Contents

The history of the book of the Bible 2

The introduction 3

The divisions of the bible 4

The pentateuch 6

Genesis 7

Exodus 10

Leviticus 11

Numbers 13

Deuteronomy 15

Joshua 18

Judges 20

Ruth 22

The Books of Samuel 24

The Books Of Kings 27

The Books Of Chronicles 34

Ezra And Nehemiah 39

Esther 43

Job 45

Psalms 47

Proverbs 50

Ecclesiastes 53

Song Of Solomon 54

Isaiah 56

Jeremiah 61

Lamentations 63

Ezekiel 65

Hosea 70

Joel 72

Amos 89

Obadiah 76

Jonah 77

Micah 79

Nahum 97

Habakkuk 99

Zephaniah 82

Haggai 84

Zechariah 85

Malachi 106

†∞∞∞∞†

†THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK OF THE BIBLE†

The INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to furnish students with an introduction to each of the books in the Holy Bible. Among those things discussed are the authorship and date of composition of the various books, the people to whom the books were addressed and the situation which called forth the writing of each.

In addition, attention is given to special characteristics or problems of the individual books.

Unfortunately, few of these matters can receive anything more than a cursory treatment.

In cases where a fuller discussion is desired, the reader is invited to consult standard commentaries and reference books which deal with the problems of introduction.

The use of the word "Bible" to refer to the collected books of the Old and New Testaments did not become a common practice until the fifth century **AD**. The word is derived from the Greek term ***Biblion,*** meaning book. In the first century **AD** there was a body of Jewish sacred literature which was regarded as authoritative and which bore the general term **"scripture,"** but whose limits were not as yet precisely determined.

In general, however, the consensus was in favor of the same books which are found in the Bible, although the Jews of Alexandria also counted as canonical those books which constitute the ***Apocrypha.***

Wish you good luck and success in the study and application of the Holy Bible books!!

The Divisions of the Bible

- The Jews divided the Old Testament writings into three groups: the Law, the Prophets and the ***Hagiographa***, or Holy Writings.
- The first of these divisions is comprised of the five books traditionally ascribed to Moses:

➢ ***Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*** and ***Deuteronomy.***

- Instead of dividing the prophets into the categories of "major" and "minor," they were viewed as earlier and later prophets.
- In the class of former prophets were Joshua, Judges and the books of Samuel and Kings.
- The **later prophets** include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve so-called **Minor Prophets.**
- The third division of the Hebrew Bible - the Holy Writings - contains the poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs *and* Job), five books which are designated by the term ***Megilloth*** or rolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes *and* Esther), and the historical books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and the books of Chronicles).
- The placing of **Daniel** among the historical books instead of the prophetic writings is perhaps to be explained on the ground that although he uttered a number of predictions, he had not exercised the office of a prophet in the same manner as had the other prophets.
- In the Christian church it has been customary to divide the Old Testament books into the following categories:

➢ Historical books (Genesis to Esther inclusive),

- Wisdom literature and Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) and
- **Prophetic hooks (Isaiah *to* Malachi).**

- The original authors of the Bible did not divide their writings into chapters and verses as we have them today; this was a much later development.
- The Jews had long divided their scriptures into sections for more convenient reference, but the division into chapters as we know them was the work either of **Stephen Langton or Cardinal Hugo de St. Caro**, both of whom lived in the first half of the thirteenth century.
- The subdivision of these chapters into verses was done by a fifteenth-century rabbi, **Mordecai Nathan**.
- Previous to this system of versification, which is identical to that found in our present Bibles, subdivisions of chapters were noted by placing letters of the alphabet at equal distances in the margin of each page.
- The division of the New Testament chapters into verses first appeared in the Greek text edited by **Bobert Estienne in 1551.**
- The first use of this system in an English version was in the Geneva Bible of 1560.
- After that, it was transferred to the Bishop's Bible of 1568 and the King James Version of 1611.
- Since that time, with slight variations in detail, it has become universally recognized. It ought always to be remembered that the division of the Bible into verses was designed as a reference aid for study of the Bible and was never intended to govern the sense of a passage.
- A verse or chapter division may often occur in the middle of a narrative or train of thought, thus giving the impression that the discussion of the topic has ended, when such may not be the case.
- The serious student should be careful not to follow a program of reading which adheres strictly to the humanly devised divisions of the Bible, but concern him-

self with making certain that he has discerned the context in which a verse or chapter is situated.

The Pentateuch

- The **Pentateuch** is the Greek name given to the five books commonly called the Books of Moses.
- These five books form a unit which, beginning with the record of creation and a history of the primitive world, passes on to deal more particularly with the chosen nation of Israel.
- It gives at length the personal history of the three great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it describes how the family of Israel grew into a nation in Egypt; it tells of its oppression and deliverance, of its forty years wandering in the wilderness, of the giving of the law with its civil and religious enactments, of the construction of the Tabernacle, of the numbering of the people, of the rights and duties of the priesthood, as well as of many other important events which befell the Jews before their entrance into the land of Canaan, and finally concludes with Moses' last discourses and his death.
- For some time most Biblical critics have rejected the traditional view that Moses was tin- author of these five books, asserting that the Pentateuch is comprised of different documents or strata of material which originated at various stages in Israel's history.
- The evidence cited in support of this hypothesis includes the fact that two names are used to refer to God in different sections of the Pentateuch. The contention is that this is evidence of different sources for the collection.
- Duplicate accounts of events, together with variations in language and style, are also appealed to in an effort to show that various strata of material were compiled to form the Pentateuch.
- As one might expect, a tremendous amount of literature on this subject has been produced. Conclusions vary widely.

- Some claim that Moses had very little, if anything, to do with the composition of the Pentateuch; others, that it was compiled or edited at a later date, hut largely from genuine Mosaic literature; still others hold to the traditional theory of Mosaic authorship.
- Since the limits of this article do not permit an adequate discussion of this problem, the reader is referred to standard introductory works on the Old Testament.

Genesis

- *Genesis* is the title given to the first book of the Pentateuch by its Greek translators. The word means "origin" or "beginning"; truly, *Genesis* is a book of beginnings.
- It describes the In- ginning of man and the universe which he in habits, the beginning of sin, the consequent beginning of an effort at redemption, and the beginning of the Hebrew nation through whom this redemption was to come.
- The book of **GENESIS,** together with the early chapters of **EXODUS,** describes the steps which led to the establishment of the **theocracy**.
- Two ideas are seen to be predominant in this book— the people of God and the Promised Land. **GENESIS** has a character which is both special and universal.
- It embraces the entire world as it speaks of God as the Lord of the whole human race; yet, as an introduction to Jewish history, it makes the universal interest subordinate to the national.
- Its design is to show how God first revealed himself to the patriarchs of the Hebrew race in order to make of them a people who would serve as his witnesses on the earth.
- This is the inner principle of unity which pervades the entire book. The contents of **GENESIS** may be conveniently outlined in the following manner:

I. **The Beginnings of History (1-11)**

1) The creation of the universe **(1:1-2:3).**

2) Description of the garden of Eden (2:4-17).

3) The creation of woman **(2:18-25).**

4) The Fall of man (**CH. 3).**

5) Cain and Abel **(CH. 4).**

6) The generations from Adam to Noah (**CH.** 5). This section is characterized by the extreme longevity of the persons noted.

7) A description of the wickedness which moved God to commission Noah to build and enter the ark, together with the details concerning the ark, the flood, and the postdeluvian events of Noah's life (6-9).

8) The ancient families of mankind, as they descended from Noah **(CH. 10).**

II. **The Story of Abraham (12-25)**

1) God's call of Abram and the covenant with him in which he was promised that his descendants should inherit the land of Canaan, that they should become a great nation and that through them all nations of the earth would be blessed **(12-17).**

- Abram's name is changed to Abraham and Ishmael is born to Abraham and Hagar, Sarah's handmaid.

2) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, with an account of Lot's deliverance **(18-19).**

3) Abraham deceives Abimelech concerning Sarah **(CH.20).**

4) The early years of Isaac **(21-25:18).**

- This section contains the birth of Isaac **(21:1-8);**
- the departure of Hagar and Ishmael **(21:9-21);**
- Abraham's faith, as demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac **(CH. 22);**
- the death of Sarah and the purchase of the family burial ground from the Hittites **(CH. 23);** and
- the betrothal of Isaac and Rebekah **(CH. 24).**
- At the end of this section, Abraham's death is recorded **(25:1-11)** and

- the generations of Ishmael are given **(25:12-18).**

III. **The Story of Isaac (25:19-26:35)**

- The main events in connection with Isaac's life are the birth of his twin sons, Jacob and Esau **(25:19-34)**and his sojourn among the Philistines **(CH. 26).**

IV. **The Story of Jacob and Esau (27:1-37:1)**

1) Jacob leaves home, after receiving his father's blessing by deceit **(27:1-28:9).**

2) It was on this journey that he experienced the vision of the ladder at Bethel **(28:10-15).**

3) Jacob's family and Kisi return from Haran to Canaan (**29-33).**

- This section gives an account of Jacob's marriages, the birth of most of his children, the shrewd dealings between Laban and Jacob and the departure of Jacob from Haran.
- After leaving Haran and wrestling with the angel, Jacob came into contact with Esau, but without the conflict which had been feared.

4) The last years of Jacob's life **(34-36).**

V. The Story of Joseph (37-50)

5) Joseph, because of the jealousy of his brothers, is sold into Egypt where, after a series of events, he becomes a ruler of Egypt, ranking just under Pharaoh (37-41).

6) Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy food during a time of great famine. After a time, Joseph reveals his identity to his brethren **(42- 45).**

7) At the insistence of Joseph, Jacob and his family settle in Egypt **(46-47).**

8) Jacob's blessing of Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and his prophecy concerning the twelve tribes (**48-49).**

9) The death of Jacob and Joseph (ch. 50)

Exodus

1. The second book of the Pentateuch bears its name because of the subject matter of the first half of the book - the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. The word, "exodus" is derived from a Greek word meaning "going out."
2. Hundreds of years elapsed between the time of the events described in the closing chapters of **GENESIS** and those of the beginning of **EXODUS.** The exact number of years between the migration of Jacob into Egypt until the exodus is given as 430 **(12:40-41).**
3. At the close of **GENESIS,** Israel was living in the fertile land of Goshen and was being fed from the granaries of the Pharaoh.
4. In **EXODUS,** the Hebrews are seen as slaves of the Egyptians, without national consciousness or apparent religious purpose.
5. **EXODUS** shows the development of Israel into a real nation, as God began the first stages of fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.
6. After the first seven verses of the book, noting the increase and prosperity of Israel, **EXODUS** is seen to fall into seven rather distinct sections:

- The sufferings of Israel **(1:8-7:7).**
- This section includes the birth, education and flight of Moses;
- his call to be deliverer of his people and his consequent return from Midian to Egypt; and
- his first ineffectual attempts to prevail upon Pharoah to let the Israelites go, which resulted only in an increase in their burdens.

7. A manifestation of God's providential guidance of Israel, illustrated by the ten plagues **(7:8-13:16).** This section also includes the account of the observance of the first Passover (**CH. 12).**
8. The guiding of the people of Sinai **(13:17- 18:27),** which tells of the departure and the miraculous crossing of die Red Sea. This section also contains a narrative of the principal events on the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai, including the coming of the manna, the observance of the Sabbath, the supply

of water from the rock at Rephidim and the advice of Jethro concerning the civil government of the great mass of people.

9. The making of the covenant at Sinai, together with the reception of the Ten Commandments **(19:1-24:18).** The laws recorded in this section regulated the religious, civil, and social life of the Israelites.
10. Directions for the building of the tabernacle **(24:18-31:18).**
11. The renewing of the covenant after the sinful actions of the Israelites in connection with the making of the golden calf **(32:1-35:3).**
12. The actual building and dedication of the tabernacle of the Lord (**35:4-40:38),** under the supervision of the two master craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab.
13. **EXODUS** is a book of redemption in which God delivers His people out of bondage and brings » them into a special relationship with Himself.

Leviticus

- In the Septuagint (The Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament), the third book of the Pentateuch bears the title **"LEVITIKON" (**"pertaining to the Levites"), an adjective modifying the word "book."
- The Levites were the tribe from which the priests and others prominent in the worship services were chosen, in lieu of the firstborn sons of all the tribes **(NUM. 3:45).**
- **LEVITICUS** fills an integral role in the Pentateuch.
- Just as it is necessary to be familiar with **EXODUS** in order to understand **LEVITICUS,** some knowledge of **LEVITICUS** is necessary if one is to understand the religious activities of the Jews as portrayed in **NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY,** and the rest of the Old Testament.
- The purpose of **LEVITICUS** may be defined as calling attention to the disparity between God's holiness and man's sinfulness and providing concrete steps whereby man might restore the fellowship which has been lost as a result of his own defilement.
- The laws connected with this restoration are varied.

- They are both general and specific; they seek, in one way or another, to govern the whole life of the people of God.
- In this sense, **LEVITICUS** is the most thoroughly legalistic book in the entire Old Testament.
- Throughout its laws is seen the unyielding demand: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." On the other hand, the climax of the book is clearly ch. 16, in which instructions are given for the Day of Atonement.
- On this day, God provided his people with a ceremony by means of which all of their sins for the previous year were counted as forgiven.
- The mercy which God displays in this service so foreshadows the work of Christ that the 16th chapter has been called "the most consummate flower of Messianic symbolism."
- In addition to the laws, there are also some historical sections, but these, too, are closely connected with the priesthood.
- They include the consecration of the priests in chs. 8 and 9, the sin and punishment of Nadab and Abihu (**CH. 10),** and the stoning of a blasphemer (**24:10FF).**
- In this connection, it is interesting to note that only one mention is made of the Levites and that in an incidental manner **(25:32FF).**
- The book may be divided as follows:
- Laws concerning Sacrifice (1-7). In this section five types of offerings are discussed:
  - burnt offerings,
  - meal offerings,
  - peace offerings,
  - sin offerings and
  - guilt offerings.

