah prophesies in the Temple precincts at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, 609–608 B.C., and is threatened with death.

Jeremiah 27

At the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, 593 B.C., Zedekiah and his mideastern allies are commanded to submit to the yoke of Babylon.

Jeremiah 28

The false prophet Hananiah is denounced.

Jeremiah 29

Jeremiah writes from Jerusalem to those already exiled in Babylon urging resignation to 70 years of captivity and warning of Jerusalem's imminent destruction.

Jeremiah 30

Having prophesied of Judah's destruction (chs. 2-20) and of exile (chs. 21-29), Jeremiah now promises that Israel & Judah shall be restored to the land of promise.

Jeremiah 31:1-22

Because God loves His people "with an everlasting love," they will be restored from captivity and re-established in the land of promise.

Jeremiah 31:23-40

As the prophesy of restoration of the Hebrews from captivity continues from chapter 30, God promises to establish a "new covenant" with His people (v. 31), ultimately fulfilled in Christ Jesus (cf. Hebrews 8:8-12)

Jeremiah 32:1-25

God instructs Jeremiah to buy a field in Anathoth, his hometown south of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., at the height of Babylon's siege of Jerusalem and impending deportations, a command that the prophet finds puzzling.

Jeremiah 32:26-44

The Lord explains to Jeremiah that his purchase of land in Israel even as Jerusalem is being besieged and its population deported signals the hope and promise that Israel will return from exile.

Jeremiah 33

Jeremiah continues as a prisoner of Zedekiah "in the court of the guard" (v. 11) in the year 587. Even as Jerusalem is being destroyed by the Babylonians, he announces God's promises of

reconstruction, forgiveness, a restored Davidic monarchy and Levitical priesthood, and an everlasting covenant. All this, ultimately, is fulfilled through *the* Son of David (Matthew 1:1ff), our great High Priest (Hebrews 5:6-10; 7:11-25), Jesus the Messiah.

Jeremiah 34

King Zedekiah and the people of Israel are condemned for freeing and then re-enslaving brother Israelites.

Jeremiah 35

Judah is compared unfavorably to the Rechabites, a clan which obeyed its father Jonadab's command to live a nomadic life and abstain from wine, while Judah has failed to obey the commands of God spoken through His prophets.

Jeremiah 36

Jeremiah's oracles are collected and recorded on scrolls, read by his scribe Baruch in the temple, and again by Jehudi to King Jehoiakim and his officials in December 604. The king responds, with Nebuchadnezzar already in the suburbs of Jerusalem, by burning Jeremiah's scrolls.

Jeremiah 37

In the year 597, Jeremiah warns that the withdrawal of the Babylonian army is only temporary, and that Pharaoh's army will provide no help. Jeremiah is accused of desertion and is imprisoned.

Jeremiah 38

Jeremiah is cast into cistern by his enemies and left to die. Rescued by the king's servants Jeremiah again counsels King Zedekiah to surrender to the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah 39

After a two-and-one-half year siege, Jerusalem falls to the Babylonians in July of 586, the nobility is slaughtered, and the population is deported; but the life of Jeremiah is spared.

Jeremiah 40

Jeremiah is released from among the captives who are bound in chains and heading for exile in Babylon, and allowed to remain in Judah.

Jeremiah 41

Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the King of Babylon to rule Judah, is murdered.

Jeremiah 42

The remnant of Judah is warned by God through Jeremiah not to flee to Egypt.

Jeremiah 43

Fearing Babylonian reprisals following the murder of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, the remnant of Judah defies Jeremiah's prophetic warning and flees to Egypt.

Jeremiah 44

The Judean exiles are warned against idolatry in Egypt, which they refuse to abandon, bringing the promise of further disaster for them and Egypt alike.

Jeremiah 45

The 45th chapter recalls God's promise to spare the life of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, delivered, according to verse 1, at the time of the preparation of the first scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies (36:1-3).

Jeremiah 46

Chapters 46-51 record a series of judgment oracles against the nations surrounding Israel. Chapter 46 records the first: judgment upon Egypt, delivered in 605 BC, after the decisive Babylonian victory at Carchemesh.

If it's not deemed desirable to read these oracles in the church's public services (due to length and repetition) one may summarize these chapters with the following statement leading to the reading of chapter 52.

Chapters 46-51 record a series of judgment oracles against the nations surrounding Israel: Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Amon, Edom, Danasius, Kedar, Hazar, Elam, and Babylon.

Jeremiah 47

The second of Jeremiah's judgment oracles: judgment upon the Philistines.

Jeremiah 48:1-25

The third of Jeremiah's oracles: judgment upon Moab.

Jeremiah 48:26-47

The conclusion of Jeremiah's third judgment oracle, against Moab.

Jeremiah 49:1-22

The fourth and fifth of Jeremiah's judgment oracles: judgment upon Ammon and Edom.

Jeremiah 49:23-39

The sixth, seventh, and eighth of Jeremiah's judgment oracles: judgment upon Damascus, Kedar and Hazar, and Elam.

Jeremiah 50:1-20

Jeremiah's ninth judgment oracle, extending to the end of chapter 51: judgment upon Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:21-46

Jeremiah's judgment oracle against Babylon continues.

Jeremiah 51:1-19

Jeremiah's judgment oracle against Babylon continues.

Jeremiah 51:20-40

Jeremiah's judgment oracle against Babylon continues.

Jeremiah 51:41-64

Jeremiah's judgment oracle against Babylon concludes.

Jeremiah 52

The fall of Jerusalem, already described in chapter 39, is recounted in this final chapter of Jeremiah's prophesy, as a reminder that Jeremiah's prophecies had been fulfilled. The two main deportations to Babylon are recalled, the first in 597, the second in 586 B.C., and a third minor deportation ending on the hopeful sign of kindness shown to King Jehoiakim, the successor of King Zedekiah, by the evil-merodach, successor of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, in the 37th year of the exile, or 561 B.C.

Lamentations

Author

Jeremiah traditionally has been credited with the authorship of Lamentations. This has been true at least since the writing of the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.). Jeremiah was a prophet and priest of Judah in her last days, and has sometimes been called the “weeping prophet.”

Date & Occasion

The setting is Jerusalem after its fall to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and before the return of the first wave of exiles in 538 B.C.

Message

Each of the five chapters is a poetic lament in which Jeremiah expresses his inconsolable grief over Jerusalem’s anguish. These laments feature the elements typical of Hebrew poetry: complaint, affirmation of trust, and appeal for deliverance from enemies. Lamentations anticipates the lament of Jesus over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39) and points ahead to His humiliation and cry of dereliction from the cross (Matthew 27:46), beyond which lies restoration and exaltation. Christians have found in Lamentations the language to express their grief, especially in times of personal or national grief.

Lamentations 1

Jeremiah weeps for Jerusalem, the once favored city, which now lies desolate, her children taken captive to Babylon in this his first of five laments.

Lamentations 2

Jeremiah’s second lament for Zion, that is, Jerusalem, consumed by the LORD’s righteous anger.

Lamentations 3:1-39

Jeremiah’s third lament, a personal complaint, at verse 21 turns into an affirmation of hope rooted in the knowledge of the LORD’s great faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:40-66

Jeremiah's concludes his third lament with pleas for deliverance from his enemies, his eyes flowing "with rivers of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people."

Lamentations 4

In his fourth lament Jeremiah vividly portrays Jerusalem's suffering, yet concludes with assurance that Zion's punishment is accomplished while her enemy's is just beginning.

Lamentations 5

Jeremiah reviews once more Jerusalem's degradation at the hands of her Babylonian invaders and pleas for restoration in this his fifth and final lament.

Author

As is the case with many of the prophetic books, we know little about Ezekiel except what we can learn from the book bearing his name. When Nebuchadnezzar first captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C. he took away King Jehoiachin and a number of leading citizens into exile. Ezekiel at the age of 26 was among this first group of deportees (2 Kings 24:14). He was a priest and he began his prophetic ministry at the age of 30 in Babylon (1:1-3). He was there when his wife died and when news arrived of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (24:15-18). His prophetic ministry continued for at least 23 years until about the age of 50 (29:17). The circumstances of his death are unknown.

Date & Occasion

Ezekiel writes during an era when Assyria was declining, Babylon was rising, and Egypt to the south and Babylon to the north were wrestling for control of the land between their rival empires, that is, coastal Syria and Palestine. Israel's kings vacillated in their allegiance between the great powers, trying the patience of the Babylonians who deported (597 B.C.) and finally destroyed the nation (586 B.C.).

Message

Ezekiel may be divided into three parts:

1. Judgment on Jerusalem – chapters 1-24
2. Judgment on the nations – chapters 25-32
3. Mercy and restoration for Israel – chapters 33-48

It is written autobiographically, is filled with symbolic actions, "enacted parables" (3:22-36; 4:1-14; 5:1-4; 12:10-20; 21:6,7, 18-24; 24:15-24; 37:15,28), parables (chapters 15,16,17,19,23) and proverbs (12:21,22; 16:44; 18:2,3). Ezekiel proclaims the transcendent glory of God as well as God's imminence in mercy (e.g. 36:26,27). It is "easily the most bizarre of all the prophets," says J.A. Motyer.

Ezekiel 1

Ezekiel writes from Babylon, on his 30th year (the age priests normally assumed the full responsibilities of their office), in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile (July 593 B.C.; cf. 2 Kings 24; 2 Chronicles 36), from the banks of the Chebar canal (Hebrews outside of Israel often gathered for worship along streams of water), recording his vision of the glory of the Lord, as "the word of the Lord came to (him)" (v. 3).

Ezekiel 2

Ezekiel is called to serve as God's prophet. "You shall speak my words to them," his is told, "whether they hear or return to hear" (v. 7).

Ezekiel 3

Ezekiel is *commissioned* to speak to the house of Israel in exile, as God's "watchman," as a prophet and He is *anointed* by the Spirit.

Ezekiel 4

Ezekiel symbolically portrays the coming final siege of Jerusalem and the punishment of the houses of Israel & Judah (realized in 587-86).

Ezekiel 5

Ezekiel symbolically enacts and then declares Israel's punishment: a third shall die by plague and famine, a third shall die by the sword, a third shall be scattered to the winds, and a small part preserved as a remnant.

Ezekiel 6

God's judgment against idolatry is announced, yet not without hope, as the effect shall be that "you shall know that I am the Lord" (vv. 7, 10, 13, 15).

Ezekiel 7

Ezekiel announces the arrival of the day of wrath without pity against the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 8

Ezekiel's vision of Chapters 8-11 begins in ch. 8 with four types of idolatry in the Temple in Jerusalem, abominations which shall bring God's wrath without pity.

Ezekiel 9

As Ezekiel's vision continues, God's executioners destroy the idolaters of Jerusalem while the faithful are identified and spared. The glory of God begins His departure from the temple and Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 10

Ezekiel sees burning coals scattered over the city, cherubim are again described (as in chapter 1:15ff), as the glory of the Lord leaves the temple.

Ezekiel 11

Ezekiel's vision, which began in chapter 8, concludes with the promise that even in captivity God will preserve a remnant, even as the glory of the Lord leaves the city.

Ezekiel 12

Ezekiel symbolically portrays Israel's coming captivity and exile in Babylon.

Ezekiel 13

The condemnation of false prophets, which began in 12:21, continues. They "prophesy from their own hearts," and they "follow their own spirit," saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace."

Ezekiel 14

The condemnation of false prophets, begun in 12:21 continues to 14:11; the chapter concludes with the certainty of Jerusalem's destruction, though even Noah, Daniel and Job were in it.

Ezekiel 15

The Lord likens Jerusalem to a useless vine, good only for burning.

Ezekiel 16:1-34

The Lord likens Jerusalem to abandoned infant which he rescued, and a faithless wife upon whom he lavished his gifts.

Ezekiel 16:35-63

The Lord's judgments are pronounced on Judah for its spiritual adultery, sins that exceeded even those of Sodom & Samaria; yet a restoring, everlasting covenant is promised.

Ezekiel 17

The Parable of Two Eagles and a Vine is delivered, representing King Zedekiah's shift of allegiance from Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King who had installed Zedekiah as king, to Egypt, a political move that the Lord condemned.

Ezekiel 18

Ezekiel repudiates the proverb of the sour grapes, explaining that each individual and each generation suffers for its own sin.

Ezekiel 19

Ezekiel voices a lamentation "for the princes of Israel" (v.1) likening Israel first to a lioness which produces cubs (i.e. kings), and then utilizing a common metaphor for Israel, that of an uprooted vine.

Ezekiel 20:1-26

As in 8:11 and 14:1, the elders of Israel exiled in Babylon with Ezekiel gather to seek counsel from Ezekiel, now about a year later than the date last mentioned (in 8:1), or August 591 B.C., five years to the day before Jerusalem is to be burned.

Ezekiel 20:27-49

Ezekiel continues to instruct the elders of Israel in the failure of their fathers to keep God's commandments and honor His Sabbaths, failures which they have perpetuated. Yet a judged and scattered people shall be re-gathered in a new exodus, purged in a new wilderness experience, and restored to the land.

Ezekiel 21

The sword of the Lord, normally wielded against Israel's enemies, is drawn against Israel.

Ezekiel 22

Israel is condemned for its immorality, idolatry, and injustice; for the unfaithfulness of her priests, princes, and prophets, and consequently subjected to the refiner's furnace.

Ezekiel 23:1-27

An allegory of two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who represent two cities: Samaria, capitol of the northern kingdom, and Jerusalem, capitol of the southern kingdom.

Ezekiel 23:28-49

The allegory of the two sisters concludes God promising judgment upon Jerusalem through her "lovers."

Ezekiel 24

Jerusalem is compared to a boiling pot whose corrosion (rust) cannot be cleansed (vv 1-14); Ezekiel's wife, tenderly identified as the "delight" of his eyes (v. 16), dies, and he must forgo customary mourning as a sign of the tragic judgment of God about to fall on Jerusalem by the hand of the Babylonians (vv. 15-26).

Ezekiel 25

Chapters 25-32 contain a series of oracles against most of the states of the ancient Near East. Chapter 25 features prophecies against Ammon, Moab, Seir, Edom, and Philistia, Israel's near neighbors.

Ezekiel 26

Chapters 26-28 feature prophecies against Israel's Phoenician neighbors, the wealthy trading cities of Tyre and Sidon. The destruction of Tyre is prophesied in chapter 26, never again to be inhabited.

Ezekiel 27

A lament for Tyre, likened to a beautiful trading ship, laden with goods, that sinks into the depths of the sea, a “dreadful end.” Tyre “shall be no more forever” (v 36).

Ezekiel 28

Tyre and Sidon are denounced for their worship of wealth, their pride and their self-sufficiency;” the restoration of Israel is promised.

Ezekiel 29

Prophecy against Egypt for having failed to be a help to Israel at the time of the Babylonian conquest in 588/87, delivered first in 587 B.C. and again in 571 B.C. (v. 17), promising that Egypt itself will be delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, exiled, and after 40 years restored, though in a permanently degraded condition.

Ezekiel 30

The prophecies against Egypt, begun in chapter 29, continue. The cities of Pathros, Zoan, Thebes, Pelusium, Memphis, and Tehaphnehes are specifically targeted.

Ezekiel 31

Pharaoh’s fate is compared to that of once proud and mighty Assyria, like a cedar of Lebanon now cut down.

Ezekiel 32

A final lament for Pharaoh delivered two months after word of Jerusalem’s destruction reached the exiles (March 585), as the prophecies against Egypt, begun in chapter 29, are concluded. Egypt joins in the grave all those nations who were slain by the sword.