- This is filled out by a discussion of the sin offering as it is to be observed by various classes of individuals.
- An historical section featuring the consecration of the priests (**8-9**) and the sin of Nadab and Abihu **(CH. 10).**
- A section on laws of purification from ceremonial uncleanness **(11-15).**
- These furnish instructions as to the appropriate sacrifices and ordinances for ridding oneself of impurity.
- The Day of Atonement **(CH. 16).**
- Laws dealing with the conduct of God's people **(17-20).**
- These include various religious and ethical laws designed to accent the separation between Israel and the heathen nations.
- Laws concerning the holiness of the priests **(21-22).**
- A discussion of holy days and feasts (**23- 24).**
- Included in this section are the Sabbath, Passover, the feasts of first fruits and harvest, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles.
- The Sabbatical and Jubilee Years **(CH.$5).**
- Promises and threats connected with obedience to the laws **(CH. 26).**
- An appendix containing the laws concerning vows **(CH. 27).**

Numbers

- This book takes its name from the fact that it contains the account of the two census enumerations of the congregation of Israel in chs. 1-4 and ch. 26.
- The title, however, is somewhat unfortunate since most of the book has no connection with these "numberings."
- The original Hebrew title, "in the wilderness," is greatly to be preferred, as the book is certainly more a vital history of the events of the period of wanderings than a catalogue of lifeless statistics.
- **NUMBERS** follows naturally after **LEVITICUS** in the sequence of the books of the Pentateuch.

- After receiving the laws at Sinai, the journey to which was described in **EXODUS,** the Israelites were ready to continue their march to Canaan.
- This book tells of their preparations, their sin in failing to trust in God and the resultant thirty-seven years of wanderings through the rough wilderness.
- At the end of the book, they are once again at the edge of Canaan, where they receive instructions for the conquest and division of the land.
- There are a number of problems connected with the chronological and historical statements made in the book, but the limits of this article do not permit a discussion of them here.
- For fuller treatment, the reader is referred to any one of several standard commentaries or introductions to the Old Testament.
- The principle divisions of the book are as follows :
- The preparation for the departure from Sinai **(1:1-10:10).**
- The events described here took place in nineteen days.
- In this time a census was taken of all men who were over twenty and who could serve in military efforts **(1-4).**
- The total obtained was 603,550 **(1:46).**
- This would indicate that the total population of the group was probably near three million.
- The census was followed by the cleansing and blessing of the congregation **(5-6),** the offering of gifts from the various tribes (7), the consecration of the Levites *(8)* and the observance of the Passover at Sinai **(9:1-14).**
- The journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea **(10:11-14:45).** This section includes the account of the coming of the quail **(11),** the rebellion against Moses by Miriam and Aaron **(12),** and the fateful mission of the spies **(13,14).**
- The wanderings of the desert wilderness **(15-19).**

- As noted above, this covered a period of thirty-seven years, from the end of the second to the beginning of the fortieth year in the wilderness. Ch. 15 includes various laws and a record of capital punishment for Sabbath breaking.
- The rebellion of Korah (ch.16) and the budding of Aaron's rod (ch. 17) are also mentioned here.
- The history of the last year, from the second arrival of the Israelites at Kadesh till they roach "the plains of Moab
- by Jordan near Jericho" *(20-36:13).*
- Notable sections of this are the story of Balaam *(22:2-24:25),*
- the zeal of Phine- has *(ch. 25),*
- the second census *(26:1-51),*
- instructions for dividing the land *(26:52-27:11),*
- the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor *(27:12-23),*
- various laws concerning offerings and vows (*28-30),*
- the war with Midian (*ch.31),*
- the settlement of the tribes east of the Jordan *(ch.32),*
- *a* review of the locations at which Israel had camped during their wanderings *(33:1-49),*
- more instructions concerning the conquest and division of Canaan *(33:50-34:29),*
- the appointment of the cities of refuge *(ch.35)* and instructions concerning the marriage of land-owning Israelite women (*ch.36).*

Deuteronomy

1. The word "Deuteronomy" is taken from the Greek word for "the second law" or "the law repeated."
2. The book is written in the form of discourses which Moses delivered to the people in the plains of Moab on the eve of their entrance into the promised land of Canaan.

3. These discourses are addressed to every member of the congregation of Israel and not just to a small segment, such as the Levites.
4. The discourses are not a second law in the sense of being a different law; neither are they to be taken merely as a recapitulation of those things recorded in *Exodus, Leviticus,* and *Deuteronomy.*
5. They are rather a forceful presentation of the most essential aspects of God's revelation with an emphasis on the spiritual principle of the law and its fulfillment, as well as a development and application of the law to circumstances which would face the Israelites in their new life in Canaan.
6. These discourses were spoken in the eleventh month of the last year of Israel's wanderings, the fortieth year after leaving Egypt.
7. In the first speech *(1:1-4:43),* Moses strives briefly, but earnestly, to warn the people against the sins which had kept their fathers from entering the promised land.
8. In order to stress the necessity of obedience, he recapitulates the chief events of the last forty years in the wilderness, emphasizing the role which disobedience and lack of trust had played in the afflictions of the Israelites.
9. The second discourse *(4:44-26:19)* enters more fully into the precepts of the Law.
10. It may be viewed as the body of the whole address, the former being an introduction. This section is hortatory and legal, consisting of a review of Israel's moral and civil statutes, testimonies and judgments.
11. This discourse is broken into **two main sections**:

1) chs. 5-11, an exposition of the Ten Commandments and

2) chs. 12-26, a group of special statutes on various matters, containing a strong ethical and religious emphasis.

12. The **third discourse** *(27:1-31:30)* deals primarily with the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience.

13. Moses now speaks in conjunction with the elders of the people and with the priests and the Levites, whose office it would be to carry out the ceremony which Moses describes in this discourse.
14. The place selected for the ceremony was the spot in the center of the land where the first altar to God had been erected.
15. As soon as they passed over the Jordan, the people were commanded to set up great stones on Mt. Ebal.
16. These were to be covered with plaster and inscribed with the law of God.
17. They were also to build an altar, which seems to have been distinct from the stones, although it is difficult to be certain about this.
18. Then the twelve tribes were to be divided between the two hills. Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin were to station themselves on Mt. Gerizim to recite the blessings which God promised them if they would remain faithful to him.
19. Across on Mt. Ebal, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali were to speak the curses with which the Lord had threatened disobedience.
20. After completing these discourses, Moses encouraged the people to follow their new leader, Joshua, and to go across and take the land which had been promised to Abraham.
21. He wrote down the Law in a book and turned it over to the priests, who were to keep it as a perpetual reminder for all the people *(31:9-13).*
22. It was to be read every seventh year, when the people assembled for the feast of Tabernacles.
23. At the command of the Lord, Moses and Joshua appeared before God at the tent of meeting.
24. There God told them of the future infidelity of Israel and instructed Moses to leave the people a song which they were to learn and which was to serve as a witness for God against them.

25. This song of Moses is recorded in Ch. 32; it recounts the blessings which God has bestowed on his people and the corrupt manner in which they have responded to his beneficence.
26. Ch.33 contains Moses' blessing on the people and ch.34 records the brief account of the death of this great leader of Israel.

Joshua

- This book is named for its chief character, Joshua, whose name means "Jehovah is salvation." The Greek form of this name is Jesus.
- The first appearance of Joshua is as the leader of the forces of Israel against Amalek *(Ex. 17:8ff).*
- The manner in which he is introduced into the story indicates that he was already well established as a leader.
- Later, he accompanied Moses to the foot of Mt. Sinai, but did not make the ascent with him (*Ex. 24).*
- In *Ex. 32-33* he is also found in close association with Moses.
- No doubt, the years which he spent with Moses greatly influenced his spiritual development.
- The aspect of his life for which Joshua is most often remembered is his having brought back a positive report from the land of Canaan after serving as one of twelve men sent to spy out the land (*Num. 13*).
- From this it can be seen that the experience and spirit which were Joshua's equipped him well for his duties and responsibilities as the leader of God's people.
- Although tradition names Joshua as the author of the book which bears his name, there is nothing in the book which necessitates this view.
- On the contrary, he could not have written all of the book as it includes happenings which took place after his death. The book itself is anonymous.

- Modern criticism assigns the writing of *Joshua* to a period late in Israel's history instead of at a time contemporaneous with the events it records.
- For a discussion of the probable date of the events described, see articles on **CONQUEST** and **EXODUS.**
- The book may be regarded as consisting of three parts which may be analyzed as follows:
- *The Conquest of Canaan (1-12).* This includes the preparation for and crossing of the Jordan ***(1-4).***
- After the crossing, they camped at Gilgal. Here they circumcised, all the males who were born in the wilderness, as circumcision had not been observed since the departure from Egypt.
- Gilgal was also the scene of the keeping of the Passover and the cessation of the manna. 5:13-6:27 tells of the miraculous destruction of
- Jericho and the salvation of Rahab. The crime and punishment of Achan is discussed in ch. 7.
- In ch. 8, the narrative records the avenging of the defeat which Israel had suffered at the hands of Ai because of the sin of Achan.
- The latter portion of this chapter tells of the setting up of the stones on Mount Ebal.
- The stratagem of the Gibeonites is the topic of ch. 9. In ch. 10 is contained the story of the conquest of Southern Canaan, with the aid of Joshua's long day.
- Chs.11-12 describe the conquest of Northern Canaan and give a list of the defeated kings.
- *The Distribution of the Territory (13-22).*
  - This provides a record of the area which was assigned to the various tribes (*13-19),*
  - the appointment of the six cities of refuge (*ch. 20)* and

- the forty-eight cities of the Levites (*ch. 21),* as well as the departure of the Transjordanic tribes to their home.

- *Joshua's farewell addresses (23-24).*
  - The first of these is a speech of encouragement and warning.
  - The second recalls the history of Israel, with emphasis on divine interventions on their behalf.
  - At the close of this speech, Joshua issued the famous statement, "choose you this day whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" *(24:15).*
- The book closes with an account of the renewal of the covenant and the death of Joshua and Eleazer.
- The book of *Judges* continues the history of Israel from the time of Joshua to Samuel. It is connected with the book of *Joshua* by the references to the death of Joshua in the first two chapters.
- The subject matter is not, however, dealt with in a strict chronological manner.
- The book contains a collection of accounts of events which generally took place on a local rather than a national level.
- In most cases it is impossible to assign any date to the events other than sometime in the period between Joshua and Samuel.
- After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, "there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel" *(Judg. 2:10).* This generation of Israelites, as well as those which succeeded it, was characterized by a lack of national unity, indifference to the commands of God, and a general moral and spiritual decay.

Judges

- The book of *Judges* continues the history of Israel from the time of Joshua to Samuel.
- It is connected with the book of *Joshua* by the references to the death of Joshua in the first two chapters.

- The subject matter is not, however, dealt with in a strict chronological manner.
- The book contains a collection of accounts of events which generally took place on a local rather than a national level.
- In most cases it is impossible to assign any date to the events other than sometime in the period between Joshua and Samuel.
- After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, "there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel" *(Judg. 2:10).*
- This generation of Israelites, as well as those which succeeded it, was characterized by a lack of national unity, indifference to the commands of God, and a general moral and spiritual decay.
- The problems of the Israelites during this period were threefold.
- From a *political* standpoint there was tribal isolation which led to the lack of national unity mentioned above.
- This disorganization encouraged other nations to attack Israel. The book of *Judges* records six such major invasions.
- The first was the Mesopotamian invasion from the northeast **(*3:8-11*)** from which Othniel delivered his people.
- The second was by the Moabites and came from the southeast **(3:12-20).**
- Israel was delivered from the Moabites by Ehud, the left handed assassin of the Moabite king, Eglon.
- The third invasion came under the Ca- naanite leaders Jabin and Sisera
- **(chs. 4, 5).**
- Israel was delivered from the Canaanites by Deborah, the only woman judge of which there is any record.

- It is interesting to note that Sisera himself was killed by a woman, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.
- The Midianite invasion from the southeast (*chs. 6-9*) lasted seven years and was ended under the bold leadership of Gideon.
- The foolish vow of Jephthah, which cost him the life of his daughter, came after he delivered Israel from the fifth invasion, that by the Ammonites from the east (10:6-11:40).
- The sixth invasion was by the Philistines, from the southwest, and was apparently something of a recurrent nature rather than one particular campaign.
- During a period of at least 200 years, Israel was delivered from the Philistines by Shamgar, Samson, Samuel, Saul, and David.
- The major *social* problem stemmed from the recurrent failure of the Israelites to drive the Canaanites out of the land, a direct violation of God's commandment.
- The Israelites then intermarried with the Canaanites, adopting many of their customs.
- This assimilation of Canaanite culture promoted the growth of idolatry which constituted the *religious* problem of the people.

Ruth

- The calm scenes depicted in this beautiful little book come as a welcome contrast to the turbulent accounts of slaughter and oppression recorded in *Joshua* and *Judges.*
- While the previous two books, especially *Judges,* deals with the rivalries and the battles which were of major historical interest, *Ruth* records for us an episode which was probably much more typical of the actual life of the people.

- The events narrated took place in the period of the Judges (1:1), but the book gives us no clue as to the identity of its author or the date of its composition.
- The value of the book is twofold.
- It traces the ancestry of David to Ruth, who was a Moabitess, and it presents us with a beautiful picture of filial piety and its rewards.
- The events in Ruth's life may be summarized as follows:

1. Due to a severe famine in the land of Judah, Elimelech, a native of Bethlehem, emigrated to Moab with his wife and two sons, who married two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah.
2. At the end of ten years, all three of the women were left widows and Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem.

- Despite Naomi's protests, Ruth determined to return to Bethlehem with her. Ruth's dedication to Naomi and to the religion of the God of Israel is stated in 1:16-17:

- "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee:

➢ for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest,

➢ I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

3. They arrived in Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest. Ruth went out to glean in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy man whose relationship with his servants eloquently attests to his character (2:4).

- According to Hebrew law, Ruth had a right to demand that a near kinsman of her late husband take her for his wife.

- Boaz had been related to Ruth's husband and was willing to marry her, but since there was another man of closer kinship, it was necessary to go through certain customary and legal measures before he could rightfully claim her.

4. This being done, the two were married with the blessings of their neighbors and eventually became the parents of Obed, the grandfather of David.

The Books of Samuel

- In the original Hebrew texts, I and *2 Samuel* formed only one book.
- This was first divided into two books in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures; the two were called the *First and Second Books of Kingdoms.*
- *1* and *2 Kings* were called the *Third and Fourth Books of Kingdoms.*
- The titles in the King James Version of the Bible still speak of these four books in this way.
- The two books under consideration are named for Samuel, not because he was the author, but because he is the principal actor in the first part of the narrative and because of his association with and influence on Saul and David, the other two leading characters. Samuel was raised up by God at a time when Israel needed him most.
- Disunited and at a low ebb spiritually and politically, Israel was led by Samuel into an era of great national solidarity. Since he was both a judge (*1Sam.*7*:6,15-17)* and a prophet **(***1Sam.3:20),* he serves as an important connecting link between the periods of the Judges and the United Kingdom. Certainly it is fitting that these two important books should bear his name.
- Jewish tradition contains a statement that the books were written by Samuel himself, but this cannot have been true, at least not for the entire composition, since Samuel's death is recorded in ***1Sam. 25:1*** and ***28:3***.
- It is quite possible, however, that Samuel was largely responsible for the first portion of this book, since we are fairly certain that he kept historical records (Cf. ***1 Chr. 29:29).***
- That the book is a compilation of records is suggested by the great similarity which many of its passages bear to sections of the books of *Chronicles.*

- Whether this compilation was done by one individual or several, one of whom was Samuel himself, is a matter of conjecture and one on which no decision can be reached.
- The two books deal with the period from the time of Othniel through the reign of David, in the eleventh and tenth centuries **BC**.
- This was one of the most significant eras of Jewish history as the government of Israel changed from a system of tribal judges to a form of constitutional monarchy, in which the king was to rule according to the precepts of God's Law.
- The date of composition of the two books can be arrived at with some degree of assurance.
- **IT** must have been after the death of David since the length of his entire reign is given in ***2 Sam. 5:5.***
- The statement in *1Sam. 27:6* that "**Ziklag pertaineth** unto the kings of Judah to this day' indicates that the division of the kingdom had already occurred, since neither Saul, David no; Solomon is ever referred to simply as a king o Judah.
- On the other hand, there are certain elements in the references to various religious observances which indicate that it was written before the reformation of Josiah.
- The date c composition, therefore, would probably fall somewhere between the reign of Rehoboan under whom the kingdom divided,
- and that Josiah.
- Although repetition and apparently duplicate accounts make analysis somewhat difficult, the contents of the two books may be outlined as follows:

I. The Life of Samuel (1 Sam. 1-15)

- The prayer of Hannah for a son, the granting of the request and the subsequent dedicate of the child Samuel to the service of the Lord **(1-*2:10).***
- The sin of the sons of Eli which result in their death and the loss of the priesthood the descendants of Eli *(2:12-36)*
- Samuel's vision concerning the house of Eli *(ch.3).*
- The defeat of the Israelites and capture of the Ark by the Philistines and the death of Eli *(ch. 4).*
- The Ark in Philistine territory *(5:1-7:4).*
- The return of the Ark and the establishment of Samuel as a judge over Israel *(ch. 7).*
- The appointment of Saul's sons as judges and the consequent request for a king. Samuel warns the Israelites of the perils of being ruled over by a king (*ch.8).*
- Saul's meeting with Samuel (*ch. 9).*
- The anointing and election of Saul as king **(10-11).**
- Samuel's address to the people, in which he defends his own record and exhorts them to walk in the way of the Lord (*ch.12*).
- From this time forward, he serves as an adviser to the king.

II. The Reign of Saul (1Sam. 13-2 Sam.1)

- The offering of sacrifice by Saul in Samuel's absence. This constituted disobedience and resulted in God's disfavor toward Saul *(ch.13).*
- Jonathan's rout of the Philistine army and his innocent breaking of Saul's foolish vow (*ch. 14).*
- Saul's disobedience in sparing some of the Amalekites and their cattle *(ch.15).* Samuel's reply to Saul's feeble excuse was the familiar "to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams" *(15:22).*
- The anointing of David to be Saul's successor (*ch.16).*
- David and Goliath *(ch.17).*

- The love of Jonathan and David and the marriage of the latter to the daughter of Saul *(ch. 18).* Also included in this chapter is the first attempt of the jealous Saul to kill David.
- Saul's second attempt on David's life *(ch.19)*
- The parting of Jonathan and David **(CH.20)**
- David's exile *(21-24).*
- The death of Samuel and the marriage of David to Abigail after the death of her churlish husband, Nabal *(ch. 25).*
- The gradual eclipse of Saul's power as he futilely sought to destroy David and protect his kingdom at the same time *(26-30).*
- The death of Saul and his sons at th hands of the Philistines (*ch.31).*
- David's lamentation over Saul and Jon; than (*2 Sam.1).*
- **III. The Reign of David (2Sam. 2-25)**
- The proclamation of David as king i Hebron and his reign over Judah from that place.
- The removal of the capital to Jerusalem *(ch. 5).*
- The bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (ch.6).
- David's victories *(chs. 7-11:1).*
- David's sin with Bathsheba and the rebuke by Nathan the prophet *(11-12).*
- The rape of Tamar by Amnon, the revenge of Absalom and Amnon's murder; the flight o Absalom *(ch. 13).*
- Absalom's return, his efforts to usurp th throne of David and his death *(14-18).*
- David's return and Sheba's revolt (*19-20)*
- The famine and the victory over the Philistine *(ch. 21).*
- David's thanksgiving and last words (*22- 23:7).*
- The names and exploits of David'; "mighty men" *(23:8-39).*
- The census and the resultant plague *(ch 24).*

The Books of Kings

- As was the case with I and ***2 Samuel***, the books of *Kings* were originally only one book when divided in the Septuagint, they were called the ***Third and Fourth Books of Kingdoms***, although the Hebrew title is simply "Kings," the same as in our English Bible.
- These form an obvious sequel to the books of ***Samuel.***
- The period covered extends from the accession of Solomon (**c.975** BC) to the death of Jehoiachin sometime after his liberation from Babylonian imprisonment **(561 BC)**.
- The history contained in the two books covers the entire period of the Jewish monarchy, except for the reigns of Saul and David, which are treated in I and ***2Samuel***.
- Israel is seen in the two extremes of power and weakness; under Solomon their dominion was extended from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean to the border of Egypt ***(1Kin. 4:21);*** under the last kings they were reduced to a pitiful remnant, subject alternatively to Egypt and Assyria, until they were finally uprooted and taken out of their homeland.
- The cause of this decadence is seen to have been the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam and the religious schism and idolatrous worship which was effected by Jeroboam's political motives.
- This division led to wars between the two kingdoms - which naturally weakened both.
- In a desperate effort to maintain their position, they made foreign alliances, adopting the superstitions and deities of these heathen nations, thus incurring the wrath of God and forfeiting the benefits of the divine protection which they had hitherto enjoyed.
- Although there is abundant attention given to names and dates, there is still some difficulty in reconciling apparent chronological discrepancies.

- This is due to the reckoning of fractions of years as complete years, the instances in which a son served as co-regent, sharing as co-regent, sharing the rule with his father, and probable errors in copying numbers.
- There is a Hebrew tradition which states that Jeremiah was the author of the books of *Kings.*
- This theory has much to commend it, but is not without its difficulties.
- That he could not have been the author of the entire narrative is indicated by the account of the deportation, imprisonment and subsequent release of Jehoiachin, whereas Jeremiah was carried down to Egypt with the fugitives *(Jer. 43:1-8).*
- If the author was not Jeremiah, however, he was in all probability a contemporary of his who held the same views as the prophet of lamentation.
- Many scholars feel that the work was composed before the fall of Jerusalem (586 **BC**) and, during or shortly after the exile, was revised to include the account of Jehoiachin's liberation from his Babylonian prison and the ultimate complete downfall of the Judean kingdom.
- There was a regular series of state annals both for the kingdom of Judah and that of Israel, which probably embraced the whole time dealt with in the books of *Kings,* or at least to the time of Jehoiakim (*2 Kin. 24:5).*
- The author, or authors, of *Kings* made use of these archival sources, citing them by name. In *1 Kin. 11:41,* after the record of Solomon's reign, the author refers to the "Book of the words of Solomon."
- Indebtedness is also acknowledged to the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (*1 Kin. 14:29; 15:7, 23,* etc.) and to the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" *(1 Kin. 14:19; 15:31,* etc.).
- These were probably written down by the prophets. An example of this type of work is seen in the history of Uzziah which Isaiah compiled (I *Chr. 26:22).*

- There were also extant at the time of the compilation of the books of *Kings*, separate works of the various prophets who had lived in Israel and Judah and which probably bore the same relation to those Chronicles which the historical parts of Isaiah or Jeremiah bear to those portions of the annals preserved in the books of *Kings;* that is, they were, in some instances at least, more copious accounts of the current events by the same hand that drew up the concise narrative of the annals, though in other instances they were mere duplicates.
- An example of this is seen in the practical identity between *2 Kin. 19* and *Isa.37.*
- Also, chapter 52 of *Jeremiah,* relating to the destruction of the temple, is quite like *2Kin. 24-25.*
- The books of *Kings* may be arranged as follows for ease of study:

I. **The Reign of Solomon (1 Kin. 1:1-14:43)**

1) The last days of David *(1:1-2:11).* Adonijah usurps David's throne, but flees after the anointing of Solomon. David dies and is buried in Jerusalem.

2) Solomon's formal accession to the throne and the early days of his reign *(2:12-46).*

3) Solomon's request for wisdom and his sagacious decision concerning the disputed child *(ch. 3).*

4) A description of Solomon's power, wealth, and wisdom *(ch. 4).* In this section we learn that Solomon wrote over 3,000 proverbs and 105 songs. For a further discussion of this, see the introduction to *Proverbs.*

5) The erection of Solomon's temple *(5-8).*

- A further description of the splendor of Solomon's kingdom (9-10).
- After mentioning the stables, the navy and the great riches of the kingdom, the narrative records the visit of the queen of Sheba, who was so impressed by the scene that she remarked, "Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wis dom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" **(1 KIN. 10:7).**

7) Solomon's wives and apostasy (**CH. 11).** One cannot read this chapter seriously without being saddened.

In his search for wealth and pleasure, Solomon contracted a large number of foreign wives—many, no doubt, for political reasons.

- These women brought their foreign deities with them and eventually Solomon's heart was turned away from the Lord - "and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (11:4).
- Whether or not Solomon was "the preacher" of **ECCLESIASTES** cannot be proved beyond doubt.
- If he was, however, surely the situation to which this chapter bears witness would lead him to the statement of cynicism and despair: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the preacher" (**ECCL. 1:2).**

II. The Divided Kingdom (1 Kin. 12:1-2 Kin. 17:41)

1. The division of the kingdom **(CH. 12).** After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Instead of lightening the heavy tax burden which Solomon's extravagances had forced on the people, Rehoboam decided to increase it. Disgruntled, the ten northern tribes chose Jeroboam as their leader and seceded from the union with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In order to keep his people from returning to worship in Jerusalem, where they might be influenced to stand with Rehoboam, the king of the North instituted the worship of the golden calf. This act of political expediency was the major factor in Israel's ultimate humiliation.
2. The remainder of Jeroboam's reign **(13:1- 14-20).** This section includes a rebuke to Jeroboam by a man of God which contains an amazing prophecy concerning the reformation of Josiah **(V. 2),** which was not to be fulfilled for over 300 years **(2 KIN. 23:15-18).**
3. Rehoboam, Abijam and Asa, kings of Judah **(14:21-15:24).**
4. Kings of Israel from **Nadab** to **Omri** (14: **25-16:28).**
5. Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah **(16:29-22:40).**

- These three individuals stand out as among the more memorable in all the history of Israel, the first two for their consummate wickedness and the latter for his fiery zeal and courageous effort in the service of God.
- Ch. 17 tells of the feedmg of Elijah by the ravens and his boarding at the house of the widow of Zarephath during the three and a half year drought which was on the land.
- Ch. 18 informs us that Jezebel's wickedness prompted her to subsidize Baal worship and a cult of heathen prophets, while she strove to exterminate the prophets of God **(v. 13).**
- Also contained in this chapter is the magnificent story of Elijah's "duel" with the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel.
- Ch. 19 records the anger of Jezebel at Elijah's having slain her prophets and her threat upon his life.

  Elijah is reduced to desperation, but is comforted by the "still, small voice" **(VV. 11, 12).**

  Chs. 20-22 relate other incidents concerning Ahab, including his brutal treatment of Naboth and his death at the hands of the Syrians.

6. Jehoshaphat of Judah **(22:41-50).**

7. **AHAZIAH OF ISRAEL** (22:51-2 Kin. 1:18).
8. Elijah's translation and the imparting of his spirit to Elisha **(CH. 2).**
9. Jehoram of Israel **(CH. 3).**
10. The ministry of Elisha the prophet (4-7), Elisha's ministry was characterized by a considerable number of miracles, including the resurrection from the dead of the son of the Shunammite woman, the healing of Naaman's leprosy, and the floating axe head. Ch. 8 records the strange phenomenon of a prophet's anointing the head of a foreign king to punish the prophet's own people. Instructions to this effect had been given to Elijah **(1 KIN. 19:15).**
11. Jehoram and Ahaziah of Judah **(8:16- 29).**

12. Jehu, king of Israel **(9-10).** Having been anointed by Elisha to punish the house of Ahab for its great wickedness, Jehu set about his task with a frightening zeal. Everything which is known of him can be characterized by the statement in 9:20: "he driveth furiously."
13. Miscellaneous kings of Israel and Judah **(11-16).**

- During his period Israel reached a period of great prosperity under Jeroboam II, regaining many of the areas which she had previously lost.
- The captivity of Israel by Assyria in 721 **BC (CH. 17).**
- The last king of Israel was Hoshea.
- He, like the nineteen kings before him, was guilty of idolatrous worship.
- Finally, after repeated efforts by the prophets to turn the people from their idols, God allowed the ten tribes of Israel to be carried out of their homeland.

III. The Kingdom of Judah Alone (2 Kin. 18-25)

- This section contains an account of the last nine kings of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem.
- For a better historical perspective and a fuller treatment, the reader is referred to the introduction to the books of *Chronicles.*
- Although the books of *Kings* contain a great deal of historical material, history is not their primary concern.
- In the Hebrew canon, they are classified, along with *Joshua, Judges* and the books of *Samuel,* as the "earlier prophets."
- A close inspection of the books will reveal that the lessons intended to be gained from them are spiritual and not political.
- The writers of these books have utilized an historical framework in an effort to proclaim their message of single-eyed devotion to God, the factual information being appealed to for illustration and confirmation.
- In this connection, it is well to suggest that a valuable aid to a proper understanding of the history of these two books and to a filling out of the

outline which they provide is to be found in the study of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah.

- An intimate acquaintance with these prophets is essential for a clear grasp of the concise narrative of these books.