Ezekiel 33:1-20

In verses 1-9 the duty of the prophet is likened to that of a “watchman” on the walls of the city; and in verses 10-20 individual moral responsibility to respond to God’s word is emphasized, God promising that He will judge each according to His ways (v 20).

Ezekiel 33:21-33

Verse 21 marks the transition to the second half of Ezekiel's prophecy. Word of Jerusalem's fall reached the exiles in Babylon in 585 (v. 21). Focus shifts in Ezekiel from Jerusalem's sinful past to its tragic present, and finally to its future restoration and glory. Verses 21-33 record a new willingness to hear, yet still not heed Ezekiel's message.

Ezekiel 34:1-19

Ezekiel denounces the unfaithful shepherds, that is, the leaders, for feeding themselves and not feeding, not leading or protecting the sheep. God declares that He Himself shall be their shepherd, He Himself will gather, heal, lead, and feed His sheep.

Ezekiel 34:20-31

God promises to provide a future David as shepherd of Israel, who will establish a covenant of peace, and send "showers of blessings" (v. 26) from which the old gospel song drew its inspiration.

Ezekiel 35

Mt. Seir, a synonym for Edom, the ancestral enemy of Israel, is denounced and promised destruction because of its anger, envy, and hatred of God's people (vv 11, 12).

Ezekiel 36:1-21

Following the prophesy of judgment against Mt. Seir (Edom) (vv 1-7), a prophesy of restoration is directed to the mountains of Israel (vv 8-21).

Ezekiel 36:22-38

The Lord GOD declares that He will act to restore Israel for His own name's sake, sprinkling clean water on the house of Israel, giving it a new heart and a new spirit.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The vision of the field of dry bones over which Ezekiel is to prophesy and to which the people of God are likened.

Ezekiel 37:15-28

Ezekiel is commanded to join two sticks, representing the two kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim (Israel), which shall be restored to God and reunited under a future Davidic King, the Messiah. Then the goal of redemption shall be fulfilled, God dwelling with His people.

Ezekiel 38

Prior to his vision of a renewed city of God and temple in chapters 40-48, Ezekiel prophesies in chapters 38 and 39 against Gog and Magog, unknown entities which probably represent a coalition of Israel's enemies gathered for decisive battle.

Ezekiel 39

Prophecies against Gog and Magog, Meshech and Tubal, symbolic of Israel's enemies, continue from chapter 38, along with the promise of Israel's restoration from exile.

Ezekiel 40–43:9

Read 40:1-4

Read 43:1-9

Ezekiel's prophecy concludes with a vision, even a guided tour, of the restored city of God and temple, which extends over the final nine chapters, portraying an ideal time when God will bless His people and be present among them. (Read 40:1-4.) The remainder of chapters 40–42 describe the temple and its courts. Chapter 43 describes the return of the glory of God to the temple, whose departure had previously been described by Ezekiel (10:18-22; 11:22-24). (Read 43:1-9.)

Ezekiel 43:9–48:30

Read 47:1-12

Ezekiel continues to record his vision of the restored city and temple, describing the altar, the gate for the prince, various

rules, sacred precincts, offerings, and feasts and land allotments, ending with the promise, “the LORD is here.” Chapter 47:1-12 describes a life-giving river which shall flow from the temple, an image which Jesus employs in describing Himself as the source of “living water” (John 4:10,14; cf. 7:37-39).

Author

The author identifies himself as Daniel (9:2; 10:2), one of the young Hebrew men taken into the service of the King of Babylon as described in Chapter 1.

Date & Occasion

Verses 1-7 place the book of Daniel in the period immediately following the victory of Babylon and the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. The Babylonians followed up this victory by invading Judah in what was the first of three invasions (in 605, 597, and 587). Among the spoils of victory were certain outstanding youth who were taken captive to Babylon. Daniel writes his prophesy from Babylon.

Message

Though Judah was defeated in battle, taken captive and exiled to a distant land, God is still absolutely sovereign over human affairs. Kingdoms may rise and fall, whether the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, or Romans, but God rules over all, and the people of God and the plans of God are secure. Despite the changing circumstances of life, God's people must remain faithful to Him, who ultimately will destroy His enemies and deliver His people through a Savior.

Daniel 1

The first chapter describes the occasion of the training of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, outstanding Hebrew youth sent to Babylon to be educated in "the literature and language of the Chaldeans" (v. 4). Despite refusing the king's food, these Hebrew youths prove superior in appearance and wisdom than all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:1-24

Daniel alone, among all the wise men of Babylon, is able to tell King Nebuchadnezzar both his troubling dream and its interpretation.

Daniel 2:25-46

Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a succession of kingdoms, leading to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Daniel is rewarded with high honors and authority.

Daniel 3

God delivers Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from fiery furnace, into which they were cast for their refusal to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.

Daniel 4:1-27

Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's second dream, a prophesy of the King's humiliation for his failure to recognize the sovereignty of God.

Daniel 4:28-37

Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, foretold in his own dream as interpreted by Daniel, is triggered by his proud failure to recognize the sovereignty of God.

Daniel 5

Mysterious "handwriting on the wall" condemns King Belshazzar for his sacrilege leading to the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 539 B.C.

Daniel 6

Daniels' enemies conspire to have him cast into a lion's den for his refusal to worship Darius the king of Persia.

Daniel 7

Recalls Daniel's prophetic vision given in the first year of Belshazzar's reign (c. 552 B.C.) of four beasts representing four kingdoms: the Medo-Persian, the Greek, the Roman, and a final kingdom of ten horns, all of which are superseded by His vision of the everlasting kingdom ruled by the Ancient of Days.

Daniel 8

Recalls a second vision which came to Daniel early in Belshazzar's reign (c. 555 B.C.), also of the succession of

empires from the Medo-Persian to the Greek, to the rise of the wicked Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175–164 B.C.) who would persecute the people of God.

Daniel 9:1-19

Daniel, in 539–538 B.C., now about 80 years old, recalls Jeremiah's prophesy that the years of captivity would be 70 (Jeremiah 25:11,12; 29:10). Consequently he prays for the restoration of Jerusalem, but not before he prays an extended prayer of confession of sin.

Daniel 9:20-27

Daniel 10

In the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C., two to three years after the prayer of Daniel in chapter 9, Daniel is terrified by a vision of a heavenly being, which he receives while still in Babylon.

Daniel 11:1-19

Daniel returns to the timeframe of the 9th chapter, 539–538 B.C., and he prophesies of the rise of Xerxes, his war with the Greeks, the rise of Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.), the division of his empire, conflict between the king of the north (the Seleucid kingdom) and the king of the south (the Ptolemaic Kingdom).

Daniel 11:20-45

Daniel's prophesy continues, as he tells of the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphany, his abominations and blasphemies, and his defeat by "the King of the North."

Daniel 12

Daniel prophesies of the end of time.

Author

Little is known about Hosea beyond his name and calling. He was a prophet to the northern kingdom Israel.

Date & Occasion

Hosea ministered from about 750 B.C. to a few years before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. This was a period of political and religious decline in Israel, following the prosperity and security of the 40-year reign of Jeroboam II (c. 793–753 B.C.) Six kings reigned over the next 25 years of political and social chaos, four of whom were assassinated by their usurpers. Syncretism, idolatry, and immorality had polluted Israel's religion.

Message

Hosea uses vivid metaphors, especially marriage, to denounce Israel's unfaithfulness and call the nation to repentance. He also holds out hope of restoration (e.g. 1:6; 2:23) based on the mercy of God, ultimately fulfilled only in Christ (Romans 9:25,26; 1 Peter 2:10).

Hosea 1

Hosea is commanded to marry a wife of whoredom and bear children of harlotry, a command that we are to understand retrospectively. A whore is what she became.

Hosea 2

The judgments of God upon unfaithful Israel are followed by His restoring mercies.

Hosea 3–4

In chapter 3 Hosea recounts his remarriage to his adulterous wife, a picture of God's merciful reconciliation with faithless Israel. In chapter 4 Hosea speaks as God's advocate bringing charges, a covenantal lawsuit against Israel, for violating the terms of the covenant. All manner of spiritual whoredom is denounced and in particular, "my people are destroyed for their lack of knowledge" (verse 6).

Hosea 5

Both Ephraim (another name for the northern kingdom of Israel) and Judah are condemned for their spiritual whoredom and warned of the LORD's withdrawal from them and that He will not return unless they repent.

Hosea 6

Israel & Judah are rebuked for their superficial repentance (verses 1-3), their fickle affections (verse 4), their ritual sacrifices (verse 6), and their transgression of the covenant (verses 7ff).

Hosea 7

The northern kingdom, called by the names of Ephraim and Samaria (the capital city) is rebuked for its half-baked ("a cake not turned") alliances (verses 4-6) and its dove-like silliness in turning from the LORD to foreigners for safety (verse 11-16).

Hosea 8

Having sown the wind of unfaithfulness to God, Israel shall reap the whirlwind of His judgment.

Hosea 9

Israel's (also called Ephraim) dalliances with the fertility gods will result in infertility and scarcity.

Hosea 10

Israel is urged to forsake its idols, to break up the fallow ground of its heart, and sow righteousness (verses 11, 12).

Hosea 11

The LORD's ceaseless love for prodigal Israel from childhood to the present. Admah and Zeboiim are references to cities that were totally destroyed by divine judgment, a destiny to which God will not abandon Israel (Ephraim) His son (verse 8).

Hosea 12

The LORD's indictment of Israel (called by the name of Ephraim) and Judah. Gilead and Gilgal (verse 11) are regions in Israel.

Hosea 13

Ephraim, another name for the northern kingdom Israel, is condemned for its idolatry at the heart of which is this: "they forgot me." "Samaria," another name for the northern kingdom, is warned that God shall fall upon it in judgment like a lion, a leopard, and a bear.

Hosea 14

Israel urged to repent and return to the LORD, where it will find healing and love.

Author

Verse 1 identifies the author as “Joel, the son of Pethuel.” Otherwise little is known about him.

Date & Occasion

Scholars range in their opinions on the date of Joel’s writing from the ninth century B.C. to just before the exile in the sixth century B.C. to the post-exilic period in the fifth century B.C.. Joel provides no clear indication of the time in which he is writing.

Message

Joel warns of the coming “day of the Lord,” which shall be a day of “destruction from the Almighty” (1:15). He warns that the present plague of locusts that the nation is enduring is a precursor of a greater judgment and calls the people of God to repentance, assuring them that God remains merciful (2:12-13). Joel points ahead to a coming day when the Holy Spirit will be poured out on “all flesh,” when whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and when God’s final judgment shall be rendered, all of which is fulfilled in connection with the work of Christ (2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21; Romans 10:13; Revelation 6:9, 9,2).

Joel 1

Joel interprets the devastation brought by a plague of locusts and drought as judgments from the LORD (verse 1-12) and calls the nation to repentance (verses 13-20).

Joel 2:1-17

Joel warns of the nearness of the terrible “day of the LORD” and calls for fasting, weeping, and mourning, holding out hope that the “gracious and merciful” LORD may “turn and relent” (verses 13,14).

Joel 2:18-32

The LORD promises a repentant Israel restored prosperity and plenty and even the outpouring of His Spirit, a promise ultimately fulfilled in Christ at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21).

Joel 3

The LORD promises through Joel that the enemies of the people of God shall be judged (verses 1-16) and Judah shall know security and abundance forever (verses 17-21).

Author

The prophet Amos was born in Tekoa, a village five miles south of Bethlehem, 15 miles south of Jerusalem. Amos was “not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet” (7:14), that is, he had not studied to be a prophet and was not apprenticed in one of Israel’s prophetic schools. By training he was a “shepherd” (1:1), “herdsman” or livestock breeder, and a “dresser of sycamore figs” (7:14). He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.

Date & Occasion

Amos ministered primarily to the northern tribe of Israel during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (792–740 B.C.) and Jeroboam II of Israel (793–753 B.C.). It was a period of peace and prosperity. Israel’s neighbors were temporarily weak (Babylon, Egypt, Assyria). Israel grew wealthy, and enjoyed a false sense of security.

Message

Amos brings what has been called a “covenant lawsuit,” indicting Israel for its idolatry, immorality, and injustice. He warns of God’s judgment, of coming destruction and exile, but also a time of restoration and blessing (9:11ff).

Amos 1

Amos begins his ministry delivering the welcome message of the LORD’s judgment upon Israel’s neighbors and ancestral enemies: Syria (Damascus), Philistia (Gaza), Phoenicia (Tyre), and Edom.

Amos 2

The welcome message of the LORD’s punishment of Israel’s neighbors and enemies continues with Moab, and then, perhaps too close for comfort, Judah, and finally the unanticipated and unwelcome message of His punishment of Israel.

Amos 3

Amos prosecutes a covenant lawsuit on the LORD's behalf against Israel, summoning the nations as witnesses, and warning that only a remnant shall survive the coming judgment.

Amos 4

Amos prosecutes a second covenant lawsuit targeting the "cows of Bashan" (Bashan being a fertile area east of the Jordan River) and recalling various judgments which the LORD sent to warn Israel, yet failed to result in repentance. Consequently he warns, "prepare to meet your God" (verse 12).

Amos 5

Israel is urged to seek the LORD and live (verses 1-17) and warned that the day of the LORD, eagerly anticipated as the day of destruction for Israel's enemies, shall instead be just that for Israel itself.

Amos 6

Amos condemns "those who are at ease in Zion," who enjoy their wealth and power, and are disinterested in the moral and religious ruin of Israel.

Amos 7:1-8:3

Amos tells of four visions of Israel's destruction, after the third of which there is an attempt to force Amos to stop his pessimistic and (perhaps) unpatriotic prophesies.

Amos 8:4-14

Amos charges Israel with indifference to the plight of the poor, judicial corruption, and deceitful commercial practices. He warns of a coming famine for the word of the LORD (verse 11).

Amos 9

Amos records his fifth vision of Israel's destruction and exile (verses 1-10) yet also promises a day of restoration (verses 11-15).

Author

Little is known about the prophet who gave his name to this prophesy. Obadiah means “servant of the LORD.”

Date & Occasion

The occasion of Obadiah’s writing is an attack on Jerusalem in which the Edomites took part (verses 11-14). Scholars do not yet agree if this was the military assault led by Arabs and Philistines during King Jehoram’s reign (848–841 B.C.), or that of the Babylonians 250 years later (605–586 B.C.).

Message

Obadiah’s prophesy is directed at the descendants of Esau, Edomites, yet sacred Scripture is given to the people of God who are meant to overhear its message. While Jerusalem lay in ruins and the evil Edomites appear to have triumphed, God asserts His sovereign purposes, promises to humble proud Edom, and restore His people.

Author

We know from Jonah 1:1 and 2 Kings 14:25 that Jonah was the son of Amittai (of whom we know nothing) and from Gath-hepher, about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee and 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem, a prophet of the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.). Jonah is the principle character of the book but the author is unknown.

Date & Occasion

The first half of the eighth century B.C. was a period of peace and prosperity for both the northern and southern kingdoms. Israel enjoyed territorial expansion, population growth, and commercial success. As God's chosen, it was blessed by God. However, Israel was not the only people about whom God had redemptive concerns as Jonah was sent to call Nineveh, the capital city of the hated Assyrian Empire, to repentance.

Message

The message of Jonah is that of God's love for the world. It stands as a rebuke of national pride and ethnic bigotry, as Jonah is required to be God's agent in saving the Ninevites, so despised and feared by the people of God. Jonah anticipates the fuller revelation of God's love for the world manifested in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (John 3:16; Matthew 28:18ff).

Jonah 1

Jonah is called by God to preach repentance to hated Nineveh, flees instead, and is swallowed by a great fish.

Jonah 2

Jonah cries out to God from the belly of the fish and the LORD delivers him.