The Books of Chronicles

- In the English versions of the Bible, the two books of *Chronicles* are placed immediately after *Kings,* although in the Hebrew canon they stand at the very end of the Old Testament.
- It is usually assumed that, as in the case of the books of *Samuel* and *Kings,* the two books of *Chronicles* were originally one.
- The Hebrew title of the books is translated "the words of the days."
- The name *Chronicles* is largely due to a suggestion by Jerome to the effect that they ought to bear a title derived from the Greek word for time, ***chronos***.
- Unfortunately, the title has led many to consider the books as nothing more than copies of public documents or annals, when in reality they were designed for a serious religious purpose, as will be noted below.
- The date of the *Chronicles* can be no earlier than the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews return from Babylon (Cf. *2 Chr. 36:22),* which sets c. 537 **BC** as a terminal date.
- The general belief that these two books form a unit with *Ezra* and *Nehemiah,* however, brings the probable date much nearer 400 **BC**.
- The closing verses of *2 Chronicles (36:22-23*) are almost identical the opening verses of *Ezra (1:1-4).*
- Hebrew tradition represents Ezra as the author both c *Chronicles* and the book bearing his name.
- This is certainly a possibility, as the books definitely appear to have been written from the same view point, but there is nothing in them to necessitate the view that one man is responsible for the en tire series.

- To a great extent, *Chronicles* is a sifting of source materials to arrive at the exact facts which the compiler wished to record.
- Among the sources specifically mentioned are five books o: the kings of Israel and/or Judah *(2 Chr. 16:11 25:26; 27:7; 20:34; 33:18; 24:27;* etc.)
- It is possible that these are variant designations of the same work.
- Named in connection with the history of King David are "the words of Samuel the seer of Nathan the prophet and of Gad the seer" (i *Chr. 29:29).*
- *A* source cited with reference to the history of Solomon is called "The words of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the Son of Nebat" (*2 Chr. 9:29*). In all twenty or more sources are named.
- Besides this the Chronicler often seems to be quoting from public documents and letters.
- Taken together, this would indicate that the range of sources to which he had access is astounding, considering the time at which the books appear to have been written.
- A fascinating possibility in connection with this is found in a passage from the apocrypha.
- In *2 Maccabees 2:13-15,* reference is made to a library which Nehemiah was collecting which would include just such documents as those referred to in *Chronicles.*
- One of the great difficulties connected with the captivity and return must have been the proper distribution of land, which was yet a vital point of the Jewish economy.
- Another difficulty, closely connected with the former, was the maintenance of the temple services at Jerusalem.
- Two things were necessary to make this possible.

- The first was seeing that the priests and Levites were in Jerusalem at the appointed time of their courses of service and fulfilled their proper function.
- Since the various offices in the temple service were assigned by families, proper genealogical records were imperative.
- Secondly, the proper support of the Levites had to be insured if the temple service was to be maintained. Since the payment of tithes, first-fruits, etc., was dependent upon each family's being established in its inheritance, it was even more necessary to provide trustworthy genealogies.
- **1CHR. 1-8** contain the efforts of the author to meet this need, while ch. 9 notes that the people were thus enabled to return to their rightful inheritances.
- Having provided the desired information, the author seeks to bring the people to a realization of the true glory of their nation as the original theocracy and to a recognition of the rights and importance of the kingdom of King David.
- Nothing could serve his purpose better than a compendious history of this kingdom, with a full account of its prosperity and the sin which led to its downfall.
- In preparing this history, the Chronicler chose only those materials which were integral to his purpose.
- His major concern is with two divine institutions-the temple service and the King Davidic dynasty.
- The northern kingdom is scarcely mentioned, and then only where it affected the fortunes of Judah.
- The events mentioned in connection with King David are those which relate to the worship in Jerusalem and preparations for building the temple.
- In dealing with the life of Solomon the emphasis lies on the building and dedication of the Temple, instead of the splendor of his kingdom and the personal events of his life.

- Similarly, prominence is given to the formal worship of the temple and the functions of the Levites whenever possible.
- The kings whose reigns are stressed are those who were in opposition to the idolatry which constantly seduced the Israelites.
- When the purpose of these two books is properly understood, the manner in which they treat history becomes much more explicable.
- The contents of the books of **CHRONICLES** may be analyzed as follows (a fuller discussion of a number of points may be found in die introductory article on the books of **KINGS):**

1CHRONICLES

I. **Genealogical Matters (1-9)**

- These genealogies begin with Adam (**1:1)** and are brought up to the time of the writer (Cf. **CH. 9).**
- It is surprising to note the large number of historical incidents mentioned in connection with the individuals named in these lists.
- Many of these are taken from other Old Testament scripture, but some find their origin elsewhere **(Cf. 4:9,10, 38-43).**

II. The Reign of King David (10-29)

- The last days and death of Saul and the early reign of King David **(10-12).**
- The return of the ark to Jerusalem **(13- 16).**
- Included in this section is the account of the misfortune of Uzzah, who was killed when he reached forth to save the ark from falling **(13:** 9ff).
- King David purposes to build the temple but is forbidden because of the great amount of bloodshed to which he has been a party **(CH. 17).**
- The account of King David's conquests **(18-20).**
- The census and the plague **(CH. 21).**
- King David's preparations for building the temple **(CH. 22).**

- Although King David was himself forbidden to build a temple for God, he set about to collect the necessary materials for such a temple, that the task of his son Solomon might be easier.
- Designation of the duties of the Levites **(CH. 23).**
- Organization of the government (**CH. 24).**
- King David's last words and his death **(28-29).**

2CHRONICLES

- **The Reign of Solomon (1-9)**
- This section includes the further preparation, the building and the dedication of the Temple, as well as various other activities of Solomon.
- **The History of Judah to Its Fall (10-36)**
- The revolt of the ten tribes and the reign of Rehoboam **(10-12).**
- The reign of Abijah **(CH. 13).**
- The reign of Asa **(14—16).**
- This was a period of prosperity in Judah as Asa instituted a number of moral and religious reforms, establishing himself as a servant of the Lord.
- The reign of Jehoshaphat **(17-20).**
- This king was also diligent in his efforts to serve God.
- He made considerable efforts to acquaint his people with the Law.
- The reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah *(21:1*-22:9).
- The reign of Athaliah, the only queen of Judah (*22:10-23:21).*
- The, reign or Joash (*Ch. 24*).
- Ascending to the throne at the age of seven, Joash, advised by the high priest Jehoida, brought about the restoration of true worship.
- After Jehoida's death, however, Joash himself slipped into the worship of idols.
- Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz (25- *28).*
- The reign of Hezekiah *(29-32).*

- After beginning his rule with a great religious restoration, Hezekiah helped his nation to regain a measure of power and glory.
- Manasseh and Amon (*ch. 33).*
- The reign of Josiah (*34-35*).
- In the eighteenth year of a reign that began when he was only eight years old, Josiah began the most sweeping religious reforms which Judah had ever known.
- During the renovation of the temple, the "book of the Law" was found, encouraging the people greatly in this time of revival.
- The last days of Judah *(ch. 36).*
- After a brief reign by Jehoahaz, the throne was taken by Jehoiakim, who reigned for eleven years.
- During this period he was a vassal alternatively to Egypt and Babylon.
- In an effort to revolt against the Babylonian rule, he lost his life.
- He was succeeded by Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months, after which he was carried to Babylon, where he lived a number of years.
- The last of the Judean kings was Zedekiah. Nebuchadnezzar had already plundered Jerusalem of much of its treasures and a considerable number of its most promising men.
- This took place in two raids, in 606 and 597 **BC**. In 586 **BC**, during the reign of Zedekiah, the Babylonians struck once again, this time leaving none but the poorest class of people to remain in Jerusalem.
- Five years later, the Babylonians came to collect about 750 more captives, even after a number, including Jeremiah, had fled to Egypt (Cf. *Jer. 43).*

Ezra and Nehemiah

- In Hebrew tradition *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* are regarded as one book.
- That the books were not one originally, however, is indicated by the presentation of identical material in *Ezra 2* and *Neh. 7:6-70.*

- How they came to be regarded as one must remain a matter of conjecture. They are treated together here because of their close relation to one another.
- Each book bears the name of its principal character. Ezra was a descendant of the priest Hilkiah, who had helped to implement the reforms of Josiah (2 *Kin. 22:8).*
- He returned from the Babylonian exile about 457 **BC**, eighty years after Zerubabbel led the first wave of exiles back to their homeland and thirteen years prior to the return of Nehemiah.
- He was both a priest and a scribe whose efforts to purify the religion of the Hebrews, based on strict adherence to the Law, immeasurably influenced the course of Judaism for centuries.
- Ezra is sometimes regarded as the second greatest hero in the history of Israel, ranking just after Moses.
- Nehemiah emigrated from Babylon to Jerusalem about 445 **BC**.
- He came not as a priest or scribe but as a civil governor with authority granted by the Persian ruler, Artaxerxes, whom he had served as cupbearer (*Neh. 2:1),* to rebuild the wall and other fortifications of Jerusalem.
- Despite the opposition of the foreigners who had settled in Judea during the exile, the work on the wall was brought to completion in fifty-two days after it was begun.
- The tradition which represents Ezra-Nehemiah as being one book also names Ezra as the author. That he had a hand in the writing is not unlikely, due to the presence of material in Ezra written in the first person.
- A great portion of Nehemiah, however, is also written in the first person, implying that part or all of it was composed by Nehemiah himself.
- It has been suggested by some that this is not a proof of authorship, but may indicate that a third person compiled one or both of the two accounts, with the help of the personal memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah.

- Also, it may indicate that the two men wrote a part of the books which bear their name, but that we owe their final form to a later redactor.
- A third possibility is that Ezra and/or Nehemiah composed an historical narrative out of available sources, adding certain items of their own composition.
- The two books appear to have been compiled from a variety of materials, including letters, edicts, genealogies, personal memoirs and chronicles.
- This helps to explain the diversity in style and language which may be seen in them.
- Since a date near 400 **BC** was tentatively assigned to the books of *Chronicles,* the closely related books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* would also receive this date.
- One objection to this is based on the mention of Jaddua in the list of priests in
- ***Neh.12:11, 22***. Josephus (*Antiquities* XI, viii, 4) mentions a priest by this name who lived in the time of Alexander the Great (c. 330 **BC**).
- Several possible explanations have been offered; it has been pointed out that it would have been possible for Jaddua to have served from 400 to 330 **BC**, although a more likely solution is either that these were two separate individuals or that we are presented with yet another example of Josephus' unreliability as an historical witness.
- The purpose of the two books was to show how God fulfilled the words of his prophets concerning the restoration of his exiled people to the land of their inheritance.
- To implement his purposes, he used the will of the great monarchs of that era - Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes.
- In addition, he worked through such leaders as Joshua, Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah in order to bring about the rebuilding of the wall and the temple and the re-establishment of the Law as the basis for individual and community conduct.

- These books furnish almost all of the known history of the Jews between 536 and 430 **BC.**
- *Ezra* is concerned with the period from 536 to 456 **BC**, while *Nehemiah* begins about 445 **BC** and narrates the events of approximately twelve years.
- The contents of the two books may be analyzed as follows:

I. Ezra

1. The return of the exiles to Jerusalem at the decree of Cyrus, 546 **BC** *(1-2).*
2. The work of rebuilding the temple begun, brought to a standstill through the efforts of heathen neighbors, and finally completed at the urging of Haggai and Zechariah (3-6).
3. Ezra's return to Jerusalem for the purpose of restoring the temple service *(7-8).*
4. The problem of mixed marriages, which threatened to plunge the Jews into the same course of idolatry which had brought about their original downfall *(9-10).*

II. Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem, made possible by Artaxerxes, for the purpose of rebuilding the wall **(1-2).**
2. A list of the builders and the repairing of the gate *(ch. 3).*
3. The rebuilding of the wall in spite of opposition led by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem *(4:1-7:4).*
4. The register of those who returned with Zerubbabel *(ch. 7).*
5. The public reading and exposition of the book of the Law *(ch. 8).*
6. The national repentance and the covenant of obedience *(9:1-10:39).*
7. Lists of inhabitants *(11:1-12:26).*
8. Dedication of the wall and organization of the temple services *(12:27-47).*
9. Nehemiah's reforms of abuses connected with tithes, the sabbath and mixed marriages *(ch. 13).*

In order to gain a complete picture of the history of this period, these two books should be studied in conjunction with the writings of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

sther

- The book of *Esther* receives its title from its chief character, whose name was the Persian word for star.
- A number of individuals have been suggested as the author. Among these, Mordecai's name is most prominent; however, ch. 10 seems to rule him out as a possibility since it implies that the book was written after the time of his death.
- In truth, there is no way of determining who was the author of the book.
- His use of several Persian words and his accurate description of the life and customs of the Persian court indicate that he was a resident of Persia at a time not too far removed from that of the events narrated.
- It is quite probable that he had access to the official chronicles of the kir.gs *(2:23; 10:2),* as well as to the writings of Mordecai *(9:20).*
- Since it is almost surely correct to identify Ahasuerus with the Persian ruler whom the Greeks called Xerxes, the events described in *Esther* probably took place between the years 485 and 470 **BC**.
- This would mean that Esther reigned about forty years after the temple was rebuilt and about thirty years before the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt.
- It has been suggested by some that she may have had at least an indirect influence in the release of the Jews for the purpose of rebuilding Jerusalem.
- This book is valuable to us for several reasons. In the first place, it , tells of God's providential care over his people even though they were in a distant land, far away from the center of the Hebrew religion.
- In this connection it is interesting to note that the name of God is never mentioned in the book.

- Neither is there any direct reference to worship of any kind.
- The allusions to fasting **(5:16)** and the "cry" of the people **(9:31),** however, seem to have a religious connotation.
- Likewise, Mordecai's well-known statement to Esther-"who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this" **(4:14) -** surely indicates belief in some type of overruling providence.
- A possible explanation is that the book was written at a time when the mention of the-name or religion of the God of Israel was either unwise or dangerous, or both.
- **ESTHER** also furnishes an account of the origin of the Jewish feast of Purim.
- Finally, the book records a major event in the history of Israel: their escape from complete extermination at the hands of the Persians,
- In the Septuagint, the book of **ESTHER** contains 107 verses which are not in the Hebrew text.
- These are preserved in the apocryphal book called **THE REST OF ESTHER,** found in some modern Bibles.
- The main events in the story of Esther are presented in the following outline:

1. The deposition of Queen Vashti, the wife of the Persian ruler Ahasuerus, for her refusal to appear before the guests of the king (**CH. 1).**

2. It has often been suggested that the Queen refused on grounds of modesty, but the tradition which has arisen around her suggests that her refusal is just as likely to have been the result of simple spitefulness.

3. In order to keep such an attitude from becoming general, thus upsetting the domestic balance, Ahasuerus removed her from the throne and from his presence.

4. The choice of Esther as Queen, after an involved process of elimination **(2:1-20).**

5. Mordecai discovers a plot against the life of the king **(2:21-23).**

6. **Haman's plot to destroy the Jews (3-4).**

- Because of the refusal of Mordecai to pay homage to Haman, a man "above all the princes" in the Persian government, the latter influenced the King to issue a decree calling for the extermination of the Jews.
- Mordecai persuaded Esther to intervene, at the risk of her life, on the Jews' behalf.

7. Esther's successful petition (5-8:2).

- Finding favor with Ahasuerus, Esther revealed the heinous plot of Haman.
- The result was that Haman was hanged and Mordecai received his long-deserved honor for having saved the king's life.

8. **The deliverance of the Jews (8:3-9:16).**

- Although the decree of the King concerning the Jews could not be rescinded, it was counteracted by the issuing of another decree which allowed the Jews to defend themselves.

9. The Feast of Purim (9:17-32).

- To celebrate their deliverance, the Jews instituted the feast of Purim.
- This feast is still observed and is a time of great joy among Jews.

10. A description of Mordecai's greatness (**CH. 10).**

Job

- The book of **JOB,** taking its name from its central character, is the first of the five so-called "poetical" books.
- It has also been referred to as "wisdom literature." Regardless of the category into which it is placed, this book is widely recognized as one of the great literary productions of all time.
- Except for chs. 1, 2, and 42, it is written in the formal style of Hebrew poetry, whose beauty depends not on metre or rhyme, but on the use of parallelism, repetition and contrast.
- The story is set in a region identified as “the Land of Uz” (1:1).

- This is thought to have been the area southeast of Palestine, along the border it shared with Arabia.
- Although it is impossible to identify the area exactly, the fact that the setting is not Hebraic gives the story an international milieu which renders it applicable to all men.
- Ancient tradition names Moses as the author of the book. It is conjectured that he may have learned the story while he was in the wilderness of Midian **(Ex. 2:15),** near the supposed area of Uz.
- Many other possible authors, however, have been suggested; none can be agreed on with any degree of certainty whatever.
- The tendency of modern scholarship is to give the book a date long after the time of Moses.
- The picture which is given of Job is that of a patriarch distinguished for his integrity and piety, his wealth, and the great measure of domestic happiness these things have brought.
- In order to prove Job's fidelity, God deprived him of all these blessings.
- The book is in the form of a historical poem; that is, a poem which purports to be based on an actual event.
- This event was an apparently public debate over the nature and cause of Job's afflictions.
- It is a philosophic discussion of the problem of human suffering - a classic problem which has not as yet received a classic answer.
- The book is a witness to the fact that God's people in all times have become frustrated in their efforts to reconcile His moral law with the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous.
- The first two chapters form a prologue in prose to the debates, giving a picture of Job's prosperity, the "wager" between God and Satan, and the resultant affliction which was **Job's.**

- **Chs.3-31** contain three series of speeches between Job and his companions, in which he defends himself against their assertion that he is being punished for some secret sin which is known only to God.
- Elihu's speech, recorded **in chs.32-37**, points out that there is a hidden purpose in God's discipline of Job.
- **Chs.38-41** contain the statements of God to the participants in the discussion; these witness to the futility of man's trying to comprehend the actions of God. **Ch. 42** records the restoration of Job's lost blessings.
- Although the book of *Job* does not furnish us with a neatly organized solution to the problem of evil, it does illustrate several common shortcomings typical of man's efforts to fathom the secrets of God.
- The outlook of Job's friends was limited by their conception of the direct ratio between suffering and affliction.
- Job, although he could give no reason for the misery which was his, denied that great personal sin was the cause.
- The reader, informed by the prologue, is able to see in Job's affliction an indication of God's confidence in his servant rather than his displeasure.
- The lesson to be gained from *Job* is that man, since he does not have access to the "prologue" of his own life, can never adequately plumb the depths of God's dealings with men; nevertheless, he is encouraged to maintain fidelity in his devotion to God, assured that God's ultimate purposes are loving and merciful.

Psalms

- The Hebrew title of the book of *Psalms* is *sepher tehillim,* meaning "book of praises"; although a number of other themes are prominent, this is surely a fitting title for this collection of religious poetry.

- Each psalm reflects a personal relationship between its author and Jehovah. Throughout the collection a dominant mood of hope displays confidence in His Lordship of the universe.
- Since other peoples in the area in and around Palestine possessed considerable religious poetry, it is not at all surprising that the Hebrews should have produced a collection of such sublimity.
- The backbone of the Psalter is a number of psalms which purport to come from David.
- These include psalms 2-41 (except 33), 51-72, 108-110, and 138-145.
- Some critics deny that David actually wrote any of the psalms himself, but the information which we possess concerning David would imply that he was the sort of man who might be expected to produce such literature.
- That he was a skillful musician is indicated by his playing the lyre for King Saul (I *Sam. 16:23*) and by Amos' statement that he invented instruments of music (*Amos 6:5).*
- His lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 *Sam. 1:19-27*), usually admitted to be genuine, displays his native poetic ability.
- The sensitivity and feeling thought to be a requisite of lasting poetry is demonstrated in David's repeated and extreme sorrow for his sin.
- His varied experiences as shepherd, musician, warrior, king, parent, lover and sinner would certainly furnish him with a background favorable to literary production.
- Above all, David is presented to us as a true worshipper of God, a man possessing the Holy Spirit (I *Sam. 16:13).*

- Perhaps not all the psalms which bear his name are actually Davidic, but they are in the same style and a majority probably belong to him.
- In addition to the psalms of David, there are two collections of Levitical psalms.
- Psalms 42-49 are ascribed to the "sons of Korah." Psalms 73- 83, as well as Psalm 50, purport to come from Asaph. These give prominence to the tribes of Joseph.
- Moses, Haman, Ethan and Solomon are also mentioned, while a few of the psalms are purely anonymous (Cf. **33,84-89**).
- Others have a strong liturgical character, indicating the possibility that they were developed as they were used in the worship service and on special occasions and cannot easily be attributed to any one author (Cf. **91-100).**
- It is not possible to say how the psalms were collected. Few can be definitely dated. If the titles are genuine (see discussion below), they were probably written in the period from about 1500 **BC** to 500 **BC**.
- Most seem to have come from the period of the United Kingdom. The work of Samuel had effected a great national and spiritual unity.
- This, coupled with the expansion of the life of Israel by David's victories, would naturally inspire men of poetic ability to seek to record their reactions.
- Some of the psalms are historical, recalling God's treatment of Israel in the past, while others are prophetic, looking to the future, even to the coming of Messiah.
- There are psalms of affliction, lamentation and penitence, as well as hymns of thanksgiving and trust.
- These are divided into five books:
  - 41, which witness to David's life and faith;
  - 42-72, a group of historical writings;

- 73-99, ritual psalms;
- 90-106, reflecting pre- captivity sentiment and history; and
- 107-150, dealing with the captivity and return to Jerusalem.

These five books are often regarded as the devotional counterpart to the five books of Moses.

- Some of the psalms were deemed as particularly fitting for recitation on certain days and consequently developed a liturgical use.
- Some were used primarily on the Sabbath while others were reserved for the Passover, the feast of tabernacles or other Jewish holy days.
- Titles appear on about 100 of the psalms.
- These are quite old, as many were not understood even as early as the second century **BC.**
- They are of uncertain value since a psalm "of" David does not necessarily mean that it was a product of David's, but might also be taken to mean that the psalm was written for David or dedicated to him.
- There is, then, no way of authenticating them.
- On the other hand, one might ask why the titles were appended if they did not have some basis in fact?
- There are several general categories into which these titles fall.
- Some point to the source of the psalm; others indicate a special purpose for which the psalm is best suited, a special melody for the psalm, or a particular type of musical accompaniment which is deemed fitting.
- The book of **PSALMS** is, of course, the longest book in our Bible.
- The 119th psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible, while the 117th is both the shortest and the middle chapter of the Bible.
- Over one-third of the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are from the Psalms.

Proverbs

- The title of this book is taken from the assertion in 1:1 that the book is a collection of "the proverbs of Solomon die Son of David, King of Israel."
- A proverb is a profound maxim or epigrammatic saying. In addition to this opening statement, several other verses indicate that Solomon was chiefly responsible for the material (*Cf.* **10:1; 25:1).**
- Chs. 30 and 31 are assigned to Agur and the mother of King Lemuel, respectively, although little is known of either.
- It ought also to be noted that certain “wise men” are credited with being responsible for some of the maxims (Cf. **1:6; 22:17; 24:23).**
- Some think that the designation, "proverbs of Solomon," indicate only that they are of the type which originated with Solomon, but were not themselves necessarily his product.
- While this hypothesis may be true, the information which we have regarding Solomon would certainly lend credence to the view that he could have produced many of the proverbs himself.
- As a king constantly in touch with his subjects and with other nations, he knew men and events thoroughly.
- He was blessed with a God-given wisdom (**1KIN. 4:29)** accompanied by humility (**1KIN.3:7).**
- This sagacity had been tested in practical matters requiring great diplomacy
- (**1KIN.3:16-28; 5:12)** and was widely recognized in **the Near East**

  (**1KIN. 4:30FF; 10:1- 13).**
- It is stated that he composed over three thousand proverbs (**1 KIN. 4:32),** many more than are contained in this book.
- Chs. 1-9, perhaps either from Solomon or the above-mentioned "wise men" of Israel, contain statements to the young.
- These are arranged in a series of discourses in praise of wisdom. A personification of Wisdom speaks as an instructor, warning against all manner of folly.

- The proverbs in this section are arranged with more continuity than is seen in succeeding chapters.
- Chs. 10-22:16 claim to be the "proverbs of Solomon," although as noted above, they can be but a portion of the three thousand maxims which are attributed to the wise king.
- This section is usually thought to be the original nucleus around which the remainder of the book was constructed.
- Counsel for those in responsible positions is contained in 22:17-24:22, claiming to be "the words of the wise." Chs. 24:23-29 are designated as "the proverbs of Solomon which the wise men of Hezekiah copied out."
- These are usually detached statements, although there are occasional signs of continuity.
- There has also been some effort to bring together sayings on related subjects such as rulers, sluggards and fools.
- Ch. 30, the sayings of Agur, and ch. 31, the great chapter on womanhood which purports to come from the mother of King Lemuel, complete this book of Hebrew wisdom.
- The latter is constructed in acrostic form, the verses beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
- There is no way of knowing the date at which these proverbs were compiled into one unit; neither is there any hint as to the name of the editor or group of editors.
- It is not impious, however, to suggest that the book was never intended as a unity, since a number of clear divisions can be seen within the collection.
- The maxims contained in *Proverbs* are of great practical value for modern times.
- They were composed in an era of great prosperity, with all its attendant weaknesses.
- Their message, however, is not limited to such an age.

- The *Proverbs* contain principles of life which are applicable to all men in every age and condition of life.

Ecclesiastes

- The word "Ecclesiastes" is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word *Koheleth,* or "the preacher."
- This title is taken from the name by which the speaker repeatedly refers to himself.
- "The preacher" has traditionally been identified with Solomon.
- Nowhere, however, is Solomon's name mentioned in *Ecclesiastes.*
- In 1:1, reference is made to "the son of David, king in Jerusalem."
- This might refer to any king of the Davidic dynasty as well as to Solomon.
- Even if Solomon is accepted as the speaker, that is, "the preacher," this is no guarantee that he is .the writer also.
- Some critics uphold a composite authorship of the book because of the changes in pronominal forms and unevenness in structure.
- This is possible, although there is nothing about the book to prohibit the idea that one man is responsible for the entire work.
- As was the case with the Song *of Solomon, Ecclesiastes* encountered considerable difficulty in being accepted into the Old Testament canon.
- Its eventual acceptance has continued to be a source of wonder because of an agnostic quality in the book.
- There has been wide disagreement as to the underlying purpose of *Ecclesiastes.*
- One common interpretation is that "the preacher" wrote at the end of a misspent life, repentant for the mistakes which he had made.
- Those who uphold this view see the book as a commentary on life by a man looking back on what many would consider the perfect life, yet being cognizant of the disorder and sorrow which still troubled him.

- It contains the reflections of a man who has thoroughly tried all avenues of pleasure - sensuality, wealth, honor, folly, speculative wisdom.
- He has sinned in giving way to every excess of life which his position made possible and comes to the realization of the uselessness of it all.
- He concludes that the result of his efforts have been quite ephemeral; that there is nothing new under the sun, but all is part of the endless, frustrating round.
- His attitude is mirrored in the recurring phrase, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the preacher."
- In *Ecclesiastes,* the world is convicted of its vanity by one who has drunk of every spring.
- The conclusion which "the preacher" reaches is that in such an empty and unsatisfying world where disappointment, trouble and death cannot be avoided, a quiet enjoyment of God's gifts is the only real wisdom.
- The man who is truly wise will "fear God and keep his commandments" *(12:13-14),* making the best of things as he finds them and trusting in the providence of God.
- This secret of a contented life is found in the consecration of the vigor of youth to the service of God.
- An understanding of this latter idea keeps the book from being merely a cry of despair and leads one to see the possibility of a rich, positive existence.
- It profoundly illustrates the idea that a life apart from God is a life without meaning.

Song of Solomon

- The first verse of this book connects it with Solomon. Because of this, it is often called the *Song of Solomon.*

- It is also referred to as *Canticles* or the *Song of Songs,* implying that it is the finest of all songs.
- Its admittance into the Old Testament canon was widely disputed; in fact, although it was accepted as a sacred book earlier, the question of canonicity was not completely settled until after the time of Christ.
- Jewish tradition names Solomon as the writer, which would place the date of the book around 1012 **BC**.
- Some hold, however, that the statement in 1:1 is a later insertion and no part of the original text.
- These critics also maintain that the large number of foreign words which are found in the *Song* would not have appeared in the literature of Israel until after the captivity.
- In recent years, an increasing number of critics have taken this view.
- Although the story is not as lucid as may be desired, one likely interpretation is that a beautiful girl of Shulam, engaged to a young shepherd, is sighted by a king (apparently Solomon) who falls in love with her and carries her to Jerusalem.
- Although the king offers her every inducement to become his bride, the young girl remains true to her country lover, whom she describes in glowing terms to the court women.
- After consistently rejecting the king, she is permitted to return home to her true love.
- Various efforts have been made to draw a spiritual application from this song of faithful love.
- Jews saw it as an allegory of the love of God for the congregation of Israel.
- Many Christians have accepted the allegorical view, although it is usually applied to the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church.

- An early Christian writer, Theodore of Mopsuestia, maintained that the book was a mere song of human love composed on the occasion of the marriage of Solomon to the daughter of Pharaoh.
- Although most have been reluctant to accept such a view, it must be admitted that there is nothing in the *Song* which suggests that it is an allegory.
- It might easily be simply an extolling of the victory of faithful love over the temptations of wealth and worldliness, upheld as an ideal for improving society.