Jonah 3

Jonah obeys the LORD's call to preach judgment to Nineveh, which responds to his warning with humility and repentance.

Jonah 4

Jonah despairs over God's mercy to Nineveh, bringing the LORD's rebuke upon Jonah's petty contempt for lost souls.

Author:

The book of Micah was written by the prophet whose name it bears. A contemporary of Isaiah, he ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (750–686 B.C.). Micah was from Moresheth (1:1), or the foothills of Judah.

Place & Occasion:

Micah was written at the time of the Assyrian invasions, 750–686 B.C., leading to the destruction and exile of the northern kingdom, Israel, in 722 B.C. and the occupation of Judah up to the gates of Jerusalem. He addresses both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, both Samaria and Judah.

Message:

Micah denounces Israel for its idolatry, its oppression of the poor, injustice, and immorality. He calls the nation to repentance for sin and to obedience and faithfulness to God's covenant. Finally, Micah promises restoration through the Messiah, Whom God shall raise up from Bethlehem (5:1-5).

Micah 1

Micah announces God's judgment upon Samaria (Israel) (verses 2-7) and upon Judah (verses 8-16). The place names found in verse 10-15 are towns scattered throughout the region that had been taken by the Assyrians.

Micah 2

Micah denounces the greedy landowners (verses 1-5) and the false prophets who would have him silenced (verses 6-11). Yet, he says, the LORD will preserve a remnant (verses 12-13). Verse 7 records the wonderful promise of God: "Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?"

Micah 3

Micah denounces the political and religious leadership of Israel, its prophets, priests, and princes.

Micah 4

Micah's message shifts from impending judgment to the latter days, when the remnant shall be rescued and Messiah's rule established.

Micah 5

Micah prophecies of the birth of Messiah in Bethlehem (verses 1-6) and of preserving and purging of His remnant (verses 7-15).

Micah 6

Micah as covenant prosecutor indicts Israel for unfaithful to the terms of the covenant, summoning witnesses (verses 1,2), pronouncing covenant curses (verses 9-16), and reminding them of God's grace (verses 3-5) and His simple requirements: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (verses 6-8).

Micah 7

Micah laments that no one is righteous or trustworthy. He places all his confidence in the God who pardons iniquity, who promises to tread our iniquities underfoot, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Author

Little is known about the prophet Nahum. He is identified as “Naham of Elkosh” in 1:1, but attempts to identify Elkosh have proven unsuccessful. As is typical of Old Testament prophets, his message is prominent while his identity recedes into the background.

Date & Occasion

The prophesy of Nahum can be dated between 663 B.C. and 612 B.C., between the capture of Thebes by the Assyrians, which he reports as a past event (3:8), and the fall of Nineveh, which he reports as a future event (3:5-7). It is likely to date more specifically in the period 660–650 B.C., during the reign of King Manasseh of Judah.

Message

About a century after Jonah’s successful call of Nineveh to repentance, Nahum delivers a “burden against Nineveh,” that is, a message of judgment against Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. Condemned for its arrogance, its lust for power, its brutal warmongering, and its insatiable materialism, this time it will not repent. Nineveh’s destruction is at the same time the deliverance/salvation of the people of God, one which foreshadows the salvation that will be theirs in its fullness only in Christ Jesus (cf. Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Nahum 1

The LORD’s wrath against Nineveh and good news for His people.

Nahum 2

A vision of Nineveh’s destruction, though lying in the future, told in a vivid present tense.

Nahum 3

Nineveh’s irreversible doom and the delight of the nations who endured her oppressions.

Author

Nothing is known about the author who has given to this book its name outside of what can be gleaned from his prophesy itself. The meaning of his name is uncertain.

Date & Occasion

Reference to the Babylonians as a threatening power places Habakkuk between the collapse of the Assyrian Empire (612–605 B.C.) but before Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem and deported King Jehoiachin to Babylon in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:8-17). More precisely, it falls between the years 604 and 600 B.C., after the Battle of Carchenish in 605 B.C., which established Babylon as the dominant power in the region. Habakkuk writes on the one hand in the context of this Babylonian threat, and on the other the moral and religious decline in Judah.

Message

Prayer, rather than prophetic preaching, forms the heart of Habakkuk's message. It begins with his cry against injustice in Judah (1:2-5), the LORD's bewildering answer (1:6-11); a second cry against what is perceived as a greater injustice (1:12–2:1), the LORD's second answer (2:2-5); and concludes with persevering prayer (chapter 3). The key to the whole is found in 2:4: the just shall live by faith, that is, persevering dependence upon and trust in God. This is the foundation of a right relationship with God to which the New Testament appeals in its presentation of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; cf. Hebrews 10:35-39).

Habakkuk 1

Habakkuk complains to God of injustice in Judah, to which the Lord responds by sending the Chaldeans, leading to further complaint by Habakkuk that God's avengers are worse than those to whom they are being sent to punish.

Habakkuk 2

As Habbakuk awaits the Lord's answer to the question he raised in Chapter 1 about the injustice of punishing wicked Judah through even more wicked Chaldeans, he is told that the Chaldeans also shall be punished in due time, and in the meanwhile, the righteous shall live by faith.

Habakkuk 3

Habakkuk pleads that God will "in wrath remember mercy" (v. 2). He concludes determined to "rejoice in the LORD" whatever hardships may continue (v. 17-19).

Author

Zephaniah is identified as the author of the book that bears his name. We know little about him beyond the genealogy in verse 1. His ancestor “Hezekiah” may be the king of Judah who reigned 715–686 B.C. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Date & Occasion

Zephaniah prophesied in the southern kingdom during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.), the king under whom great reforms occurred in 621. Since Nineveh had not yet been destroyed (2:13-15) , and since he denounces the idolatry that Josiah reformed, it is likely that Zephaniah prophesied in the earlier part of Josiah’s reign and was instrumental in bringing about those reforms.

Message

Zephaniah warns of a coming day of the Lord in which God will use a foreign enemy to destroy Jerusalem for her sins. Yet, in the end, this judgment shall lead to restoration.

Zephaniah 1

Zephaniah denounces Judah and Jerusalem for their idolatry and syncretism (verses 4-6), warning of a universal “day of the LORD,” a day of terrible judgment.

Zephaniah 2

Zephaniah calls the people of God to seek the LORD while there is still time to escape His judgments (verses 1-3), even as they are reassured that their enemies shall be punished as well (verses 4-15).

Zephaniah 3

The sins of Jerusalem are denounced (verses 1-5), the judgments of God upon the nations are recalled and anticipated (verses 6-8), and the future blessing of both Israel and the nations is promised (verses 9-20).

Author

Haggai was a 6th century prophet, mentioned in Ezra and a contemporary of Zechariah. His name means “festal.” Little is known about him.

Date & Occasion

The opening verse tells us that Haggai (like Zechariah) began his ministry “in the second year of Darius the King” (520 B.C.). His prophecy is addressed to the Judean exiles who had returned to Palestine under the edict of the Persian King Cyrus in 538 B.C. They had begun the work of rebuilding the temple, but had abandoned it for about 16 or 17 years in the face of opposition (see Ezra 4:1-4; 5:1ff).

Message

Haggai delivers four messages (which begin at 1:1; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20) which alternate between calling the people of God to repentance in light of God’s curses on the land (1:1-11; 2:10-19) and promising greater blessings on the temple and through the Davidic Messiah, ultimately fulfilled in Christ (2:1-9; 2:20-23). Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament.

Haggai 1

Haggai urges the people of God to recommence the construction of the temple even as he rebukes them for building their own comfortable homes while the house of God lies in ruins.

Haggai 2

The LORD promises that the glory of the new temple (then being built) shall be greater than the glory of the former temple, that of Solomon, destroyed by the Babylonians.

Author

Zechariah was a 6th century contemporary of the prophet Haggai. He is identified in verse 1 as “the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo.”

Date & Occasion

Like Haggai, Zechariah began his ministry in “the second year of Darius the King” (520 B.C.). He is addressing the exiles who had returned to Palestine beginning with the decree of Persian King Cyrus in 538 B.C., but whose work in rebuilding the temple and the city had slowed.

Message

Zechariah prophesies of the future welfare of Jerusalem, its peace and prosperity, ultimately fulfilled by the Messiah, of whom explicit mention is frequently made.

Zechariah 1

Zechariah calls the people of God to return to the Lord. Through two visions, the first of a horseman, the second of four horns, symbols of power, God promises that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt and its enemies destroyed.

Zechariah 2

Zechariah’s third vision is of a man with a measuring line, a tool of construction, as God promises to dwell in the midst of a rebuilt Jerusalem, from which God’s grace shall be extended to the nations.

Zechariah 3

Zechariah’s fourth vision is of Joshua the high priest facing Satan’s accusations of uncleanness, and hence unworthiness.

Zechariah 4

Zechariah’s fifth vision is of a golden lampstand and of two olive trees, the latter representing Zerubbabel the governor and

Joshua the priest, through which by the power of the Spirit of God the work of rebuilding shall be accomplished.

Zechariah 5

Zechariah's sixth vision is of a flying scroll upon which is written the curses of the law of God for sin, and his seventh vision, of a woman sitting in a measuring basket, represents wickedness, which is removed from the land.

Zechariah 6

Zechariah's eighth vision, of four chariots which patrol the earth as emissaries of God's judgment; priesthood and kingship are united in Joshua the high priest, who is a type of the Messiah to come.

Zechariah 7

Two years after the visions of Chapters 1–6, Zechariah is asked about continuing a fast established on the anniversary of the destruction of the temple. Zechariah points to obedience, not fasting, as the means of gaining, and disobedience as the means of forfeiting, the favor of God that they seek (verse 2).

Zechariah 8

The LORD promises Jerusalem blessing instead of judgment, feasts instead of fasts, and Gentile pilgrimages in quest of the God of Israel instead of Gentile invasions.

Zechariah 9

Chapters 9–11 contain oracles of judgment upon Israel's enemies. God portrays Himself in Chapter 9 as an avenging Warrior, righteous King and humble Savior, a promise ultimately fulfilled in Christ (v. 9; cf. Matthew 21:1-11).

Zechariah 10

The people, and especially the leaders, of Judah are rebuked for consulting household idols. The LORD promises that He Himself shall shepherd, strengthen, and restore the people of God.

Zechariah 11

Zechariah is appointed to be shepherd of God's rebellious and doomed people, and like Christ, is rejected for the price of a slave (30 pieces of silver; cf. Exodus 21:32; Jeremiah 19:1-13; Matthew 26:14-16, 27:1-10).

Zechariah 12

From Chapter 12 to the end of Zechariah's prophesy the focus is the judgment of the nations and the salvation of Jerusalem. That salvation ultimately is not merely deliverance from earthly enemies, but spiritual salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Messiah "whom they have pierced" (12:10; John 19:37).

Zechariah 13

Zechariah announces the opening of a cleansing fountain to ride the land of false prophets and idolatry. God Himself will "strike" His own shepherd and save a remnant of His people, a prophesy fulfilled in the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Messiah (verse 7ff; Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27; Luke 2:31-34; cf. John 10:11).

Zechariah 14

Zechariah announces the coming "day of the LORD," a day of battle, of judgment and salvation, of light and living water, and of the gathering of the Gentiles to worship the King, the LORD of hosts.

Author

It is generally believed that Malachi was written by the prophet whose name the book bears. However, because “Malachi” means “my messenger,” it may be that the author is unknown.

Date & Occasion

Malachi was written during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, either between the arrival of Ezra (458 B.C.) and the arrival of Nehemiah (445 B.C.), or the period between Nehemiah’s two visits (about 433 B.C.). Either way, it is addressed to the exiles newly returned from Babylon, struggling to re-establish themselves in the land. This is also the period when the Athenian Empire, the Athens of Pericles, Socrates, and Plato was at its height.

Message

Malachi is addressed to a discouraged and doubting people who in their disillusionment have grown indifferent to their covenantal obligations and have broken faith with God. Note the “disputational” style of accusation and response. Malachi comes to them as a covenant advocate or enforcer, leveling six charges against the people of God through which he urges them to covenant faithfulness. It contains some of the best known predictions of the advent of Messiah (3:1,2; 4:2-6).

Malachi 1

The LORD affirms His love for His people (1:1-5), but rebukes the priests of profaning the altar with impure offerings (1:6-14).

Malachi 2:1-16

Israel is rebuked for covenantal unfaithfulness: specifically, the priests for violating the covenant with Levi (2:1-9) and the people for violating the covenant of marriage through taking foreign wives (2:10-12) and by divorcing their Israelite wives (2:13-16).

Malachi 2:17–3:12

The LORD answers the cynical charge that He fails to distinguish between good and evil and is guilty of injustice (2:17) by warning of a coming purge of His people through His Messenger (3:1-5), and identifying the true source of Israel's deprivations, its faithlessness seen particularly in the people's withholding of their tithes (3:6-12).

Malachi 3:13–4:6

The LORD answers the accusation that it is useless to serve Him by promising that those who fear Him shall be spared on the day of the LORD, when He will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked (verse 18). He promises again a Messenger, an Elijah, ultimately fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14; 17:10; Mark 9:11-3; Luke 1:17), who will call for repentance before that great day.

Introduction to the Gospels & Acts

The four gospels and Acts are the historical narratives of New Testament. Sometimes compared to the five books of Moses, or even to the consecutive historical narrative that stretches from Genesis to Nehemiah, the gospels and Acts provide us with the record of Jesus' life and His "continuing acts" through the apostolic church.

The first three gospels record many of the same events and teaching, and are called the "synoptic" gospels. John's gospel stands alone, and Luke, the "beloved physician," is author of both the gospel that bears his name and Acts.

Why are there four gospels rather than one? We are not told but can only observe that it is so, and conclude that God was pleased to enrich us in our knowledge of Jesus by teaching us from four perspectives rather than one, the book of Acts even providing a fifth.

Author

According to tradition, the author of Matthew is the disciple whose name it bears, also called Levi (9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17), though in fact the author is not identified.

Date & Occasion

The opinions of the scholars range from 50 to 100 A.D., but it is likely to have been written before the fall of Jerusalem, sometime between 64 and 70 A.D. Because the church father Ignatius of Antioch is the earliest author to quote Matthew, there is reason to believe that it was for the Antioch church that Matthew originally composed his gospel.

Message

Matthew focuses on demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah predicted by the Hebrew Scriptures. If Mark presents the Gentile Messiah, Matthew presents the Jewish. Repeatedly he cites Old Testament texts in order to show that Jesus fulfills its prophecies. He presents Jesus' teaching in five major discourses: The Sermon on the Mount (5-7), Mission (10), Parables (13), the church (18), and Olivette (24,25). Traditionally Matthew has been represented by a divine man or angel (from Ez 1:1-21 and Rev 4:6-8)

Matthew 1

Chapter 1 is a kind of prologue to the gospel, providing Jesus' genealogy from Abraham through David to Joseph, his legal father (verses 1-17) and recording Jesus' birth (verses 17-24).

Matthew 2

The visit of the Magi, the flight of the holy family to Egypt, and their return to Galilee.

Matthew 3

John the Baptist baptizes Jesus that He might fulfill all righteousness.

Matthew 4

Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He is tempted by the devil, whom He rebuts by citing Scripture, succeeding where Adam failed. At verse 12 He begins his public ministry as prophesied by the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:1-20

Chapters 5–7 record the Sermon on the Mount, beginning in verses 1-20 with the Beatitudes and Jesus' affirmation of the Law and its permanence, culminating in His warning of the necessity of a righteousness that exceeds that of the external and superficial righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 5:21-48

Jesus continues His Sermon on the Mount interpreting the true intent of the 6th, 7th, and 9th commandments, and the command to love one's neighbor, demonstrating the inadequacy of mere external obedience, and demonstrating the internal intent of the law.

Matthew 6:1-18

Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer and insists that the disciplines of piety (giving, fasting, praying) must have as their aim pleasing God, not being seen by others, as He continues His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-34

As the Sermon on the Mount continues, Jesus teaches us not to seek treasures on earth, not to be anxious about life, but to trust God and to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Matthew 7

Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount. He warns us of judgmentalism, encourages us to pray, alerts us of the danger of wolves in sheep's clothing, teaches us the "golden rule," and urges us to stay on the narrow path and build our lives on the rock of His word.

Matthew 8

Jesus demonstrates His Messianic identity as He heals the sick, calms a storm, casts out demons, and commands, “Follow me” (v. 22).

Matthew 9

Jesus continues to heal the sick. He raises a young girl from the dead and encounters His first opposition, demonstrating in the physical realm His authority in the spiritual, even to forgive sins.

Matthew 10

Jesus instructs and sends His 12 disciples to teach and preach in the cities of Judea, urging them to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves and warning them that they go out as sheep among wolves (v. 16).

Matthew 11

Jesus confirms His own identity as Messiah and that of John the Baptist as the Messiah’s forerunner; and He condemns the cities of Galilee for not receiving their message.

Matthew 12:1-21

Jesus declares that He is Lord of the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:22-50

Jesus rebuts His accusers by referring to “a kingdom divided,” and warns His detractors against blaspheming the Holy Spirit, against seeking signs beyond those which He already has given. Finally, He identifies His true family.

Matthew 13:1-30

Jesus teaches His disciples in parables: the Sower, the Wheat & the Tares.

Matthew 13:31-58

Jesus continues teaching in parables: the Mustard Seed, Leaven, and His explanation of the Wheat and Tares; the parables of the Hidden Treasure, Pearl of Great Price, the Dragnet, and the Householder; yet Jesus is rejected by His own household.

Matthew 14

Jesus responds to the death of John the Baptist: He prays, heals the sick, feeds the 5000, walks on water, demonstrating that He is the promised one.

Matthew 15

Jesus disputes with the Pharisees over tradition, the authority of which they have elevated over Scriptures, and which consequently blinds them to the identity of God's Son. He demonstrates the nature of true defilement, which is internal and personal, rather than external and ceremonial; He heals many and feeds the 4000.

Matthew 16

Bitter opponents, the Pharisees and Sadducees make common cause in opposition to Christ. Jesus asks the disciples the great question, "who do men say that I am" (verse 13), leading to Peter's great confession of Christ.

Matthew 17

The transfiguration, a healing, and the question of the temple tax.

Matthew 18

The character and authority of the church. (The question of greatness, the Parable of the Lost Sheep, procedure when sinned against, and the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.)

Matthew 19

As Jesus begins His journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, He establishes standards for His disciples regarding marriage, children, and wealth.

Matthew 20

Jesus teaches the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, predicts His death and resurrection for a third time, and identifies true greatness.

Matthew 21:1-22

Jesus' "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem, fulfilling that which was anticipated by Psalm 118:19-26; followed by both His cleansing of the temple, and His cursing of a fig tree, an act of prophetic significance.

Matthew 21:23-46

Jesus' authority is challenged as He enters the temple. He responds with the Parables of the Two Sons and of the Wicked Tenants.

Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Feast, warning of the consequences that will come to Judah as a result of rejecting God's invitation to His redemption feast in Christ.

Matthew 22:15-46

Jesus disputes with the Pharisees and Sadducees regarding various questions: paying taxes to Caesar, the resurrection of the dead, the greatest of the commandments, and the identity of David's son and Lord in Psalm 110:1. As they attempt to entrap Jesus, they themselves are ensnared.

Matthew 23

Having debated the religious authorities in chapters 21 and 22, Jesus now denounces the scribes and Pharisees, pronouncing seven woes upon them, and concluding with a lament for Jerusalem's unbelief.

Matthew 24:1-35

The "Olivet discourse," Jesus describes the signs surrounding His "coming" in judgment to destroy Jerusalem, a prophecy fulfilled in 70 A.D.

Matthew 24:36–25:13

As the "Olivet discourse" continues, Jesus describes the events of *that* day, the day of His second coming, and urges readiness, illustrated through the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Matthew 25:14-46

The conclusion of the “Olivette discourse,” the theme of readiness continues through the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

Matthew 26:1-35

As the plot to kill Jesus gains momentum, Jesus is anointed for burial, institutes the Lord’s Supper, and foretells Peter’s denial. He makes provision for His disciples even in His hour of greatest need.

Matthew 26:36-75

Jesus prays in Gethsemane; is betrayed by Judas; is arrested, tried and condemned before Caiaphas the high priest, and is denied by Peter. Jesus prays when others fail to pray. He encourages others when they are overcome by sorrow. He submits to the will of God when others resist God’s purposes.

Matthew 27:1-31

Jesus is tried before Pilate and sentenced; He is delivered to be crucified; and mocked by His executioners. “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

Matthew 27:32-66

The crucifixion of Jesus, His death and burial, and the securing of His tomb. “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

Matthew 28

Jesus is raised from the dead, conquering sin and death on our behalf. “As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection from the dead” (1 Cor 15:21). He delivers to His disciples their marching orders, His “Great Commission,” and ascends into heaven.

Author

Though the author is anonymous, the name of John Mark has been associated with this gospel from nearly the beginning. It is found on many ancient manuscripts and is cited by a number of 2nd century church fathers such as Papias (A.D. 140), Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), and Irenaeus (A.D. 185). Papias may have been the first to refer to Mark as Peter's "interpreter," though many commentators since have seen a connection between Peter and Mark's gospel.

Date & Occasion

Fixing a date for Mark has proven difficult though it is likely to have been written before 70 A.D. Beginning with the church fathers, commentators have identified Mark as a "Gentile gospel," addressed to the church in Rome. It includes translations of Semitic terms (3:17; 5:41; 15:22), and explanations of Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42) which would not be necessary for a Jewish audience.

Message

Mark presents a concise (it is the shortest of the gospels) and simplified account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, though at times with expanded historical details. Mark often includes first-hand impressions of Jesus the man, His responses, gestures, looks, actions, and so forth. If Matthew may be said to emphasize the divinity of Christ, Mark emphasizes His humanity. Mark's gospel culminates with the confession of the Gentile centurion, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (15:39). Traditionally, Mark has been represented by a winged lion (from Eze 1:1-21 and Rev 4:6-8)

Mark 1:1-20

Mark's Gospel begins not with the birth of Jesus (an account of which it does not contain), but with the witness of the Old Testament and of John the Baptist to Jesus (verses 1-11), His temptation, and the beginning of His ministry in Galilee (verses 12-20).

Mark 1:21-45

Jesus teaches, heals, and prays throughout Galilee and His fame spreads throughout the region.

Mark 2:1–3:6

Jesus demonstrates His authority to forgive sins and to establish religious norms in connection with food, fasting, and the Sabbath. He declares the purpose of His ministry; to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Mark 3:7-35

Jesus appoints His twelve disciples, answers the charge that He casts out demons by the power of the devil, and identifies His true family.

Mark 4:1-34

Jesus teaches four parables and explains the purpose of parables and their meaning. He calms a storm, leading to the astonished question, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him” (v 34 KJV).

Mark 4:35–5:20

Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee and enters into the Gentile region of Decapolis. As He does so, He performs works of power, demonstrates His authority over nature and the demonic.

Mark 5:21-43

After a time in the Gentile region of Decapolis, Jesus returns to Galilee, heals a woman with a long-term affliction and raises Jairus’ daughter from the dead.

Mark 6:1-32

Jesus’ ministry in Galilee continues as He is rejected by His hometown, sends out the twelve to minister, and learns of the martyrdom of John the Baptist.

Mark 6:33-56

Jesus feeds the 5000 (vv 30-44) and walks on water (vv 45-52), as He and the disciples cross the Sea of Galilee and minister in Gentile regions (vv 53-56).

Mark 7

Jesus debates the Pharisees on the value of tradition and ritual as He ministers in the Gentile regions of Gennesaret, Tyre, Sidon, and Decapolis (1-30). He heals a deaf man, leading to the comprehensive conclusion, “He has done all things well” (31-37).

Mark 8:1-30

As Jesus continues to minister among the Gentiles, he feeds the 4000, spars with the Pharisees, and receives Peter’s confession that He is the Christ.

Mark 8:31–9:29

Verse 31 of chapter 8 marks the turning point in Jesus’ ministry as He heads inexorably to Jerusalem and the cross, revealing Himself and His mission with increasing clarity as He goes.

Mark 9:30-50

Jesus returns to Capernaum and concludes His ministry in Galilee, teaching humility in leadership and aggressive avoidance of sin

Mark 10:1-31

As Jesus enters Judea on His way to Jerusalem and the cross, He teaches the disciples about marriage and divorce, children and the kingdom, and the difficulty with which the rich enter the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:32-52

Continuing on the road to Jerusalem, Jesus teaching the disciples that Christian leadership is servant leadership, foretells His death and resurrection a third time, and heals blind Bartimaeus.

Mark 11

The “Triumphal Entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem, His cursing of the fig tree, and cleansing of the temple.

Mark 12:1-27

Jesus spars with the various religious authorities in Jerusalem who seek to arrest Him: chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, Sadducees.

Mark 12:28-59

Jesus continues to debate in the temple in Jerusalem, teaching which is the greatest commandment, who is the Son of David, and the value of the widow’s mite.

Mark 13

The Olivette Discourse: Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem (verses 6-31) and the circumstances of His return (verses 32-36).

Mark 14:1-31

Wednesday of Passion Week, the religious leaders and Judas plot against Jesus while He observes His Last Supper with His disciples, and institutes the Lord’s Supper.

Mark 14:32-72

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, is betrayed, arrested, tried by the Sanhedrin, condemned, and denied even by Peter.

Mark 15

Jesus is tried by Pilate, crucified, dies, and is buried.

Mark 16

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus and his parting Great Commission.

Author

According to Scriptural evidence and tradition, Luke, traveling companion of the Apostle Paul on some of his journeys, was the author of Luke and Acts. A native of Antioch, the Apostle Paul calls him “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). His writing style indicates that he was a cultured, well-educated man.

Date & Occasion

Given that Acts ends with the Apostle Paul still under house arrest in Rome, Luke and Acts are likely to have been written about 63 A.D., before Paul had been released or executed.

Message

Luke’s stated purpose is to provide an accurate and “orderly account” of the ministry of Jesus so that Theophilus (to whom the book is dedicated) and others may have “certainty” about what they believe (verse 1). If Mark emphasizes the *human* Christ, Luke emphasizes the *humanitarian* Christ, giving special attention to Jesus’ concern for society’s outcasts: women, children, Gentiles, “sinners,” and the poor. Emphasis is given to prayer (nine of Jesus’ prayers are included) and the parables, 16 of which are unique to Luke. Traditionally Luke has been represented by a winged ox (from Eze 1:1-21 and Rev 4:6-8).

Luke 1:1-24

Luke dedicates his gospel to Theophilus, and the birth of John the Baptist is foretold.

Luke 1:26-56

The birth of Jesus foretold and Mary’s response of praise, known by its Latin name as the *Magnificat*.

Luke 1:57-81

The birth of John the Baptist and the response of his father, commonly called by its Latin name, the *Benedictus*.

Luke 2:1-21

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, its announcement to shepherds, and the angelic *Gloria in Excelsis* is recorded.

Luke 2:22-52

The infant Jesus is presented in the temple. Simeon's response, known by its Latin title as the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32), and the elderly Anna's thanksgiving are recorded, as well as the account of Jesus' visit to the temple at age 12, "about (His) Father's business."

Luke 3

The ministry of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, and Jesus' genealogy back to Adam.

Luke 4:1-29

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in which he rebuts the devil with Scripture. The beginning of His Galilean ministry which results in His rejection in His home town of Nazareth.

Luke 4:30-44

Jesus heals many in Capernaum, casts out demons, and teaches with authority.

Luke 5:1-26

Jesus continues teaching and healing in Galilee, and calls His disciples to be "fishers of men."

Luke 5:27-6:11

Jesus challenges common assumptions regarding associating with "sinners," fasting, and Sabbath observance.

Luke 6:12-36

Jesus prays, chooses His twelve apostles, and preaches His "Sermon on the Plain" (beginning at verse 17), a sermon similar to but different from the "Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew's Gospel. (Mt 5-7)

Luke 6:37-49

Jesus concludes His “Sermon on the Plain,” teaching on right and wrong judgments, prayer, and obedience.

Luke 7:1-23

A centurion’s servant is healed and a widow’s son is raised from the dead; John’s question regarding Jesus’ identity is answered.

Luke 7:24-50

Jesus reveals the identity of John the Baptist and commends his ministry; a sinful woman is forgiven.

Luke 8:1-25

Jesus’ Galilean ministry continues as he teaches in parables and calms a storm.

Luke 8:26-56

Jesus heals the Gerasene demoniac, a woman with an affliction of 12 years duration, and raises Jairus’ daughter from the dead.

Luke 9:1-27

Jesus sends out the twelve, feeds the 5000 and receives Peter’s confession that He is the Christ. He then immediately foretells his death and calls his disciples to take up their own cross and follow Him.

Luke 9:28-60

The Transfiguration, and the conclusion of Jesus’ Galilean ministry as He begins, in verse 51, his long journey towards the cross, having “set His face” to Jerusalem, to take up His cross, which his disciples also, in their own way, take up (vv. 23-27)

Luke 10:1-20

Jesus sends out the seventy to minister in a plentiful harvest, as lambs among wolves.

Luke 10:21-41

Jesus teaches the sovereignty of the Father and Spirit in the true knowledge of God, delivers the Parable of the Good Samaritan to a self-righteous lawyer, and calms a flustered Martha.

Luke 11:1-28

Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, repudiates the accusation that He is empowered by the devil, and warns that a house divided cannot stand.

Luke 11:29-54

Jesus warns His generation of its unbelief and denounces the Pharisees and lawyers.

Luke 12:1-34

As Jesus continues His long, slow journey to Jerusalem, He underscores the necessity of confessing the Son of Man before men, of the dangers of riches and the importance of seeking first the kingdom of God.

Luke 12:35-59

Jesus teaches His disciples to be prepared for His return through faithful service, warning of the inevitable divisions that will occur because of Him.

Luke 13

Jesus warns of judgment, teaches about the kingdom of God and laments over Jerusalem's unbelief.

Luke 14

As Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem and the cross (toward which He set His face, we were told, in 9:51), His conflict with the Pharisees intensifies as He teaches the Parables of the Wedding Feast, of the Great Banquet, and insists that we count the cost of discipleship.

Luke 15

The Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost or Prodigal Son.

Luke 16

The Parables of the Unjust Steward, the Rich Man & Lazarus, and related teachings.

Luke 17

As Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem, He teaches lessons on temptation, forgiveness, faith, service, gratitude, and the coming of the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:1-17

Parables of the Persistent Widow and of the Pharisee & the Tax Collector, and His blessing of infants.

Luke 18:18-43

Jesus' teachings in response to encounters with the rich young ruler, and a blind beggar; he tells of his coming death a third time.

Luke 19:1-27

As Jesus' journey into Jerusalem comes to a close, He enters Jericho, about 10 miles to the east, where he encounters Zaccheus, and teaches the Parable of the Ten Talents ("minas" in the ESV, about three months of a laborer's work).

Luke 19:28-48

The long journey to Jerusalem begun in 9:51 concludes with the Triumphal Entry and the cleansing of the Temple.