Isaiah

- The prophet Isaiah, whose name means "Jehovah is salvation," was the son of Amoz (1:1), not to be confused with the prophet Amos.
- He prophesied during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and possibly Manasseh.
- This would mean that his ministry lasted from about 740 **BC** till about 700 **BC**.
- The vision which served as Isaiah's call to the prophetic ministry is recorded in
- ch. 6.
- From the description which is given of this vision, it is clear that it must have exerted tremendous influence over Isaiah throughout his life.
- The willingness to serve which he expressed so succinctly in 6:8 remained undaunted in spite of the knowledge that he and his message would be rejected *(6:9-13).*
- In the years to follow, he not only spoke of things spiritual but he offered warnings and interpretations concerning the political issues of his time.
- Aside from the fact that he was married to a woman called the "prophetess" (8:3), who bore him two sons (7:3; 8:3), little is known of his personal history.
- Jewish tradition has it that he was placed in the trunk of a carob tree and sawn asunder by order of the wicked king Manasseh.
- Many suppose that *Heb. 11:37* refers to him.

- During the span of Isaiah's ministry, Judah underwent great periods of change.
- His call came in the last year of King Uzziah's reign, about 740 **BC**.
- Uzziah was, generally speaking, a good king and had brought to Judah a degree of wealth and power which she had not known since the time of Solomon.
- With these accomplishments, however, came the attendant sins of avarice, corruption, oppression and religious formalism.
- While gaining materially, Judah had retrogressed spiritually.
- Uzziah was succeeded by his son Jotham, who also sought to encourage the worship of Jehovah but who failed, as had his father, to break down the high places of idolatrous worship.
- Ahaz followed Jotham and set about to replace the true worship with devotion to heathen idols.
- Though rebuked by Isaiah, Ahaz led the people further in a march which, in time, was to bring them to destruction.
- Following Ahaz as king was Hezekiah, one of the best ever to reign over the southern kingdom. Hezekiah began his reign with a religious reformation in which he "removed the high places, and broke
- the pillars, and cut down the Asherah" (2 *Kin. 18:4, 22).*
- Under Hezekiah, Isaiah enjoyed great popularity and was given wide opportunity to present his message.
- Judah, however, was gripped with a malignancy which could be detained, but never fully arrested.
- It was during the reign of Hezekiah that the Assyrians carried Israel off into captivity.
- Judah herself narrowly escaped destruction by promising to pay heavy tribute to the northern invaders.
- Eventually, Hezekiah refused to pay the tribute.

- Sennacharib, the Assyrian ruler at the time, decided to march on Judah and although he was never successful in destroying the southern kingdom, the toll which was taken was a heavy one.
- Judah had brief moments of glory thereafter, but it was simply a matter of time until the overthrow of the nation, of which Isaiah had prophesied so long, would come to pass. The seeds of destruction had already been sown; the harvest was inevitable.
- The major critical problem connected with the book of *Isaiah* is that of its unity and authorship.
- A large number of critics maintain that chs. 1-39 and 40-66 are two separate books by entirely different men, the author of the second portion being referred to as "Deutero-Isaiah" or "Second Isaiah."
- Although the scope of this brief article does not admit of a proper treatment of the problem, alew major points may be noted.
- Those who hold that the sections are by different authors assign chs. 40-66 to a period during the Babylonian captivity.
- To all appearances, the audience addressed is a different one from that of the first section.
- The references to Cyrus (see outline below) are made in a manner to indicate that he was already on the scene and familiar to the group addressed.
- This school of thought also points out that nowhere is the claim of Isaianic authorship made in the second section and there is very little in the section to conflict with the theory of a later date.
- On the other hand, the following arguments may be adduced in support of the unity of the book. No extant manuscript gives any hint of the book's ever having been in any other form.
- There are certain unusual ideas and phrases which are common to both sections of *Isaiah* but which are seldom found elsewhere in the Old Testament.

- The local coloring in the second section would apply more aptly to Judea than to Babylon. Also, there are certain passages in the
- second division, such as references to the temple services, which must be pre-exilic.
- These, taken cumulatively, make a strong plea for the unity of the book. For a more detailed study of this problem, the reader is referred to standard commentaries and introductory works.
- Fortunately, the profound religious value which *Isaiah* possesses for us is not contingent on the solution of this difficult problem.
- The contents of *Isaiah* may be analyzed as follows:

Section 1: Chs. 1:39

1. Prophecies centered around Judah and Jerusalem *(1:1-12:6).*

➢ Included in this section are a description of the glories of the Messianic Age *(2-4)* and the account of the call of Isaiah *(ch. 6).*

➢ In chs. 7-12, although Isaiah is dealing primarily with various invasions which threaten Judah, reference is made to the wonderful child "Immanuel" and to the glorious age when a king of the Davidic line would institute a benevolent rule over a world without discord and wars.

2. Prophecies of judgment on the foreign and hostile nations of Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Dumah, Arabia and Tyre *(13-23).*
3. The Apocalypse of Isaiah: the judgment of God against the world's sin and the ultimate destruction of the earth (24-27).

   Despite the dreadful nature of the punishment which was to come, this section is marked by a note of triumph and trust (Cf. especially *ch.26).*
4. Prophecies concerning the relations of Judah and Jerusalem to Egypt and Assyria *(28-33).*

5. In this section is contained a series of six messages of woe, directed first against one and then another of the weaknesses of Judah's national life *(28:1-29; 29:1-14; 29:15-24; 30:1-17; 31:1- 32:20; 33:1-24).*

   The character of the Messianic Age is also further described *(32:1-18).*

6. The doom of Edom and the redemption of Israel *(34-35).*

   Ch. 35 is a beautiful picture of the ultimate triumph of the spiritual Zion.

7. The reign of Hezekiah *(36-39).*

   This section is in the nature of an historical appendix recording the overthrow of the Assyrian army *(36- 37),*

   Hezekiah's sickness and recovery *(ch. 38),* and containing a prophecy of the Babylonian captivity *(ch. 39).*

Section II: Chs. 40-66

8. God's sovereign and providential control over history, which will be manifest in his ultimate overthrow of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus **(40-48**).

   Two passages of especial interest in this section are the first "suffering servant" passage, apparently alluding to the office of the Messiah **(42:1-**9), and Isaiah's sarcastic appraisal of the folly of idol worship **(44:6-23).**

9. The Redemption which is possible through suffering and sacrifice **(49-55).**

   This division, centers mainly around the three "suffering servant" passages which it contains.

   The first is concerned with the difficulty of his task and his rejection by those to whom he is sent **(44:1-13).**

   The second **(50:4-9)** speaks of the obedience and trust of the "servant" and the blessings which are to follow his work.

   The third is the classic passage from 52:13-53:12, which describes the life, suffering and ultimate triumph of the servant.

10. The triumph of the kingdom of God and ^God's universal reign **(56-66).**

    The sins which are prevalent in Isaiah's day are discussed in chs. 56- 59. A glorious song of the Messianic Age fills chs. 60-62.

The book closes, with a prayer for mercy and pardon **(63-64)** and God's answer to this prayer in the form of the promise of a new heaven and a new earth **(65-66).**

Jeremiah

- Jeremiah lived in the reigns of Josiah, Jehoa- haz (Shallum), Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Ze- dekiah.
- His long career as a prophet of Judah began in the thirteenth year of Josiah (627 **BC)** and continued till the eleventh year of Zedekiah (586 **BC**), when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar **(JER. 1:2-3),** although he continued to prophesy even after that event.
- He was "the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth," a town within an hour's walking distance of Jerusalem.
- He was called to be a prophet while still a young man (1:6).
- In this call, he learned that a northern enemy would bring about the destruction of Jerusalem **(1:11-16).**
- Jeremiah's condemnation of the sins of the people aroused much hostility against him, both in his home town of Anathoth and in Jerusalem **(11:18-23).**
- It is even implied that his own family “dealt treacherously” with him **(12:6).** Despite these sorrows, however, this was to prove to be the happiest time of the ministry of the weeping prophet.
- Under the next four kings of Judah, Jeremiah spoke out fearlessly. He drew upon himself the anger of the court by predicting the capture and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in consequence of the people's sins.
- He was forced into hiding by the anger of Jehoiakim, who cut his book of prophecies with a pen knife and burned them.
- After the preliminary captivity under Jehoiachin, Zedekiah was appointed by the Babylonians to serve as a puppet king.
- In time he sought to throw off the Chaldean yoke, but was warned by Jeremiah that the safest course to follow was to remain subservient **(27: 12).**

- Finally, under Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem was destroyed, bringing to fruition the many predictions of Jeremiah concerning the event.
- After the destruction of Jerusalem he remained for a long time in the city, but was finally forced to go to Egypt, along with his companion and secretary, Baruch.
- There, in the city of Tahpanhes, we have the last clear glimpses of his life; after this, nothing is certain.
- If he wrote 52:31, which is doubtful, he lived to extreme old age. There is a Christian tradition that the Jews at Tahpanhes, irritated by his rebukes, finally stoned him to death.
- On the other hand, however, there is a Jewish tradition to the effect that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt, Jeremiah and Baruch escaped to Judea where the prophet was allowed to die in peace.

- There is good reason to believe that Jeremiah himself was responsible for the production of the book, although the actual writing was probably done by Baruch.
- In 36:1-2,4, 8,32, we read of his collecting and writing Jeremiah's prophecies. It is quite possible that he continued to do this in Egypt, until its present form was reached.
- The messages which constantly recur throughout Jeremiah's prophecies are:
  - The impending destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon;
  - the possibility of averting this destruction by repentance;
  - the submitting to Babylonian rule after it becomes apparent that domination is inevitable;
  - Babylon herself will be destroyed, never to rise again; and
  - Judah will return from captivity and eventually achieve an unsurpassed glory. The prophecies contained in the book are not I”

- in chronological order, a factor which makes logical analysis somewhat difficult; however, the following general divisions of the material may be seen:

1) The call of Jeremiah (*ch. 1).*

2) The depravity of Judah and the inevitability of destruction from the north **(2-6).**

3) The illusions of temple security *(7-10).* In this section Jeremiah weeps over the attitude of the people that their formal observance of the temple sendees will save them from destruction. He warns them that genuine repentance is their omy hope.

4) Jeremiah's complaint over his own miserable estate and the infidelity of the Jews of the covenant **(11-12).**

5) Further preaching and signs of the impending doom *(13-25).*

6) In ch. 25, Jeremiah predicted that the length of the captivity would be seventy years.

7) Prophecies and events during the reigns of the last kings of Judah *(26-39).*

8) Prophecies and events in Judah after the captivity *(40-41).*

9) Jeremiah's activity after he is forced to flee to Egypt *(42-51).*

10) After a final exhortation to abandon idolatry *(ch. 44),* the bulk of this section consists of prophecies against foreign nations, including a prediction of the eventual fall and desolation of Babylon.

11) A summary chapter on the captivity of Judah, possibly added by someone other than Jeremiah *(ch. 52).*

Lamentations

- In the Hebrew scriptures, this book is known simply as "Lamentations."
- The tradition ascribing these lamentations to Jeremiah first appears in its title in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures.

- The book itself, however, does not claim to be the work of Jeremiah.
- The basis for the tradition is probably *2 Chr. 35: 25*, in which it is stated that Jeremiah composed a lamentation over the death of Josiah; it is a mistake, however, to identify our present book with this lament over Josiah.
- Whoever the real author was, he was undoubtedly an eyewitness of the events which provoked his sorrowful offering.
- Although a number of differences have been noted between the style of *Lamentations* and that of *Jeremiah*, these may possibly be accounted for by the fact that after the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was free to speak from his heart in a manner which had previously been forbidden him.
- It is also possible that these odes of woe were compiled by a group of Jeremiah's disciples from the utterances of the prophet himself.
- This would help to explain the formal manner in which the book is arranged as well as accounting for the similarities which may also be noted between the two books.
- Four of the five chapters of *Lamentations* - *the* exception being ch. 5- are odes arranged in acrostic form. Chs. 1, 2, and 4 each contain twenty-two verses which, in the Hebrew text, begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
- In ch. 3, each letter of the alphabet is allotted three of the sixty-six verses which comprise that ode.
- It has been suggested that this was done to emphasize that Israel had sinned "from A to Z."
- These five odes depict the desolate condition of the forsaken city of Jerusalem, especially as contrasted with its former splendor.
- The reasons for God's anger toward the Jews are enumerated and an appeal is made to him to remember the affliction of his people and to take vengeance upon the conquerors of Judah.

Ezekiel

- Ezekiel, the great prophet of the Babylonian exile, was taken captive in the captivity of Jehoiachin, eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem.
- He was a member of a community of Jewish exiles who settled on the banks of the Chebar, a "river" or stream of Babylon.
- It was by this river "in the land of the Chaldeans" that he received his call to the prophetic office, in the fourth month of "the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" (595 **BC**).
- We learn from an incidental allusion *(24:18)* - the only reference which he makes to his personal history - that he was married and had a house in his place of exile, and that he lost his wife by a sudden and unforeseen stroke on the very day that the siege of Jerusalem began.
- The last date mentioned in his prophecy is the twenty-seventh year of the captivity, so it is certain that his ministry lasted over twenty-two years.
- Tradition asserts that he was murdered in Babylon by some Jewish prince whom he had convicted of idolatry and was buried on the banks of the Euphrates.
- The style in which the entire book is written indicates that it is the work of one man, although some critics have doubted its unity.
- It is characterized by the frequency of visions and symbolical acts which were witnessed or performed by Ezekiel; several of these are noted in the outline given below.
- His prophecy is quite unusual in that he constantly addresses the Jews in Jerusalem and describes events that are taking place in that city, although he himself is in Jerusalem.
- The purpose of Ezekiel's ministry may be seen rather clearly by noting the major divisions of the 'book.
- In the first half of the book (**CHS.1-33)** Judah is convicted of violating virtually every command which God had given.

- Warning is given that even the Jewish theocracy will be destroyed if the people persist in their sin.
- After the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem in ch.33, the book takes on a different tone.
- From this point forward, Ezekiel's message is predominantly one of comfort and encouragement to the defeated Jews. The contents of the book may be analyzed further as follows:

I. Israel's sin and impending judgment, uttered before the final captivity (chs. 1-24).

1) Biographical information concerning Ezekiel, including a note as to his personal situation and a description of his call to the prophetic ministry **(1-3).**

2) The siege of Jerusalem portrayed in four symbolical acts **(4-7).**

- In the first of these, Ezekiel evidently drew a picture of a city under siege, indicating that this was soon to be the condition of Jerusalem.
- After this, Ezekiel lay on his side for a great number of days, announcing that the nation was to be punished for its sins.
- By eating an inferior type of food which had been cooked on animal dung, Ezekiel predicted the famine which would accompany the siege.
- In the final act, Ezekiel shaved his head, burning his hair, striking it with a sword and scattering it to the winds, indicating the fate of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
- Chs. 6 and 7 contain additional oracles concerning Israel's sin and imminent doom.