Luke 20:1-18

Now in Jerusalem, the last week of his earthly ministry, Jesus' authority is challenged by the religious and political authorities and challenges them by teaching the Parable of the Vine-Growers.

Luke 20:19-47

Jesus fields the questions of the religious and political authorities in Jerusalem in the last week of his earthly ministry.

Luke 21

While teaching at the temple Jesus commends the widow's "mite" and prophesies Jerusalem's destruction at the coming of the Son of Man.

Luke 22:1-38

Jesus and His disciples observe the Passover, their Last Supper, at which Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, even as Judas plots to betray Him.

Luke 22:39-71

Jesus prays at Gethsemane, is betrayed by Judas, arrested, denied by Peter, and condemned by the Sanhedrin.

Luke 23:1-25

Jesus is tried, condemned, and sentenced by Pilate, despite his five-fold protest of Jesus' innocence.

Luke 23:26-56

Jesus is crucified, taunted, dies, and is buried.

Luke 24:1-27

The resurrection of Jesus and His appearance to His disciples on the Emmaus Road.

Luke 24:28-53

Jesus continues on the Emmaus Road, reveals His identity to the two disciples who accompanied him, appears to the other disciples in Jerusalem, showing them "everything written about (Him) in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms." (v. 44). Finally, He triumphantly ascends into heaven.

Author

The church's tradition is that John, the son of Zebedee, the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23) is the author of the fourth gospel. Though anonymous, there are a number of hints in the text that support the tradition that long ago assigned John's name to it.

Date & Occasion

Early church tradition, now supported by modern scholarship, understood that John wrote his gospel toward the end of his life, around 90 A.D. Some scholars have even assigned an earlier date, before 70 A.D. John himself describes the purpose of his writing:

. . . that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31)

Message

Beginning with the Prologue (1:1-14) and continuing with personal encounters (e.g. Nicodemus, woman at the well, woman caught in adultery, man born blind, Lazarus) and the "I am" statements (e.g. bread of life, good shepherd, resurrection and life, light of world, etc.), John demonstrates that the eternal word became flesh and dwelt among us in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Its message may be summarized by its most famous verse:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 KJV)

Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215) labeled John "the spiritual gospel." Traditionally John has been represented by a rising eagle (from Ez 1:1-21 and Rev 4:6-8)

John 1:1-18

John's prologue of praise to the eternal word who became flesh.

John 1:19-51

The baptism of Jesus and the calling of the first disciples.

John 2

Jesus turns the water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee and cleanses the temple.

John 3

Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born again.

John 4:1-26

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that God must be worshiped in "spirit and truth" (verses 23,24).

John 4:27-54

Following Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well the Samaritans confess that Jesus is "the Savior of the World" (verse 42).

John 5:1-18

Jesus heals on the Sabbath.

John 5:19-47

Jesus' authority and the witnesses to His identity.

John 6:1-34

Jesus feeds the 5000 and walks on water.

John 6:35-71

Following the feeding of the 5000 Jesus says, "I am the bread of life."

John 7:1-24

Jesus slips into Jerusalem during the Feast of Booths and begins teaching in the Temple.

John 7:25-52

As Jesus teaches in the Temple during the Feast of Booths, He declares, “If any many thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (v. 37).

John 8:1-30

After spending the night at the Mount of Olives, Jesus returns to the temple the following day. He encounters the woman caught in adultery and declares, “I am the light of the world” (v. 12).

John 8:31-59

Continuing to teach at the temple during the Feast of Booths, Jesus speaks of the truth that sets free and declares, “before Abraham was, I am” (vv. 32,58).

John 9

Jesus heals a man born blind.

John 10:1-21

Still in Jerusalem, Jesus identifies Himself as the “Door” and the “Good Shepherd” who lays down His life for the sheep (vv. 7,9,11,14).

John 10:22-42

Jesus concludes His time in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah, celebrated in December, announcing “I and the Father are one” (v. 30). Jesus is forced to leave Jerusalem for the region beyond the Jordan.

John 11:1-27

As Jesus approaches the tomb of Lazarus in Bethany He announces, “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 27).

John 11:28-57

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. In response, the chief priests and Pharisees plot His death.

John 12:1-26

Jesus is anointed for burial and enters triumphantly into Jerusalem.

John 12:27-50

Following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus announces that the hour has come when He must be “lifted up,” that He might draw all people to Himself (v. 32).

John 13

Chapters 13-17 record the ministry of Jesus in the “Upper Room,” on the eve of His death. Jesus washes the disciples’ feet and gives the new commandment, that we should “love one another” (verses 34,35).

John 14

Speaking from the “Upper Room,” Jesus promises His disciples, who are troubled by the news of His imminent departure, a room in His Father’s house, the help of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and His peace.

John 15

Continuing in the “Upper Room,” Jesus announces He is the “true Vine,” commands His disciples to love one another, and warns of the hatred of the world.

John 16

Jesus continues His “Upper Room Discourse,” warning of His imminent departure, yet promising to send the “Helper,” the “Spirit of Truth.”

John 17

Jesus concludes his “Upper Room” ministry with His “High Priestly Prayer.”

John 18

Jesus is betrayed, arrested, denied by Peter, and interrogated by the High Priest and Pilate. Jesus is beaten, mocked, crucified, dies, and is buried.

John 20

Jesus is raised from the dead on the first day of the week and appears to Mary Magdalene and the disciples culminating in Thomas' confession the following Sunday, "My Lord and My God!" (v. 28).

John 21

Jesus appears to the disciples a third time and commissions Peter to "feed My sheep" (verses 15,16,17).

Conclusion

This ends the reading of the fourth gospel, written, says John, "*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*" (20:31).

Author

According to tradition and the writings of the church fathers (e.g. Irenaeus [early 2nd century–c. AD 202], Clement of Alexander [c. 150–c. 215], Eusebius [c. 275–339]), Luke the physician, traveling companion of the Apostle Paul on his second and third missionary journeys, and author of the gospel by his name, wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The author's writing style and skill indicates that he was probably a highly educated Gentile.

Date & Occasion

Given the fact that chapter 28 ends with the Apostle Paul under house arrest and free to preach to those who visit him, this likely places the date of writing before 64 A.D., when persecution broke out as Nero blamed the great fire of Rome on Christians, and 68 A.D. when the Apostle Paul was martyred.

Acts, like Luke, is addressed to Theophilus and carries the same purpose: to provide an “orderly account” of Jesus’ earthly ministry so as to inspire “certainty” or confidence in the things Christians believed (Luke 1:1-4). Luke’s gospel presents “all that Jesus *began* to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). Acts covers what Jesus *continued* to do and teach upon His ascension through His apostles.

Message

Acts provides the narrative account of the development of the early church as it carries out its mission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Acts 1:1-14

Jesus’ final instructions to His disciples, and His ascension into heaven.

Acts 1:15-26

A replacement for Judas Iscariot is selected.

Acts 2

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the first Christian sermon.

Acts 3

Healing of the lame beggar and the Apostle Peter's second sermon.

Acts 4

Following the healing of the "lame beggar," the religious leaders arrest, threaten, and release Peter and John, who report their experience to the assembled church.

Acts 5:1-16

The deception and deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, and subsequent growth of the church.

Acts 5:17-42

The religious authorities in Jerusalem again imprison and threaten the apostles, who, once more, refuse to comply choosing to "obey God rather than men" (v. 29).

Acts 6

Seven men are chosen to assist the apostles by taking responsibility for the ministry to widows, freeing the apostles to devote themselves to the word of God and prayer.

Acts 7:1-34

Stephen's defense of the gospel before the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

Acts 7:35-60

Stephen concludes his defense of the gospel and becomes the first Christian martyr.

Acts 8:1-25

The "Samaritan Pentecost" and "conversion" of Simon the magician.

Acts 8:26-40

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 9:1-19a

The conversion of the Apostle Paul.

Acts 9:19b-43

The Apostle Paul's early ministry in Damascus & Jerusalem;
Peter heals Aeneas and raises Tabitha from the dead.

Acts 10:1-23a

The visions of the Roman centurion Cornelius and the Apostle Peter indicating the end of the Old Testament dietary restrictions.

Acts 10:23b-48

The "Gentile Pentecost" and subsequent baptisms demonstrate the full ecclesiastical equality of non-Jewish believers and the baptism of the uncircumcised.

Acts 11

The Apostle Peter's vision of the cleansing of heretofore unclean animals is recounted to church leaders in Jerusalem, along with word of Gentiles receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, proving the full ecclesiastical equality of non-Jewish believers.

Acts 12

The Apostle Peter is rescued from prison by an angel of the Lord and rejoins the saints assembled for prayer.

Acts 13:1-15

Chapter 13 marks the beginning of the early church's intentional missionary outreach to Gentiles. The church at Antioch in Syria sends the Apostle Paul and Barnabas on his "first missionary journey," preaching the gospel to the synagogues of the cities of the Galatian region of south-central Asia Minor. Note the reading of Scripture in the synagogue service followed by the exhortation (sermon).

Acts 13:16-52

The Apostle Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch (Asia Minor) at the outset of his first missionary journey, supported by citations from Psalms 2 and 16, Isaiah 55, and Habakkuk 1, followed by his second sermon.

Acts 14

The Apostle Paul and Barnabas travel from Pisidian Antioch in central Asia Minor, 80 miles southeast to Iconium, on to Lystra and Derbe, and then retrace their steps back to Syrian Antioch from which they began, completing the first missionary journey.

Acts 15:1-21

The first church council is called to meet in Jerusalem to determine if Gentile converts to Christianity must not only have faith in Christ, but also submit to the ceremonial laws of Moses to be saved, particularly circumcision, but also including the dietary laws, the calendar of holy days, and the cleansing ordinances.

Acts 15:22-41

The Council at Jerusalem agrees to send to the churches by the hand of Paul a record of their decision regarding Gentiles and the ceremonial law (cf 16:4).

Acts 16:1-21

The Apostle Paul begins his "second missionary journey" accompanied by Timothy, aiming to revisit the churches established in Asia Minor on his first missionary journey. At Troas, in north-western Asia Minor (Turkey) he receives his "Macedonian call" to "come and help us" (verse 9), extending the church's missionary effort into Europe for the first time.

Acts 16:22-40

The release of Paul and Silas from prison and the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

Acts 17:1-15

The Apostle Paul's journeys to Thessalonica and Berea.

Acts 17:16-34

The Apostle Paul in Athens proclaiming Christ to the philosophers.

Acts 18:1-22

The Apostle Paul travels from Athens south to Corinth, then back across the Aegean Sea to his home base at Syrian Antioch, completing his “second missionary journey.”

Acts 18:23–19:20

Verse 23 marks the beginning of the Apostle Paul’s “third missionary journey.” The Apostle Paul travels from Galatia, in central Asia Minor, to Ephesus along the coast where he remains for two years, ministering with great effect and controversy.

Acts 19:21-41

After two years of ministry in Ephesus in which “the word of the Lord was growing mighty and prevailing” (v. 20), a riot erupts in response to the Apostle Paul’s teaching, the first, but not last time this would be the result of gospel preaching.

Acts 20:1-16

Continuing his third missionary journey, the Apostle Paul travels from Ephesus, along the coast of Asia Minor, to Macedonia and Greece, visiting churches as he goes. Determined to journey to Jerusalem, he reverses his course back through Macedonia, northern Asia Minor, and to Miletus along coastal southern Asia Minor, 30 miles south of Ephesus, and sends for and addresses the Ephesian elders.

Acts 20:17-38

With Jerusalem as his destination on the concluding leg of his third missionary journey, the Apostle Paul stops in Miletus in coastal southern Asia Minor, where he meets with the elders of the church at Ephesus, to whom he delivers his final farewell.

Acts 21:1-36

The Apostle Paul continues his journey to Jerusalem, sailing from Patria in southern Asia Minor across the eastern Mediterranean to Tyre, 150 miles north of Jerusalem, sails further south to Caesarea, and completes the journey by land in verse 15.

Acts 21:37–22:30

The Apostle Paul defends the gospel from the stairs of the Antonian Fortress before a mob in Jerusalem.

Acts 23:1-11

By order of the Roman authorities, the Apostle Paul gives testimony before the Jewish authorities. When the proceedings turn violent, he is rescued by the tribune and is taken to the Roman barracks in Jerusalem.

Acts 23:12-35

The Apostle Paul is taken by armed escort to Felix, the provincial governor in Caesarea, 100 miles north of Jerusalem.

Acts 24

The Apostle Paul defends his prior actions in Jerusalem before the provincial governor in Caesarea, Felix, who keeps him in custody for two years.

Acts 25

The Apostle Paul, charged with crimes by the Jewish authorities before the new provincial governor, Festus, appeals to Caesar.

Acts 26

Still held in custody by Festus, the provincial governor, the Apostle Paul defends his gospel before King Herod Agrippa II (A.D.27–c.100).

Acts 27

The Apostle Paul begins his journey to Rome to be tried by Caesar.

Acts 28:1-16

Following his shipwreck and a 3-month stay on the island of Malta, the Apostle Paul sails under custody to the central western coast of Italy, and travels the remaining 250 miles by land to Rome, where he is kept under house arrest for 2 years.

Acts 28:17-31

While there, he speaks to the Jewish leaders in Rome, with largely negative results, and so turns to the Gentiles. For two years under house arrest, he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Epistles

There are 21 epistles or letters in the New Testament written by the Apostles to churches or individuals. They follow roughly the form of letter writing then common in the Hellenistic world: greetings, body, and conclusion. The body of the epistles are taken up with instructions on various issues that had arisen in the churches. Traditionally they have been divided into two categories:

Paul's Epistles (including his Prison Epistles [Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon] and Pastoral Epistles [1 & 2 Timothy, Titus])

General Epistles (Hebrews, 1 & 2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude, Revelation)

Author

The Apostle Paul, the former Saul of Tarsus, citizen of Rome, one-time zealot for Judaism, a “Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees,” educated by Gamaliel (the leading rabbi of the day) and converted to Christ on the Damascus Road, is the author of the epistle to the Romans.

Date & Occasion

Romans was probably written from Corinth just prior to the Apostle Paul’s visit to Jerusalem with a monetary gift from the Gentile churches (15:25; Acts 24:17), sometime between the end of 55 AD and the early months of 57 AD. He had long desired to visit the Roman Christians, a mixed church of Gentiles and Jews the origins of which are unknown. After delivering the gift to Jerusalem, it was the Apostle Paul’s desire to move from the eastern to the western Mediterranean, to Rome and on to Spain (15:24). He writes to explain his gospel in anticipation of his visit.

Message

Romans is the New Testament’s most systematic and comprehensive presentation of the Christian gospel. All of the major themes, from sin, to Christ and the atonement, to the Holy Spirit and the application of redemption (election, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification), law, the meaning of the Old Testament, the Christian life, and eschatology. It has exercised decisive influence upon church leaders such as John Chrysostom (349–407), Augustine (354–430), Luther and all the Protestant Reformers, John Wesley, and in modern times, Karl Barth (1886–1968). Its message is vital for us today.

Romans 1:1-17

Greetings and introduction to the theme of the epistle: “The righteous shall live by faith” (v. 17).

Romans 1:18-32

The pervasiveness of human sinfulness demonstrated in the idolatry and immorality of the Gentiles.

Romans 2:1-16

The universal, righteous, and impartial justice of God.

Romans 2:17-29

The universality of human depravity demonstrated in Jewish failure to keep the law which they are privileged to have received from God.

Romans 3:1-20

The argument of chapters 1 and 2 is summarized and concluded: “both Jews and Greeks are under sin,” (v. 9) and every mouth is closed (v. 19).

Romans 3:21-31

The universal problem of human guilt and corruption that was demonstrated in 1:18–3:20 is answered: righteousness is a gift of God given through faith in Christ.

Romans 4

The Old Testament case for justification by faith alone is proven in the life of Abraham, who was justified while uncircumcised and so that he might be the father of all who believe.

Romans 5

The fruit of justification by faith described: peace with God, joy, hope, love, reconciliation, and salvation. In verses 12-21 Adam and Christ are contrasted, Adam’s disobedience through which sin, condemnation and death is spread to all, and Christ’s obedience through which “the many” are “made righteous... leading to eternal life.”

Romans 6

Focus shifts in chapter 6 from justification (3:21-5:21) to sanctification. Union with Christ in His death, burial and

resurrection mean new life, freedom from bondage to sin, and freedom to serve righteousness.

Romans 7

The Christian's freedom from the law's condemnation (verses 1-13) and the continuing fight of faith (verses 14-25).

Romans 8:1-17

The Christian's new life in Christ and his/her freedom in the Spirit.

Romans 8:18-39

Are believers secure? The assurance of believers is rooted not in their decision but in God's love and the Spirit's intercession. The unbroken "Golden Chain" of predestination, call, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation, glorification is described. C. H. Spurgeon said of v. 32, "It is a conglomerate of promises... a mass of rubies, and emeralds, and diamonds, with a nugget of gold for their settings."¹

Romans 9

Romans 9–11 take up the perplexing question of Israel's unbelief. The answer of chapter 9 is election: The word of God has not failed (v 6), rather, God chooses whom He will. As for the question of fairness (raised in v 20), "He does not attempt to demonstrate the propriety of God's action; instead, he rebukes the spirit of the question."²

Romans 10

Righteousness and salvation for both Jew and Gentile is attained only by faith in Christ, a faith which comes from hearing the word of Christ in the gospel (v 17). *Whoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (v 13).

¹ *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith: Being Precious Promises Arranged for Daily Use. With Brief Experimental Comments* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1907).

² J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (1961; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 28.

Romans 11:17-36

Israel is likened to an olive tree with a believing Patriarchal root from which the unbelieving contemporary Jewish branches have been broken off, while wild olive shoots, the Gentiles, have been grafted in, all according to God's gracious purposes in election.

Romans 12

The "therefore" of verse 1 marks a major transition in his epistle as the Apostle Paul moves from the doctrines of chapters 1-11 to Christian practice in chapters 12-16. Chapter 12 focuses on the church as a "body" and the mutual obligations of members, at the foundation of which is the commitment of each to live as living sacrifices to God.

Romans 13

The Christian's outlook and obligations to the civil government (verses 1-7) and to fulfill the law through love (verses 8-14).

Romans 14

The Apostle commends the exercise of Christian liberty and charity in things indifferent.

Romans 15:1-13

The selflessness of Christ an example for believers to follow.

Romans 15:14-33

The Apostle Paul's ministry to the Gentiles and plans to visit Rome, and from there, Spain.

Romans 16

Personal greetings, personal commendations, final instructions, and concluding doxology.

1 Corinthians

Author

The first verse of 1 Corinthians identifies the Apostle Paul as the author. Paul, whose given name was Saul, was reared in an affluent Jewish family in Tarsus, educated by the leading rabbi of the day, Gamaliel, and was a zealous Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism. He was converted to Christ dramatically on the road to Damascus on which he was traveling in order to persecute Christians, and called by Christ to be His apostle to the Gentiles.

Date & Occasion

This epistle was written on the Apostle Paul's third missionary journey (A.D. 53-57), while in Ephesus in central coastal Asia Minor, during his two-year ministry there, an account of which is recorded in Acts 19. It was probably written about 55 A.D. to address serious problems that had developed in the Corinthian congregation, which the Apostle Paul had founded on his second mission journey (Acts 18:1-11): division, spiritual pride, sexual immorality, abuse of Christian liberty, abuse of the sacraments, disorder in worship services, and others.

Message

The Apostle Paul's response is long but simple: humility, Christian love, and the simple preaching of the cross of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

The Apostle's salutation.

1 Corinthians 1:10-31

The Apostle Paul urges unity in the church based upon what the world considers the "foolishness" of the cross.

1 Corinthians 2

The Apostle Paul determines to preach only Christ crucified.

1 Corinthians 3

The Apostle Paul addresses the problems of factions in the church and reliance upon worldly wisdom.

1 Corinthians 4

The Apostle Paul warns against unwarranted judging and worldly pride, a chapter rich with irony, as he compares the riches of the arrogant with his own poverty, their wisdom with his foolishness.

1 Corinthians 5

The Apostle Paul denounces a case of sexual immorality in the church and demands the removal of the offending member, an example of church discipline in the first century. He appeals to the purity of the church and the hope of reclamation of the offender.

1 Corinthians 6

The Apostle Paul requires that disputes between Christians be resolved by church courts not civil courts, and that they flee immorality, as those who have been “bought with a price.”

1 Corinthians 7:1-24

The Apostle Paul answers questions the Corinthians had raised regarding marriage, singleness, and divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

The Apostle Paul concludes his counsel regarding marriage, divorce, and singleness

1 Corinthians 8

In Chapters 8–10 the Apostle Paul answers questions raised by the Corinthians regarding eating meat that previously had been offered to idols in pagan rituals. He urges that believers surrender their Christian liberty when the exercise of it may cause another believer to stumble.

1 Corinthians 9

The Apostle illustrates the practice of forgoing rights for the sake of the gospel from his own ministry: he surrendered his right to financial support that he might preach the gospel without charge.

1 Corinthians 10

The Apostle Paul's concluding counsel regarding meat associated with pagan religious rituals draws from the bad example of ancient Israel, recorded in the Old Testament for our instruction. His doing so demonstrates the continuity between Old Testament and New Testament, believers in both drawing spiritual sustenance from the Rock which is Christ. Christ's apostle exhorts us to flee idolatry and seek the good of our neighbor and glory of God in all circumstances.

1 Corinthians 11

The Apostle Paul addresses first the issue of head coverings for women (verses 1-16), and then decorum in the administration of the Lord's Supper (verses 16-33).

1 Corinthians 12

Instruction is given regarding the variety of spiritual gifts, divinely distributed, underscoring as he does the unity amidst the diversity of the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 13

To a people fixated upon public, visible, even supernatural gifts, the Apostle Paul describes the greatest spiritual gift of all: love.

1 Corinthians 14:1-19

The supremacy of prophecy and the importance of comprehension and mutual edification in the exercise of each element of the public services of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:20-40

The necessity of order and decorum in public worship.

1 Corinthians 15:1-34

The apostle declares the certainty and centrality of the bodily resurrection of Christ to the Christian faith, insisting that if Christ is not risen our preaching and faith are in vain, and we are of all people most to be pitied (verse 19).

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

The nature of the resurrection body and the believer's victory over death in Christ

1 Corinthians 16

Final instructions and greetings.

Author

Verse one identifies the Apostle Paul as the author of 2 Corinthians along with his traveling companion, Timothy. Paul, formerly Saul, was once a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism, and a persecutor of the church. He was suddenly and dramatically converted to Christ on the Damascus Road and called to be His apostle.

Date & Occasion

The Apostle Paul founded the Corinthian church on his Second Missionary journey in 51-52 A.D. (Acts 18:1-8) On his Third Missionary Journey, the Apostle stayed in Ephesus for three years, during which time messengers from Corinth came to him with questions which he answered in his “First Epistle to the Corinthians.” Some time later he made a short visit to Corinth from Ephesus to which he refers in his Second Epistle (2:1). After this second visit and before the upcoming third visit to which he refers (12:14, 13:1; and Acts 20:2,3) the Apostle Paul wrote this second epistle. He traveled from Ephesus to Troas and on to Philippi in Macedonia (2:13, 14), from which the epistle was written in about 55 A.D.

Corinth was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire, located on the Greek Peloponesia and was a rich, strategically located commercial center.

Message

The Apostle Paul writes to explain his ministry and encourage the Corinthians (chapters 1-7), to urge generous gifts in support of the poor Christians in Jerusalem (chapters 8, 9), and as a defense against false apostles (chapters 10-13). As he does so, he tells as much about the gospel message, about giving and about gospel ministry.

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

The Apostle Paul’s greeting and thanksgiving for the “Father of mercies and God of all comforts” (verse 3).

2 Corinthians 1:12-24

The Apostle Paul explains the change of plans which prevented an intended visit to Corinth.

2 Corinthians 2

The Apostle Paul continues to provide reasons why he did not make an intended visit to Corinth. He explains that out of love he sent a letter of rebuke instead, to which the Corinthians, he assures them, correctly responded with church discipline. Through it all Christ leads the church in “triumphal procession” (verse 14).

2 Corinthians 3

The apostle commends the ministry of the new covenant, contrasting “tablets of stone” with “tablets of the human heart” and “the letter” which kills with “the Spirit” who “gives life,” the “veiled face” of Mosaic religion with the “unveiled face” of Christian believers who are transformed by “beholding the glory of the Lord,” in the face of Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4

The gospel of the glory of Christ is contrasted with the “earthen vessels” through which it is communicated (verse 7; KJV). Though affliction and death await the believer, the reward of an “eternal weight of glory” lies beyond (verse 17).

2 Corinthians 5

Because Christians are new creations in Christ, the Christian’s *hope* is to be with Christ, *ambition* is to please Christ, the Christian’s *goal* is to live for Christ, and the Christian’s *ministry* is to urge reconciliation with God through Christ. This is one of the great chapters of the Bible.

2 Corinthians 6

The apostle Paul’s urgent description of the gospel ministry of reconciliation continues (verses 1-13) followed by pleas for separation from evil for the sake of unhindered fellowship with God (verses 14-18).

2 Corinthians 7

The Apostle Paul rejoices at the good news that Titus brought of the repentance of the Corinthian church, distinguishing worldly sorrow from godly sorrow, the latter alone leading to true repentance.

2 Corinthians 8

In chapters 8 and 9 generous giving on behalf of the poor Christians in Jerusalem is urged, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who “though he was rich, yet for (our) sakes became poor, so that (we) by his poverty might become rich” (verse 9).

2 Corinthians 9

The Corinthian Christians are encouraged to give cheerfully and bountifully on behalf of the needy church in Jerusalem invoking the principle that those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly, and those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 10

In chapters 10-13 the Apostle Paul defends his apostleship against the claims of false apostles. In chapter 10 he identifies the characteristics of true spiritual power (verses 1-12) and the proper object of Christian boasting (verses 13ff).

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

The “false apostles” who preach “another Jesus” and a “different gospel” are exposed (verses 13, 14).

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

The Apostle Paul begins what has been called his “Fool’s Speech,” which continues to 12:10, in which with irony he “boasts” of that which the world considers shame.

2 Corinthians 12

The Apostle Paul concludes his “Fool’s Speech,” boasting with irony of that which the world considers weakness including a divinely appointed “thorn in (his) flesh” which weakened him but by doing so proved the sufficiency of God’s grace (verses 1-10). He continues to defend his true apostleship against the claims of “super apostles” citing the “signs of a true apostle” that he performed among them (verses 11-21)

2 Corinthians 13

Final warnings calling the Corinthians and us to self-examination (“test yourselves”) and extending final greetings, concluding with the “Apostolic Benediction.”

Author

Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul wrote Galatians (1:1). Born in Tarsus in Asia Minor to Jewish parents who possessed Roman citizenship, Paul was sent to Jerusalem as a young man to be educated under Gamaliel, the leading rabbi of that day. He excelled in Judaism and became what he later called “a Hebrew of Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5). His zeal led him to persecute Christians until he encountered the ascended Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1ff; cf 7:58; 8:1).

Date & Occasion

Around 50 A.D. the church faced its first doctrinal crisis. More and more the gospel was taking root in Gentile communities around the Mediterranean. As these non-Jews came to believe in Christ and enter what heretofore had been a largely a Jewish Christian church, the question naturally arose regarding their relation to customs and traditions of Judaism. Would Gentile believers be required to keep the law of Moses, particularly its ceremonial aspects, in order to be Christians? The defining issue was circumcision. Some were teaching, as Luke reports, that “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Other important questions included cleansing ordinances, dietary laws, and the Jewish sacred calendar (2:11ff; 4:10ff).

In addition, the Apostle Paul himself was being attacked. More clearly and more forcefully than anyone else, Paul was teaching that Gentile Christians were free from the ceremonial requirements of Mosaic law. Consequently, both he and his gospel came under attack. His detractors denied that he was a true apostle at all.

There were two regions in ancient Asia Minor (present day Turkey) that went by the name of “Galatia.” Scholars debate whether the Apostle Paul is addressing the Northern, Celtic Galatians or the Southern Galatians. The answer one gives affects the dating of this epistle as well. Most modern scholars

take the latter view though the matter cannot be resolved with certainty. Whichever is the case, Paul himself had brought the gospel of grace to the “churches of Galatia.” He was, in some respects, their “founding pastor.”

It is difficult to date the precise time of writing. It is fairly certain that it lies between the eve of the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15, usually dated at 48 or 49 A.D., and the Apostle Paul’s imprisonment recorded in Acts 21, approximately A.D. 58. The Apostle’s lengthy stay in Ephesus, about A.D. 52, is often cited as a likely possibility.

Message

Galatians is undoubtedly the most controversial, the most polemical, and the most personal of all of the New Testament books. Because of its vigorous defense of justification by faith and the Christian’s freedom from the curse of the law, Galatians has been called the “Magna Carta of Christian liberty.” Many of the church fathers wrote commentaries on it (e.g. Chrysostom, Augustine, Victorinus, Jerome). Its impact upon Luther was particularly profound. His commentary on Galatians, published in 1519, exerted enormous influence then and repeatedly since. Charles Wesley, among others, was converted while reading it. Luther said of Galatians, “I am wedded to it,” calling it his “Katie von Bora.”

Galatians 1

Salutation, denunciation of false gospels, and defense of the Apostle Paul’s apostolic authority and message.

Galatians 2

The Apostle Paul continues his defense of his apostolic authority and message, describing his opposition to “false brethren” and even the hypocrisy of the Apostle Peter. He declares six times, positively and negatively in 2:16 alone that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus alone and not by the works of the law.

Galatians 3

The gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone is defended as rooted in the covenant that God made with Abraham and not superseded by law and works.

Galatians 4

The maintenance of Gospel liberty is urged against enslavement to idols, religious ritual, and law.

Galatians 5

Our freedom in Christ is not to be abandoned for slavery to the law (5:1-12); neither is our freedom to be turned into license (5:13ff). Rather, believers are to walk by the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit (5:16-26).

Galatians 6

Mutual responsibilities of church members under the law of Christ, the law of sowing and reaping, the importance of perseverance in well-doing, and final warnings.

Author

The Apostle Paul is identified in 1:1 and 3:1 as the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul, the former student of the great Rabbi Gamaliel, former Pharisee and persecutor of the church, was converted to Christ on the Damascus Road, and called by Him to be His Apostle to the Gentiles.

Date & Occasion

The Apostle Paul writes from prison (3:1; 6:20), probably during the 2 year house arrest in Rome recounted in Acts 28. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and is one of the 5 most important cities of the Empire. It was also the center of the cult of the goddess Diana, in connection with which the Apostle Paul's mission sparked a riot among her devotees and the craftsmen whose livelihood depended upon it (Acts 19:23-41).

Message

The contents of Ephesians closely parallels that of Colossians. It is likely that they were written at about the same time to different churches. Compared with other of the Apostle Paul's letters, this is more devotional in tone. For example, election is considered doxologically in Ephesians 1, whereas in Romans 9–11 it is considered theologically. The central theme of Ephesians is the church, God's new humanity, the bride of Christ. Ephesians was John Calvin's favorite New Testament epistle.