3) Visions of idolatry in Jerusalem and the resultant judgment and destruction of that city **(8-11).**

4) Further prophecies against Jerusalem **(12- 24).**

This section contains a rebuke of false prophets and hypocrites **(12-14),** a repeated emphasis on the certainty and necessity of punishment **(15-17),** a

discussion of retribution and responsibility and a reassertion of God's love toward sinners **(CH. 18),** a lamentation or dirge over t:ie rulers of Judah **(CH. 19)** and final warnings before the complete destruction of Jerusalem **(20-24).**

II. Prophecies against the nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt (25-32).

III. Prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel, uttered after the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

1) A discussion of the responsibility of the people to respond to the call of the prophet (33; **1-20).**

2) The announcement of the fall of Jerusalem **(33:21-33).**

3) A contrast between the leadership of the faithlf ss shepherds (kings) of Judah and Israel and tl e true shepherd who was to come **(CH. 34).**

4) The doom of Edom **(CH. 35).**

5) The vision of the valley of dry bones, symbolizing the resurrection of the remnant of Israel **(36^7).**

6) The prophecy of Gog and Magog (**38-39).**

7) The rebuilt Temple **(40-48).**

These last two sections have been the subject of varied conflicting interpretations. To assist in understanding them, the reader is invited to consult the standard Old Testament commentarries.

Daniel

- Daniel was a youth of Jerusalem, apparently of aristocratic standing **(1:3),** who had been carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem fell.
- He quickly distinguished himself in Babylon by refusing to eat the "dainties" which the king had set before him and by exercising his unusual ability to interpret dreams (1:**8-16).**
- In time he was brought before Nebuchadnezzar to offer an interpretation of a puzzling dream which the king had dreamt; his explanation so impressed

Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel was; flowed to rise to a place of great prominence in the kingdom.

- His famous delivery from the li m's den came after he had become the victim of a plot to cause him to lose favor in the eyes of Darius the Mede, the conqueror of Babylon who had also shown favor to Daniel.
- Although the book purports to have come from Daniel, considerable opposition to his being its actual author has been advanced.
- The first critic of the genuineness of the book was Porphyry of Tyre, a neo-Platonic philosopher of the third century **AD** who asserted that it had been written by a person living in the second century **BC** during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- The main ground for his theory was his rejection of the possibility of predictive prophecy.
- Since the book presented such an accurate picture of events in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it was therefore concluded that it was written not in the sixth century **BC** (the time of the captivity), but at a date after the events "predicted" had already taken place, and was therefore a fraud.
- In addition to the basic argument of Porphyry, later critics have assigned a late date to the book due to certain historical references claimed to be in error or anachronistic, the apocalyptic style of writing, and the language of the book, which is claimed to come from a period later than the sixth century **BC.**
- The question of the date of writing is closely bound up with authorship.
- If Daniel was not the author of this book, it was written between 605 **BC** and 533 **BC**, possibly closer to the latter date.
- If he was not, it is probable that the book was written in the second century **BC.**
- The text of the book has come down to us partly in Hebrew and partly in an Aramaic dialect.

- Attempts to explain this all contain a certain amount of conjecture and it is unlikely that a perfectly acceptable solution will be found.
- *Daniel* is divided into two sections of six chapters each.
- Chs. 1-6 are largely historical, explaining how Daniel came to be in the court of Nebuchadnezzar and of his rise to power.
- It tells, of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image which Daniel interpreted to refer to the current kingdom and three world powers which would arise after it and of the kingdom of God - "a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" - which would arise during the era of the last of these great empires.
- This section also includes the account of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace and of the handwriting on the wall which spelled out the defeat of Belshazzar at the hands of the Medes and the Persians.
- The second section, Chs. 8-12, describes visions which Daniel received concerning the great world powers of the future and the kingdom of God.
- The Greek translation of *Daniel* contains additions not found in the Hebrew and Aramaic text.
- These additions are found as separate books in the Apocrypha and are called *The Song of the Three Holy Children,* the *History of Susanna,* and *Bel and the Dragon.*
- The value of the book of *Daniel* may be seen in its assurance to God's people that their situation in exile was not permanent, that God would keep his promise to Abraham, and that the Jews would still be the channel through which all nations would be blessed.
- It is a grand tribute to the providence of God and His lordship of history and the universe.

Hosea

- It is usually agreed that the prophet Hosea was a resident of the Northern Kingdom, Israel.
- He mentions places in Israel not prominent in other prophetic writings in such a way as to imply a personal acquaintance with them.
- He is also well aware of political, religious, and social developments in Israel. There are, to be sure, certain definite references to Judah, but the bulk of the prophecy is directed to Israel.
- Hosea's ministry covered a long period, as indicated by developments in the story and by the list of kings included in 1:1.
- Although his message was primarily concerned with Israel, he lists four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) and only one from Israel (Jeroboam II); during the years covered by the reigns of the four kings mentioned, however, no less than six kings ruled in Israel.
- It has been conjectured that Hosea refrains from naming them because they ruled such a short time and because their reigns were marked by violence.
- Despite the fact that the exact date of Hosea's ministry cannot be established, it is probably safe to estimate that he was active from before the middle of the 8th century **BC** until about 720 **BC.**
- At the beginning of Hosea's preaching, Israel was enjoying the prosperous period of the reign of Jeroboam II.

- The seeds of certain difficulty, However,were seem to lie in Israel's trying to preserve her position by political machinations instead of relying on God.
- An example of the chaos which resulted may be seen in the fact that in the twenty-one years that followed Jeroboam II, Israel was ruled by six different kings, four of whom were assassinated.
- Israel's past and future troubles are attributed by Hosea to her persistent practice of idolatry.
- The people are offering sacrifices on heathen altars; adultery and cult prostitution are prevalent.
- The figure which Hosea often uses to describe the spiritual condition of the Israelites is a lack of knowledge. He is not speaking simply of intellectual knowledge, but of a real personal relationship with God.
- Running throughout the book is the theme of God's enduring love in spite of the degenerate condition of Israel and her indifference to that love.

  In chs. 1-3, the faithless actions of Israel toward God are illustrated by the relationship between Hosea and his worthless marriage partner, Gomer.
- The names of his children indicate the attitude of God toward Israel.
- The first is named "Jezreel" after the city which was the scene of Jehu's brutality and which signified that God would punish his people.
- Lo-Ruhamah (Not pitied) and Lo-Ammi (Not my people) are the names given to the two other children, signifying the estrangement which was the inevitable result of the actions of Israel.

- God's love is illustrated in Hosea's willingness to take his wife back from the practice of harlotry—though not without some discipline.
- The second division of the prophecy, found in chs. 4-14, presents a detailed picture of the depths of depravity to which Israel had gone, with alternating passages of reproof, threats of punishment, and assurances of restoration.

Joel

- The name "Joel" means "Jehovah is God." This was evidently a favorite name in Old Testament times as there are twelve other men mentioned in the Rible who bear this name.
- Apart from his name and the fact that he was the son of Pethuel, nothing can be said of Joel with any degree of certainty.
- He was probably from Judah, as his many references to Jerusalem imply.
- The time of the writing of the prophecy has long been a disputed matter. It has been placed in every period of prophetic activity, though most scholars agree in giving it either an early, pre-exilic date, probably in the reign of Uzziah (c. 830 **BC**) or Joash (c. 750 **BC**) or a late post- exilic date.
- The reasons adduced for an early, date are its position as the second in the book of the Twelve Prophets in the Hebrew Canon, the lack of any mention of the nation of Israel, and the apparently active condition of religion which would fit the early years of the reign of Joash.
- Those who contend for a late date argue that the lack of any mention of Israel is due to the fact that it had already been destroyed.

- It is also maintained that the lack of any reproof for idolatry and the activity of the priesthood fits best with the period after the return from exile.
- The land of Judah had evidently suffered a devastating plague of locusts followed by famine and drought.
- The plague is described in four stages referring either to four kinds of locusts or four stages of development in the common locust.
- This great hardship offered Joel a propitious opportunity to speak of a greater judgment which was to befall the nation and to call for a season of repentance, fasting and mourning *(2:12).*
- In *2:28*ff Joel describes the "day of the Lord."
- On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, Peter spoke of the events of that day as fulfilling "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" *(Acts 2:16ff).*
- The remainder of the prophecy is thought by many to be a picture of the Christian Era and the triumph of the gospel with its placing of the sickle to the "fields white unto harvest" *(3:13; Cf. John 4:35).*
- The vivid description, the intense call to action, and the careful, faultless style of this short work have made it a classic of Hebrew literature.

Amos

- The prophet Amos was a native of Tekoa, a city set on a hill of 2,700 feet overlooking the bleak wilderness of Judah and visible from Bethlehem, five miles to the north.

- The region still bears its ancient name and is, as in the time of Amos, a pasture area filled with flocks of sheep and goats.
- Amos was not of the professional class of prophets nor was he a son of a prophet; he was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees when he received his summons from God - "The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, 'Go, and prophesy to my people Israel' " *(7:15).*
- Although this type of life was austere and simple, Amos had evidently come in contact with the commercial centers of Palestine, as he displays considerable knowledge of the habits and attitudes of the people to whom his message is directed.
- The opening verse of the prophecy places the activity of Amos "in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. . . ."
- Based on this statement and a description of the prosperity which arose under Jeroboam II, it is probable that Amos preached near 750-740 **BC**.
- Since the book seems to be a collection of a series of prophetic addresses delivered on different occasions, there is no way of determining how long Amos' ministry lasted.
- Although Amos was a resident of the southern kingdom, his message was directed to Israel, particularly to its leading cities of Bethel and Samaria.
- As noted above, a high degree of prosperity had been achieved during the reign of Jeroboam (Cf. *2 Kin. 14:23-29*).
- Areas which had been lost were regained and the borders of the kingdom were greatly enlarged. Israel had gained control of the major trade routes and Samaria had established herself as a great commercial center.
- A rich merchant class had grown up and, as a result of robbery, violence and a general absence of scruples, was enjoying all manner of luxuries, as seen in the sumptuous character of their houses *(3:15).*

- The merchants were encouraged to follow this course by their avaricious wives whom Amos describes as "cows of Bashan"-f 4: 1).
- The whole picture is one of a complete lack of justice, mercy and normal regard for human life.
- The condition of religion in Israel was on a level which matched the low moral and social standard. Although the shrines of God were well attended, they were subjected to the grossest sort of immorality and abuse, fornication and drunkenness being practiced in the very presence of the altar.
- The worship which was carried on was strictly a formal affair, devoid of any spiritual content. The effect of religion on the conduct of the worshippers was negligible.
- This intolerable situation could do nothing but bring the wrath of God. It was to announce this wrath that Amos came to Israel.
- His message, save for the last chapter, is one of pure condemnation and judgment.
- In the first two chapters, he announces that the whole area of Palestine is to suffer punishment for its evil, naming some of the most heinous crimes of the eight nations included in this jeremiad.
- The depravity of these nations is seen in the sins with which they are charged. The Ammonites are condemned "because they have ripped up Women with child in Gilead that they might enlarge their border" *(1:13);* doom is promised to the Moabites because their taste for revenge was so strong that they burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom (2:1).
- After scoring the neighboring nations, Amos turns his attention to Israel. He condemns them for the wealth they have gained at the expense of the poor (2:6-7) and for the other excesses noted above.
- In chapter 4 he recalls the punishments which God had formerly used to recall his people from sin and warns that this generation shall not escape a like

trial—"therefore this will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" *(4:12).*

- The Israelites were warned that the only course which they can follow to avert the imminent disaster is to seek the Lord and to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever- flowing stream" *(5:24).*
- The coming destruction is pictured in chapter 7 by the visions of a plague of locusts, a fire and a plumb line used for measuring the people for destruction.
- Israel is pictured as a basket of summer fruit *(8:1), a* graphic figure of the short span of life which is to be hers.
- The closing verses of Amos' prophecy sound a note of hope as he speaks of the restoration of the Davidic strain, referring undoubtedly to the Messiah.
- The influence of Amos' rustic background is seen in the many agricultural metaphors which he employs and in the plain-spoken manner in which he delivers his message, heedless of the efforts which are made to silence him *(7:10-17).*
- Throughout the prophecy one can discern Amos' unflagging conviction that sin will not go unpunished and that the righteousness of God will ultimately triumph.

Obadiah

- *Obadiah* is the shortest book in the Old Testament.
- The name "Obadiah" means "servant of the Lord" and was quite common from the time of David until the close of the Old Testament.
- It is found thirteen times in the Old Testament but it is impossible to determine which of these men was the author of this prophecy.
- The occasion of the prophecy was a plunder of Jerusalem in which the Edomites had participated and for which they were to be punished.
- There were four such plunderings and it is difficult to determine to which of these the prophecy refers; many scholars assign it to a time after the

destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, in 586 **BC,** during the reign of Zedekiah.

- The Edomites were descendants of Esau and were thus related to the Jews, but there was a longstanding enmity between them.
- Throughout the Old Testament prophecies, there is a denunciation of Edom.
- The Edomites lived in the rocky range south of the Dead Sea and had built almost impregnable fortresses in the canyons and gorges of these mountains.
- The magnificent ruins at Petra attest to the greatness which Edom once knew.
- This prophecy of Obadiah's tells of the sin of Edom and describes its approaching doom.
- In the closing passage of the book, the restoration ' of Judah is foretold.
- In 582 **BC**, only four years after the destruction of Jerusalem to which many think this prophecy refers, Edom was overcome by the Babylonians.
- Until the time of Christ they enjoyed several revivals of power (the Herods, for instance, were an Edomite family), but after the destruction of Jerusalem in **AD** 70, the Edomites disappeared from history.

Jonah

- The book of *Jonah* gains its tide, of course, from its chief character. The son of Amittai (J; 1), Jonah was a native of Gath-hepher, a village of the tribe of Zebulun.
- Hence, he was a prophet of Israel. If he is to be identified with the Jonah of *2 Kin. 14:25*, he lived in the time of Jeroboam II (the first half of the eighth century **BC**) and had played some role in helping that king to regain lost territory *(2 Kin. 14:25).*
- He was evidently well known and probably held quite a respected place in the Northern Kingdom.
- There is no way of telling who was actually the author of the book or at what time it was written.