Ephesians 1:1-14

Salutation (verses 1,2) and an extended prayer of praise for redemption, a single long sentence in Greek (verses 3-14).

Ephesians 1:15-23

Thanksgiving and prayer for the Ephesian church.

Ephesians 2

Salvation by grace through faith in Christ (verses 1-10) and the creation of God's new household (verses 11-22).

Ephesians 3

The revelation of the mystery of the gospel and a second prayer for the Ephesian church with doxology.

Ephesians 4:1-16

The unity of the church amidst a diversity of gifts.

Ephesians 4:17-32

The new life of the believer: the new mind, new self, new behavior.

Ephesians 5:1-21

The new walk of the believer: characterized by love, purity, light, wisdom, and the fullness of the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

The Christian household: the duties of husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, and slaves.

Ephesians 6:10-24

Christian warfare and the armor of God (verses 10-20) and final greetings (verses 21-24).

Author

The Apostle Paul, the one-time Pharisee and persecutor of the church, the Damascus road convert and Apostle to the Gentiles, identifies himself as the author (1:1).

Date & Occasion

The Apostle traveled to Philippi in obedience to the Macedonian Vision (Acts 16:6-10). There he established the first church on European soil. He writes to them from prison (1:12-30), perhaps the Roman prison recorded in Acts 28 around the year 61 A.D. (cf. 1:13; 4:22). Philippi was founded by Philip II of Macedon. It was strategically important both because of its gold and silver mines and because it lay on the main road connecting the eastern and western halves of the Roman empire. In 42 B.C. it was the site of a battle between Marc Antony and Octavian on one side, and Brutus and Cassius on the other. Octavian (Augustus) later made it a military colony.

Message

The Apostle Paul writes for two main reasons. First, to thank the Philippians for their unflagging support; second, to provide spiritual guidance. It has been called “The Epistle of Joy.”

Philippians 1:1-18

Greetings, thanksgiving, prayer, and the progress of the gospel.

Philippians 1:19-30

“To live is Christ” and the privilege of Christian suffering.

Philippians 2:1-11

The humility of Christ and ours. Verses 6-8, called the “hymn to Christ,” celebrates Christ’s humiliation and exaltation..

Philippians 2:12-30

The Apostle writes of Christian obedience and witness, and provides news concerning Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Philippians 3

Righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through birthright, ritual, or law (verses 1-11). Press on, the Apostle Paul urges, to the good of our heavenly citizenship (verses 12ff).

Philippians 4

One of the great chapters of the Bible with a half-dozen or so commonly memorized verses, the Apostle Paul gives his final exhortations to unity, to rejoice in the Lord, to prayer, and to contentment.

Author

Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul (1:1; 4:8) while in prison in Rome.

Date & Occasion

Colossae was a city in southeastern Asia Minor (present day Turkey) located on an important trade route, 100 miles west of Ephesus. Though the Apostle Paul never visited Colossae (2:1), it is likely that the foundation of the Colossian church was laid as a result of his ministry in Ephesus (A.D. 53-55), when “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord”(Acts 19:10). Epaphrus, identified as the founder of the church, joined the Apostle Paul in prison in Rome some 5-7 years later (A.D. 62-63), telling him of strange teaching that threatened the survival of the church (Acts 28; Colossians 1:7; 4:12,13). This epistle is the Apostle’s response to Epaphrus’ concerns.

Message

The message of Colossians is the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ compared to the world’s philosophies (2:8), to ascetic and ritual practices (2:20-23; 2:16-19), and to cosmic powers (2:8-15).

Colossians 1:1-14

Salutation and prayer for the Colossians.

Colossians 1:15-28

The Apostle Paul describes the preeminence of Christ, the salvation enjoyed by the Colossians, and His ministry as an Apostle.

Colossians 2

The supremacy of Christ to human philosophy and tradition, to the invisible cosmic powers, and to religious asceticism and ritual.

Colossians 3

Having demonstrated the theological *indicatives* of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, the Apostle Paul urges the ethical *imperatives* which flow from that foundation.

Colossians 4

The Apostle Paul concludes the ethical imperatives that flow from our union with Christ (4:1-6) and extends final greetings (4:7-18).

1 & 2Thessalonians

Author

The Apostle Paul, born Saul of Tarsus, a highly educated and devout Pharisee, one time persecutor of the church, converted to Christ on the “Damascus Road,” and called to be the “Apostle to the Gentiles.”

Date & Occasion

The Thessalonians epistles are among the earliest of the Apostle Paul’s, written about 50 or 51 A.D. Perhaps only Galatians was written earlier.

1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth after the Apostle Paul had received a report from Timothy regarding the state of the Thessalonian congregation (3:6,7). 2 Thessalonians was written shortly thereafter. Thessalonica, located in Macedonia, was founded in 315 by King Cassander of Macedon. It was named for Cassander’s wife, Alexander’s half-sister. It became the capital of the Roman province of Macedon with a population of 200,000. During the Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey he received his “Macedonian vision” wherein a man was pleading “Come, help us” (Acts 16:9). He journeyed first to Philippi, then to Thessalonica, where his ministry lasted for a number of weeks, and resulted in a church composed primarily of Gentiles. Eventually his ministry led to a riot, and Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to be whisked away at night. From Thessalonica they traveled to Berea (Acts 17:1-9), then on to Athens and Corinth, from where he wrote these epistles.

Message

1 Thessalonians records the Apostle Paul’s instructions to a young church and new converts regarding Christian beliefs, ethics, and ministry. Significant emphasis is given to the return of Christ. 2 Thessalonians continues the themes of 1 Thessalonians, underscoring previous teaching on the return of Christ and the importance of work. What Johann A. Bengel, 18th century German commentator said of the 1st Thessalonians

can be said of the 2nd Thessalonians as well: “There is a kind of unmingled sweetness in this epistle.”

1 Thessalonians 1

The Apostle Paul thanks God for the Thessalonian Christians and commends their faithful reception of the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2

The Apostle Paul defends his ministry in Thessalonica employing four metaphors: steward, father, mother, herald.

1 Thessalonians 3

The Apostle Paul explains the certainty of Christian suffering and prays for the Thessalonians’ growth in love and holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4

The Apostle Paul now exhorts the Thessalonian Christians to become that for which he prayed in chapter 3, providing instruction in holiness (verses 1-8), love (9-12), and the Second Coming (vv 13-18).

1 Thessalonians 5

The Apostle Paul teaches the church regarding “the day of the Lord” (vv 1-11), provides final instructions (vv 12-22), and prays for the Thessalonians as he concludes his epistle (vv 23-28).

2 Thessalonians 1

Salutations, greetings, and the promise of Christ’s saving and avenging return.

2 Thessalonians 2

The revelation of the “man of lawlessness.”

2 Thessalonians 3

Warnings against idleness and concluding benediction.

Author

The Apostle Paul is identified in the salutations of the three “Pastoral Epistles,” 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, as the author of each.

Date & Occasion

Historians and New Testament scholars speculate that the Apostle Paul was released from the Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts in 28 in 62 A.D., launched out on a fourth missionary journey, was re-arrested and executed by Nero’s government. Since Nero died in 68 A.D., this would place the date of these epistles between 62–68 A.D., probably in the earlier part of this period, 62–64 A.D. 2 Timothy was the last of the Apostle Paul’s epistles, written just before his trial, which he anticipated would end in his execution (2 Timothy 4:6). This would place it in the latter period, between 64–68 A.D.

The epistles are addressed to Timothy, a native of Lystra in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor. Timothy was a product of a mixed marriage of Jewish mother and Gentile father, was schooled in the Hebrew Scriptures, and along with his mother and grandmother had become a Christian (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14,15).

Timothy traveled with the Apostle Paul on his 2nd & 3rd missionary journeys. Paul wrote 1st Timothy while on his fourth missionary journey in Macedonia to Timothy whom he had left behind in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). 2 Timothy was written during Paul’s 2nd imprisonment in Rome (2 Timothy 1:8; 2:9), and contains the additional instruction for Timothy to leave Ephesus and come visit him in Rome (2 Timothy 4:9,11-13,21)..

Message

The Pastoral Epistles are written in anticipation of a time when the Apostles would have passed from the scene. They are concerned with order in the church in the post-Apostolic era:

the church's organization, officers, members, and doctrines. The Timothy epistles are also full of personal encouragement for Timothy.

1 Timothy 1

Salutation and warnings against false teachers; their doctrines contrasted with the true gospel.

1 Timothy 2

Instructions regarding public worship.

1 Timothy 3

Qualifications for bishop-elders (cf. Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17) and deacons.

1 Timothy 4

Admonitions to Timothy regarding his ministry.

1 Timothy 5:1–6:2

Further admonitions to Timothy regarding his ministry, particularly touching widows, elders, and slaves.

1 Timothy 6:3-21

Timothy is warned about false teachers, the dangers of wealth, and urged to guard the gospel.

2 Timothy 1

Greetings and admonitions to faithfulness.

2 Timothy 2

Wholehearted devotion to gospel ministry is urged through the use of the analogies of the soldier, the athlete, the farmer, the workman, the vessel, and the servant.

2 Timothy 3

Warnings against false teachers and admonitions to faithfulness, particularly in light of the inspiration and adequacy of Scripture.

2 Timothy 4

Consistent ministry of the word is urged, personal instructions and final greetings are given, even as the Apostle Paul anticipates his impending death.

Author

Along with the other “Pastoral Epistles,” 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus was written by the Apostle Paul.

Date & Occasion

Like 1 Timothy, Titus was written on what is called the Apostle Paul’s “fourth missionary journey,” that is, during his travels between his first imprisonment and his 2nd and final imprisonment and execution. This fourth mission trip undertaken between 62 and 68 A.D., may have taken the Apostle to Spain (Romans 15:24,28), to Crete (Titus 1:5), north to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), perhaps to Colossae (cf. Philemon 23), and then to Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3; cf. Philippians 1:25,26). He may have gone back to Ephesus (1 Timothy 3:14,15; 4:13), and to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Troas (2 Timothy 4:13), Miletus, and perhaps Corinth (2 Timothy 4:20). Finally we find him back in Rome awaiting execution (2 Timothy 1:8,12; 2:9; 4:6,7,16). Paul probably wrote between 62 and 64 A.D.

Titus was a Gentile Christian, probably a convert of the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:4). Little else is known about him. He seems to have traveled with Paul on his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys and on part of the fourth (Galatians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18).

Paul writes from Macedonia to Titus on Crete, where Paul had left him following their missionary activity there.

Message

The Apostle Paul writes urging Titus to conclude his work on Crete by completing the organization of the churches (1:5-9), silencing false teachers (1:10-14; 3:9-11), and providing instruction on proper conduct (2:1-3:8). Titus provides significant insight into the order intended for the churches in the absence of the Apostles.

Titus 1

Greetings and the appointment of elders for the oversight of the churches.

Titus 2

Having refuted false teachers in chapter 1, sound teaching is urged in chapters 2 and 3.

Titus 3

Instruction in sound doctrine and good works and final greetings.

Author

Philemon was written by Paul, Christ's Apostle to the Gentiles.

Date & Occasion

The Apostle Paul wrote this epistle around 60 A.D., while a prisoner in Rome. It is addressed to Philemon, a convert of the Apostle's who was a member of the church at Colossae and may have been delivered together with the Colossian epistle (cf. Colossians 4:7ff and Philemon 23). Paul writes urging Philemon to receive back his runaway slave Onesimus, who had encountered Paul in Rome and become a Christian.

Message

This epistle demonstrates that the gospel transforms all human relations, as the Apostle Paul urges Philemon for Christ's sake to receive back Onesimus as more than a slave, but as a Christian brother.

Author

The author of Hebrews is anonymous. Various candidates have been proposed, including the Apostle Paul, who was the choice of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) and Origen (c. 185–253), and whose authorship was accepted in the Eastern and Western churches from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries, Barabbas, Luke, Clement of Rome, Apollos, Epaphras, and Silas. Authorship cannot be established with certainty, though it can be said that he was schooled in the Old Testament (particularly the LXX) and wrote in a Hellenistic literary style and firmly understood Jesus as the culmination of redemptive history, fulfilling the types of the Old Testament.

Date & Occasion

Hebrews is addressed to a church that is suffering persecution and in danger of falling away from the faith. Given the writer's arguments drawn from the Old Testament, the temple, sacrificial system, and priesthood, it is likely to be addressed to Jewish Christians who, under the pressure of rejection from the Jewish community, are tempted to turn from the hidden truths of Christianity to the concrete forms and visible institutions of Judaism. Since Hebrews seems to assume an existing sacrificial system, it would have been written before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

Message

The writer's message is, "don't go back!" He urges his readers to stand firm given the supremacy of Christ to all preceding revelation and all Old Testament rituals and institutions, particularly the temple, sacrifices, and priesthood. All these, he says, were temporary and incomplete, pointing ahead to a better priest, sacrifice, sanctuary, and covenant.

Hebrews 1

The supremacy of God's Son affirmed and then demonstrated from Psalms 2, 104, 45, 102, and 110, and other Old Testament texts.

Hebrews 2

We are exhorted not to neglect "so great salvation" (KJV) wrought by God's Son (verses 1-4), followed by further demonstrations of Christ's supremacy based on Psalm 8 (verse 5 ff.) and Psalm 22 and other Old Testament passages (verses 11ff.).

Hebrews 3

We are admonished not to repeat the mistakes of the Hebrew people who hardened their hearts against the voice of God and rebelled in the exodus and wilderness wandering. Jesus is shown to be superior to Moses (verses 1-6) while the church is exhorted from Psalm 95 not to fall away from God (verses 7-19).

Hebrews 4

We are exhorted not to fall away from God, based on Psalm 95, continues, as the church is urged not to harden its heart and not repeat the failure of Israel which did not enter God's rest due to disobedience. Rather we are urged "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (verse 16)

Hebrews 5

Christ is shown to be qualified to service as our high priest through divine appointment and personal suffering. His priesthood is "according to the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 6

We are warned against apostasy (verses 1-12) and encouraged by reminders of the certainty of God's promises (verses 13-20).

Hebrews 7

Christ is demonstrated to be the high priest promised in Psalm 110, according to the order of Melchizedek, that mysterious figure who we find first in Genesis 14:17-20 and only again in Psalm 110; as such he is prior to and superior to the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 8

Christ is the high priest in the true, that is the heavenly, not the earthly tabernacle, and mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises, that prophesied in Jeremiah 31.

Hebrews 9

The earthly and temporal tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices are unfavorably compared with the heavenly and eternal: the tabernacle that is in heaven, the high priesthood of Christ, and His shed blood.

Hebrews 10:1-18

The yearly sacrifices of the old covenant are compared unfavorably with the “once for all” sacrifice of Christ (verses 12,14; cf. 9:26,28).

Hebrews 10:19-39

Given the superiority of the new covenant to the old and of Christ’s priesthood to the Levitical, and His sacrifice to the blood of bulls and goats (10:14), believers are urged to “hold fast the confession” and not “shrink back.”

Hebrews 11:1-19

Faith, as the assurance or conviction of things hoped for, yet not seen, confirmed, or received, is illustrated in the lives of Old Testament believers.

Hebrews 11:20-40

Faith, as the assurance of things promised, continues to be illustrated in the lives of Old Testament believers from Isaac through the prophets.

Hebrews 12:1-17

Believers are exhorted to fix their eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, that we might run the race with endurance, regarding our suffering as the loving discipline of our heavenly Father.

Hebrews 12:18-28

The old covenant, represented by Mt. Sinai, is unfavorably compared with the new covenant, represented by Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 13

Final exhortations regarding the whole range of Christian responsibilities and expectations, benediction, and greetings.