- The story itself is one of the most familiar of the Old Testament. Jonah, a prophet of God, is called to deliver a message of repentance to Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrians.
- Since Nineveh was already in the process of destroying the Jews, Jonah sought to avoid discharging his commission and boarded a ship bound for Tar- shish.
- He was cast overboard by the sailors in the midst of a storm and swallowed by a great sea monster which the Lord had provided for this purpose.
- After being released from the fish, Jonah preached his message to Nineveh and was able to bring about their repentance.
- Because of his hostility toward this Gentile nation, Jonah began to brood God, by the lesson of die gourd, showed Jonah that he was concerned for other nations besides Israel.
- There has been considerable speculation as to the motives of God in sending Jonah to the Ninevites.
- One generally accepted idea is that God sought to rebuke the parochial spirit of the Jews by offering his favor to the Assyrians, thus demonstrating the capacity of the Gentiles for salvation.
- In keeping with this suggestion, it is interesting to note that Jonah's place of embarkation was Joppa, the same city from which Peter was called to deliver the gospel to the household of Cornelius, the first Gentile Christians.
- It has also been suggested that the purpose of Jonah's message was to forestall the Assyrian captivity of Israel by causing the Ninevites to repent of their lust for conquest.
- A third interpretation which some have preferred is that the key to understanding Jonah lies in Christ's reference to him in *Matt. 12:40-41;* that is, that Jonah was an antitype of Christ and that the central event of the narrative is the escape from the belly of the great fish on the third day *(1:17; 2:10),* just as the central event in the life of Christ was his resurrection from the dead on the third day.

Micah

- Micah was called the "Morasthite" because he was a native of Moresheth, sometimes called Moresheth-gath *(1:14)* due to its location in the southwestern part of Judah near the Philistine city of Gath.
- Little is known of Micah apart from his prophecy.
- He is mentioned in *Jer. 26:18* as having prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah; the opening verse of *Micah* places his activity in the time of Jotham and Ahaz as well.
- The period covered by the reigns of these three kings of Judah was from 751 to 687 **BC**. The reference in *Jeremiah* is taken by many to be an indication that his main work was in the reign of Hezekiah and that he might therefore be partly responsible for the revival of religion under that king. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah in Judah and of Hosea in Israel.
- Some have supposed him to have been a disciple of Isaiah.
- That there was some contact between the two seems evident from the practically identical passages in *Isa. 2: 24* and *Mic. 4:1-3.*
- Micah's message was directed to Samaria and Jerusalem, the respective capitals of Israel and Judah, and therefore responsible to some degree for the corruption which had overtaken these two kingdoms.
- Ch. 1 announces the doom that is to befall Samaria for her idolatry.
- Ch. 2 is a message of woe for the ruling class, because of their oppression of the poor.
- In this chapter Micah records the efforts of representatives of this class to suppress his preaching *(2:6, 11).*
- The sins of the ruling classes, as well as prophets and priests, are dealt with in ch. 3.
- The tone of the prophecy shifts abruptly in the opening verses of ch. 4, as Micah pictures the future glory of Jerusalem, or Zion.
- In 4:9, however, he lapses back into a message of impending doom.

- A remarkable prophecy is contained in 4:10, as Babylon is named as the conqueror of Judah although, at this time, Assyria was the leading power and Judah by no means appeared safe from her threats.
- About 100 years later, however, the prophecy was fulfilled as Judah, having survived the Assyrian conquests, was overrun by the forces of Babylon.
- Another well-known prophecy is contained in 5:2, where it is stated that a ruler for Israel "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," will come out of Bethlehem.
- When Herod inquired of the scribes as to the birthplace of Jesus, this prophecy was cited as having been fulfilled (*Matt. 2: 1-6).*
- Chs. 6 and 7 are a continuation of the picture of moral corruption and resultant punishment, but with an assurance that God will show compassion for Israel and will allow a remnant to flourish again, thus keeping the promise which he had made to Abraham *(7:20).*

Nahum

- Nahum's message, falling in the last half of the 7th century **BC**, tells of the destruction which is to befall Nineveh for lapsing back into wickedness.
- In 3:8-10 Nahum refers to the destruction of **Thebes** (No-Amon) as an event already past.
- This is known to have taken place in 663 **BC**, at the hands of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, during his expedition into Egypt.
- The fall of Nineveh, to which the prophecy points, took place in 606-607 **BC**. The date of Nahum's prophecy, therefore, may be fixed somewhere within this period of about fifty years, probably nearer the latter date.
- The name "Nahum" was a fairly common one and means "consolation" or "consoler," a fitting name for the prophet who brought comfort to the oppressed nation of Judah. Little is known of the personal life of Nahum.

- He is called the **"Elkoshite"** in 1:1, which would suggest that he was from a locality known as **Elkosh**.
- One theory has it that Elkosh was a city in Galilee, while others place it in Judah or Assyria. Still another tradition identifies Nahum's home with Capernaum ("village of Nahum") and makes Elkosh merely the place of his birth.
- It is impossible to determine which of these traditions is correct.
- As noted above, the subject of Nahum's message is the impending downfall of Nineveh.
- In ch. 1 God is pictured as one who will triumph over his enemies, regardless of their might.
- In the rest of the book the reasons for Nineveh's doom are noted. Two sins in particular are singled out.
- The first is unmerciful military power which plunders, kills and destroys in a heedless and remorseless fashion.
- The second is the corrupt practice of commerce which causes all morality and integrity to be sacrificed for the sake of acquisition of wealth and lustful pleasures.
- Nahum's prophecy represents the cry of the outraged conscience of the nation of Judah over the oppression which they have suffered at the hands of the Assyrians.
- It is marked by a feeling of satisfaction which almost approaches glee in anticipation of Nineveh's receiving the punishment which is her just due.

Habakkuk

- Little can be said with any degree of certainty concerning the prophet, Habakkuk. He was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah, writing in the last half of the seventh century **BC**.
- Ch. 1:5-6 contains a threat of the Chaldean (Babylonian) nation's being raised up as an instrument to punish the disobedient Jews.
- This would date the book either before the rise of Babylon in 625 **BC** or before the immediate threat to Judah in 606 **BC.**

- The style and approach of the book is unique among the prophets in that it contains the account of Habakkuk's complaints against God and God's answers to these complaints.
- Habakkuk exemplifies a great faith and a high conception of God, but he is perplexed because events have not taken the course which he had desired.
- The first complaint which he registers in 1:2-4 is that his preaching to the people has not resulted in repentance on their part.
- God's answer to this is that he is raising up the Chaldeans to punish the Jews for their disobedience (1:5-11).
- This furnishes Habakkuk with the material for his second complaint - why will God punish His people at the hand of a nation which is even more wicked and unholy than that which is punished? (1:12-2:1).
- God then assures Habakkuk that the Chaldeans are not to go without punishment and that unwavering faith on the part of the Jews will ultimately be rewarded (2:2-4).
- Ch. 2:5-20 contains a condemnation and threat of punishment for aggression, violence, and idolatry. The final chapter of the book is a song of praise of God and His judgment, exemplifying belief in the principle set out in 2:4, "the just shall live by his faith."

Zephaniah

- In the opening verse of this prophecy, the lineage of Zephaniah is traced through four generations back to Hezekiah.
- If this individual is to be identified with King Hezekiah, it is likely that Zephaniah sought to gain authority for his words by showing himself to be of royal blood.
- If this is the case, it makes his criticism of the ruling classes more notable. Zephaniah probably lived in Judah and quite possibly in Jerusalem.
- In ch. 1:4, he speaks of Jerusalem as "this place," and in 1:10-11, he exhibits considerable knowledge of the topography of the city.
- The first verse of the book places it in the reign of Josiah (c. 642-611 **BC**).
- Since the condition described is worse than what might be expected after the reforms of Josiah had been implemented, the prophecy was probably written in the early part of Josiah's reign, as he did not begin his reformation until eighteen years after he had taken the throne.

- The social condition of the land was characterized by injustice and oppression *(3:1-3)* and by prosperity which had been gained by violence and fraud *(1:8-9).*
- The spiritual condition of the people was equally as bad. Josiah had ascended to the throne in the wake of the evil reign of Manasseh.
- At the time of this writing, Baal was still worshipped (1:4).
- People who claimed to worship God were really swearing by Milcom, another name for the heathen deity Moloch, who was worshipped with human sacrifice *(1:5).*
- Many had completely "turned back from the Lord" (1:6).
- The people had grown skeptical, feeling that God would not take any soft of action one way or the other *(1:12).*
- Perhaps it is this situation which made the people ready to accept the reforms of Josiah.
- The key idea in Zephaniah's prophecy is the "Day of the Lord," mentioned repeatedly throughout the book.
- On that day the Lord will avenge Himself for the corruption of His people. The day of destruction is pictured as being imminent and terrible, a day in which few will escape.
- In order to fulfill His original promise to Abraham, however, God will spare a faithful remnant who will serve as a channel of blessing to the world.
- The glorious situation in which this remnant will find itself is pictured in ch. 3.
- They are to be given a pure language "that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent" (3:9).
- A beautifully comforting picture of the fortunes of the "Daughter of Zion" is contained in 3:13.
- "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Haggai

- Haggai was probably born in Babylon during the captivity, but 2:3 indicates that he might possibly have seen the temple of Solomon, which would mean that he was born in Palestine and was an old man at the time of his ministry.
- He was the first prophet after the captivity and was mentioned by Ezra as having been a co-worker with Zechariah in encouraging the people to complete the building of the second temple *(Ezra 6:14).*
- Although it cannot be determined what span the life of Haggai covered, the prophecies contained in this book were delivered in a four-month period in 520 **BC**, "the second year of Darius the King" (1:1).
- In 536 **BC**, after seventy years of captivity, a number of exiles returned to Judah by permission of Cyrus. They were led by Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest. Shortly after their return, they began the task of rebuilding the temple, the foundation stone being laid in the second month of the second year after the return (*Ezra 3:8-10).*
- Opposition to the building program arose from the half-cast Samaritans, descendants of the foreign colonists who were introduced into Samaria in 722 **BC** *(2 Kin. 17:24-41),* and the work was brought to a halt.
- A feeling of indifference had arisen; at the time of Haggai's ministry, the people had built "ceiled houses" for themselves, but they had allowed the Lord's temple to go unfinished for sixteen years.
- The purpose of Haggai's ministry was to renew interest in the rebuilding of the temple.
- The first of his four prophecies (*1:1-15*) was delivered on the first day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius- about August-September, 520 **BC**.
- This was addressed to the leaders, rebuking them for the spiritual lethargy which had allowed the temple to lie unfinished for such a long time.
- Haggai cites this lethargy as a chief cause for God's having withheld His blessings from the people (1:6).

- Haggai's words were so effective that it was only twenty-four days later that the work of rebuilding the temple was begun.
- The second message *(2:1-9)*, delivered about a month later (October), was designed to encourage those who were despondent over the disparity in glory between the former temple and the one which they were erecting.
- He assured them that a greater glory than that of the past temple was to come to the house of Israel. In this connection, he speaks of the "desire of all nations" (2:7), interpreted by many to refer to the Messiah.
- Two months after the second message, Haggai spoke to the people for a third time.
- In this section *(2:10-19)*, Haggai informs the people that their past indifference had kept them from accomplishing the things which they set out to do but that God would bless their future endeavors.
- The last of the prophecies contained in the book was delivered the same day as the third and is found in 2:20-23.
- In this, the prophet speaks of the establishment of Zerubbabel, a symbol of the idea that God's people were to stand as the power of the heathen nations was broken.

Zechariah

- Filled with references to the Messiah the prophecy of Zechariah is admitted by expositors to be an extremely difficult book to interpret.
- The prophet was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of **Iddo** *(1:1, 7)*.
- Apparently, he had been born in Babylon and had returned to Jerusalem in the group led by Zerubbabel sixteen years previous to the time of his ministry *(Neh. 12:4,16)*.
- He was a contemporary of Haggai and began his ministry two months after Haggai had begun his, in 520 **BC**.
- The work of rebuilding the temple was already in progress.

- Zechariah preached at least two years after Haggai ceased to prophesy (7:1) and possibly even longer.
- The conditions are the same as those described in the introduction to *Haggai*.
- The purpose of Zechariah's preaching was to join Haggai in the task of encouraging the construction of the temple and to see it through to its completion.
- He and Haggai deserve much credit for the rebuilt edifice. Zechariah met his task with reproof for shortcomings, encouragement and exhortations, promises of God's blessing and statements looking forward to the Messianic era.
- The book is divided into two parts:
  - Chs. 1-8, concerned mainly with the rebuilding of the temple, and
  - Chs. 9-14, dealing with future events, notably the coming of Messiah and the glory of His reign.
- Zechariah begins his book with a reminder that the captivity had been a result of disobedience.
- He continues by relating a series of visions designed to show that God is in control of history and will bring a glorious blessing to the faithful remnant of His people.
- Jerusalem is pictured as so prosperous it is having to be enlarged to hold the people *(ch. 2).*
- The vision of Joshua the high priest, clothed in filthy rags *(ch. 3)* seems to be a definite prevision of the atonement of Christ.
- Other visions in the book point to the certainty of God's judgment and ultimate victory over sin, culminating in the coming of the Messiah.

Malachi

- The time in which Malachi wrote cannot be definitely determined.

- From references to the temple and the priests, it may be assumed that it was after the return from captivity.
- The conditions described are similar to those which prompted the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the book may date from that period.
- Nothing is known of Malachi, but that he considered his words to have the full approval of God is seen throughout the book.
- The Jews had returned from captivity a zealous and hopeful people.
- After a short period of indifference, Haggai and Zechariah had been able to stir them to rebuild the temple and the wall of Jerusalem had also been restored.
- The people, however, had become disillusioned; things simply were not as good as they had hoped.
- Drought and its accompanying crop failure, together with opposition from various enemies, had made life difficult.
- Skepticism, doubt, and general neglect of spiritual matters had crept in.
- They were offering imperfect sacrifices and failing to give their tithes. The priests were lax and did little to encourage them.
- Mixed marriages with the heathen and divorce had become common.
- The heart of Malachi's message was to point out to the people that they could never expect prosperity as long as they continued in the sins described above.
- After assuring them of God's blessings if they would repent, he shifts to the subject of the approaching Day of the Lord.
- This day will be ushered in by Elijah, who will act as a forerunner of Messiah, after which Messiah will come.
- In the New Testament *(Matt. 3:1-12; 11:14)*, this Elijah is identified with John the Baptist.
- The writing of Malachi closes the period of prophetic activity.

- After this time, the scribes and priests came to the fore of religious leadership in the activity of expounding that which had already been written.