James

Author

The author identifies himself as “James” (1:1), most likely the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church who presided at the counsel of Jerusalem (Acts 15). He is identified in Galatians as “the Lord’s brother” and a pillar of the church along with Peter and John (Galatians 2:9). James was martyred in 62 A.D.

Date & Occasion

The scholars place the date of James after 44 A.D., the beginning of serious persecution in Judea (Acts 12), and 49 A.D., the date of the Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15). James is possibly the oldest of the New Testament writings. It is written to “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad,” that is, to the whole church identified as the new Israel.

Message

James deals with a range of subjects often paralleling the Sermon on the Mount. At the heart of his message is his insistence that true faith manifests itself in good works.

James 1:1-15

Salutation and call to perseverance in life’s trials.

James 1:16-27

Be doers of the word and not hearers only.

James 2

Faith without works is dead.

James 3

Taming the tongue and the nature of godly wisdom.

James 4

Warnings against worldliness and a call to submit and draw near to God.

James 5

The rich are warned; patience and prayer are commended.

Author

The author identifies himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” and “a witness of the sufferings of Christ” (1:1; 5:1). Early confirmation of its authenticity may be found in the writings of the church fathers such as Irenaeus (c. 185 A.D.), Tertullian (c. 160–225 A.D.), and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 A.D.), among others.

Date & Occasion

Peter locates himself in “Babylon,” probably a reference to Rome (5:13; cf. Rev. 17:5,9), which tradition says is where he was at the end of his life. Its date is most likely sometime between 60–68 A.D. *If* he writes after the Apostle Paul’s release from prison in 62 A.D. and before Nero’s persecutions which began in 64, we may be able to date the letter in 63 A.D. He writes to the “elect exiles of the dispersion” (1:1), probably a reference to Christians scattered throughout the Mediterranean to whom Peter is applying a term formerly used to designate Jews living outside of Palestine. The places named in 1:1 are all regions of Asia Minor that encompass most of present-day Turkey.

Message

Peter writes to encourage persecuted and distressed Christians. The “apostle of hope,” as Peter has been called, extends hope and provides instruction on handling suffering faithfully. His own summary of his message is recorded in 5:12: “this is the true grace of God.”

1 Peter 1:1-12

Faith, hope, and joy in Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:13-25

Our call to holy living and reverential fear.

1 Peter 2:1-12

Christ the living stone builds His spiritual house out of living stones.

1 Peter 2:13-25

The responsibilities of Christian citizens and servants illustrated by the example of Christ.

1 Peter 3

Directions for the Christian home (verses 1-7) and conduct toward unbelievers (verses 13-22).

1 Peter 4

Exhortations to moral purity, love, service, and faithfulness.

1 Peter 5

Peter charges to the elders to “Shepherd the flock of God,” and concludes this epistle in which, in the words of 5:12, he has been “exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God” in which they are to “stand firm.”

Author

Although the authenticity of Petrine authorship has been challenged in modern times and weakly attested even in ancient times, the epistles claim can be taken at face value: “Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,” is the author (1:1).

Date & Occasion

If 3:1 refers to 1 Peter the date of writing would be sometime between 63–64 A.D. and Peter’s death in 67–78 A.D. As with 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:13), the likely place of writing would be Rome, particularly given the tradition that Peter was martyred there by Nero, and his readers, the same churches in Asia Minor referred to in 1 Peter (1 Peter 1:1).

Message

The Apostle Peter writes to combat false teaching (2:1). He seems to be dealing with an early form of Gnosticism, a heresy that combined elements of Greek philosophy and eastern mysticism, that taught salvation through knowledge, that viewed the body and the physical world as sinful or irrelevant, and so encouraged both asceticism and, ironically, immorality. It is particularly the latter with which the Apostle Paul is dealing. Calvin said, “The majesty of the Spirit of Christ exhibits itself in every part of the epistle.”

2 Peter 1:1-15

Salutation and exhortation to confirm one’s calling and election through spiritual growth.

2 Peter 1:16-21

The certainty of God’s revelation in Christ.

2 Peter 2

False teachers described and denounced and their destruction assured.

2 Peter 3

The certainty and circumstances of Christ's return and the ethical implications for us.

Author

Though the author of the Epistles of John is unidentified, the ancient tradition of the church assigns authorship to the Apostle John. This fits well with the eyewitness and authoritative claims of the opening verses.

Date & Occasion

1 John is likely to have been written after the Gospel of John and before the letter of Ignatius (about 110 A.D.). It was written to combat an incipient gnosticism that denied the reality of the incarnation. These proto-gnostics argued that Jesus only *appeared* to be human, only *seemed* to partake of human flesh (4:2,3). In addition to theological error there were also behavioral problems: both immorality and lovelessness.

Message

John insists upon a connection between God's attributes of light, truth, and love, and the development of those virtues in the believer. He distinguishes between the genuine believer and the counterfeit, the former being one who walks in the light, believes the truth, the practices love.

1 John 1:1-2:6

The purpose of the epistle (verses 1-4) and the believer's duty to walk in the light, confess sin through our Advocate, and keep the commandments.

1 John 2:7-29

Those who know God love the brethren, love not the world, and confess the truth.

1 John 3

The children of God practice righteousness, love one another, and keep the commandments.

1 John 4

The children of God confess Jesus Christ and practice love,
because God is love.

1 John 5

The children of God believe Jesus is the Christ, love God, keep
the commandments, and overcome the world.

Author

The style, content, and tradition assign the authorship of 2 John to the author of the Gospel of John and 1 John, that is, to John the son of Zebedee, the Apostle of Christ.

Date & Occasion

2 John was written to combat the same false teaching addressed in 1 John and was written about the same time, at the end of the first century (between 80 and 100 A.D.).

Message

John urges his readers to both walk in truth and speak in love, and reject those who deny the reality of Christ's incarnation.

Author

Like 1 and 2 John, the 3rd epistle is written by the author of the Gospel of John, John the son of Zebedee, the Apostle of Christ.

Date & Occasion

3 John is occasioned by a conflict between Diotrephes and others in the congregation over the issue of hospitality shown to traveling missionaries. It may be that it was written earlier than either 1 or 2 John, placing it in the 80's of the first century.

Message

John writes to underscore the importance of hospitality, rebuking Diotrephes and commending Demetrius.

Author

The author identifies himself as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” The James referred to is likely to be the half-brother of Jesus, author of the epistle that bears his name, an important church leader.

Date & Occasion

Jude is difficult to date and can only be inferred by the age of the author and the heresy he addresses. The most likely date is before 65–67 A.D., the date of 2 Peter

Message

Jude, Like 2 Peter, writes to combat false teachers who were using the grace of God in Christ as a license for sin. He both denounces false teaching and commends the positive application of Christian truth.

Author

The writer identifies himself as John, traditionally understood to be John the Apostle.

Date & Occasion

Written during a time of persecution in order to exhort the churches to remain faithful and to give them hope of final victory. The Emperor Nero's reign (A.D. 54-68) or Domitian's (A.D. 81-96) are the two most likely timeframes for composition, most scholars favoring a date around A.D. 95. It is addressed to seven churches located in Asia Minor, in what is today modern western Turkey.

Message

Following the opening vision of Christ upon His throne (1:12-20), He addresses the seven churches (2:1-3:22), and then, employing what is called apocalyptic language, presents a series of visions portraying the church's struggle with evil in history, culminating in the victory and reign of Christ (4:1– 22:5). This main section of The Revelation is cyclical in structure, consisting of seven cycles of judgment, each telling the same story, each culminating in the return of Christ, each told from a fresh vantage point. It concludes with final exhortations and benediction (22:6-21).

Revelation 1:1-8

John's prologue and greeting of the seven churches.

Revelation 1:9-20

John's vision of the Son of Man.

Revelation 2:1-17

Christ's instructions to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos.

Revelation 2:18-27

Christ's instructions to the church in Thyatira.

Revelation 3

Christ's instructions to the churches in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Revelation 4

A vision of the heavenly throne, of Him who sits upon it, and the worship that surrounds it.

Revelation 5

The revelation of the slain Lamb who is worthy to open the scroll/book, break its seven seals, unfolding the plan and purposes of God recorded in chapters 6–22..

Revelation 6

The worthy Lamb opens the first six seals of the scroll/book which describe successive judgments, beginning with the “four horsemen of the Apocalypse,” and ending in the Second Coming.

Revelation 7

Following the opening of the 6 seals of the scroll/book in chapter 6, the opening of the 7th is delayed as the servants of God are assured of God's protection.

Revelation 8

The seventh seal of the scroll/book is opened, ending the first cycle of judgment (chapters 4–7) and beginning the second (chapters 8–11). This cycle consists of seven trumpets which parallel the seven seals, though the intensity of the judgments increases. Trumpets 1-4 are blown, with accompanying calamities.

Revelation 9

The sounding of trumpets 5 and 6 of 7 and their accompanying calamities upon the earth.

Revelation 10

An interlude between the 6th and 7th trumpets, extending to chapter 11:14, describes the prophetic call of God's people and His protection of them in the midst of His judgments.

Revelation 11

The ministry of the two faithful witnesses is described (11:1-14) and the seventh trumpet sounds, bringing to a conclusion the second cycle of judgment in the Second Coming of Christ (11:15-19).

Revelation 12

The third cycle of visions, following the first cycle of 7 seals (chapters 6-7) and second cycle of seven trumpets (chapters 8-11) begins, and extends to the end of chapter 14. The work of redemption is depicted through the symbols of a woman, a child, a dragon, and Michael.

Revelation 13

Two beasts, depicting persecuting power, particularly of the state, are described, requiring "the endurance and faith of the saints" (v. 10).

Revelation 14

The third cycle of visions which began in chapter 12 is completed with the vision of the 144,000, the messages of the three angels, and the Second Coming depicted as a harvest.

Revelation 15

The fourth cycle of visions, extending to the end of chapter 16, begins with a vision of seven angels, with seven golden bowls of God's wrath, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

Revelation 16

The seven angels pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath introduced in chapter 15, culminating in the Second Coming in verses 16:17-21.

Revelation 17

The fifth cycle of visions begins in verse 1 and extends to chapter 19:20, depicting the judgment of Babylon, a symbol of the immoral and idolatrous world of paganism.

Revelation 18

The fall of Babylon, symbolic of the immoral and idolatrous world of paganism, is announced and celebrated.

Revelation 19

Verses 1-10 complete the fifth cycle of visions with the celebration of the saints over Babylon's destruction. Verse 11 marks the beginning of the sixth cycle of visions which extends to 21:6, and which focus on the final battle between Christ and His enemies, culminating in the Second Coming and final judgment.

Revelation 20

Revelation 20–21:8 continues the sixth cycle of visions, chapter 20 depicting the binding of Satan and the Great White Throne judgment.

Revelation 21

The 6th cycle of visions concludes with the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth (verses 1-8). The 7th cycle of visions begins in verse 9 depicting the New Jerusalem and extends to 22:5.

Revelation 22

The seventh cycle of visions, that of the New Jerusalem, concludes with a description of a restored Eden (verses 1-5). John's Revelation closes with a promise, an exhortation, and a warning (verses 6-21).

**Lesson Count for Each
Book of the Bible**

Old Testament

Genesis	56
Exodus	28
Leviticus	12
Numbers	20
Deuteronomy	33
Joshua	18
Judges	27
Ruth	4
1 Samuel	36
2 Samuel	31
1 Kings	37
2 Kings	36
1 Chronicles	19
2 Chronicles	41
Ezra	9
Nehemiah	11
Esther	10
Job	41
Psalms	164
Proverbs	32
Ecclesiastes	13
Solomon	8
Isaiah	77
Jeremiah	70
Lamentations	6
Ezekiel	47
Daniel	15
Hosea	13
Joel	4
Amos	9
Obadiah	1
Jonah	4
Micah	7
Nahum	3
Habakkuk	3

Zephaniah	3
Haggai	2
Zechariah	14
Malachi	<u>4</u>
OT total	
(excluding Pss.)	968

New Testament

Matthew	38
Mark	25
Luke	42
John	34
Acts	33
Romans	22
1 Corinthians	20
2 Corinthians	15
Galatians	6
Ephesians	9
Philippians	6
Colossians	5
1 Thessalonians	5
2 Thessalonians	3
1 Timothy	6
2 Timothy	4
Titus	3
Philemon	1
Hebrews	16
James	6
1 Peter	7
2 Peter	3
1 John	5
2 John	1
3 John	1
Jude	1
Revelation	<u>24</u>
NT total	341

Six Year Plan –I

(Years 1–6)

The following schedule, based on the chapter divisions of *Liturgical Introductions to Scripture*, is designed to take a congregation through the New Testament in six years, as well as a significant portion of the Old Testament. This plan assumes breaks in the annual schedule and so is based on a 48 rather than 52-week year. This plan also assumes that the Psalms are being sung, and so does not include them in the readings. One's preaching schedule will impact which books we read. The "lesson count" table may be consulted to substitute another book of the Bible for the one through which you are currently preaching.

Year 1

AM	Matthew (38), 1 & 2 Thessalonians (8), Haggai (2)	PM	Genesis 1–42 (48)
----	------------------------------------------------------	----	-------------------

Year 2

AM	Acts (33), Galatians (6), Ephesians (9)	PM	Genesis 43–50 (8), Exodus (28), Leviticus (12)
----	--------------------------------------------	----	---------------------------------------------------

Year 3

AM	Mark (25), 1 Corinthians (20), Habakkuk (3)	PM	Numbers (20), Joshua (18), Ruth (4), Lamentations (6)
----	------------------------------------------------	----	----------------------------------------------------------

Year 4

AM	Romans (22), Hebrews (16), Philippians (6), Jude (1), Nahum (3)	PM	Deuteronomy (33), Daniel (15)
----	-----------------------------------------------------------------------	----	----------------------------------

Year 5

AM	John (34), 1 & 2 Timothy (10), Titus (3), Philemon (1)	PM	1 & 2 Peter (10), Revelation (24), Colossians (5), Amos (9)
----	-----------------------------------------------------------	----	-------------------------------------------------------------------

Year 6

AM	Luke (42), James (6)	PM	2 Corinthians (15), Judges (27), 1–3 John (7)
----	----------------------	----	--------------------------------------------------

Six Year Plan – II

(Years 7–12)

The second six-year plan continues reading in the New Testament, repeating the Gospels, Acts, and Romans in the mornings. In the evenings the Old Testament historical books continues, 1 Samuel through Esther (excluding 1 & 2 Chronicles), and concludes the minor prophets and the wisdom books (excluding Job) and one of the major prophets, Isaiah. (Numbers in brackets denote number of lessons)

Year 7

AM Matthew (38), Esther (10)

PM 1 Samuel (36), Jonah (4),
Micah (7)

Year 8

AM Acts (33), Zechariah (14),
Zephaniah (3)

PM 2 Samuel (31), Hosea (13),
Joel (4)

Year 9

AM Mark (25), Ecclesiastes (13),
Malachi (4), Galatians (6)

PM 1 Kings (37), 1 & 2 Timothy
(10), Jude (1)

Year 10

AM Romans (22), Hebrews (16),
Proverbs 1–25 (26)

PM 2 Kings (36), Philippians (4),
Colossians (5), Philemon (1)

Year 11

AM John (34), Proverbs 26–31
(6), 1 & 2 Thessalonians (8)

PM Ezra (9), Nehemiah 11),
Isaiah 1–23 (27)

Year 12

AM Luke (42), James (6)

PM Isaiah 24–66 (50)

Bibliography

Reformation Study Bible

Ryken's Bible Handbook

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown's Commentary

Various commentaries according to the books upon which comments are cited.