

# Practical Bible Studies



*By Johnny Ramsey*

**VOLUME I  
GENESIS – ESTHER**



# **PRACTICAL BIBLE STUDIES**

***Volume I  
Genesis — Esther***

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# Preface

For a number of years brethren in many places have complained about the quality of Bible study materials. Especially in the area of teenage and adult classes, requests for challenging lessons have come forth. Due to the help and encouragement of godly congregations and spiritual elders and preachers, we have taken up the task and privilege of producing these materials. In a series of four books we will cover the entire Bible. The first section will be *Genesis* through *Esther* followed by *Job* through *Malachi*. Then, in the New Testament, we will have *Matthew* through *Colossians* and last, *I Thessalonians* through *Revelation*. The entire series will be called:

## **PRACTICAL BIBLE STUDIES**

Special sections for serious reflection, meditation, questions and discussions will appear toward the close of each book of the Bible. May we use these lessons to the glory of God and the edification of the church of our Lord.

Special appreciation is now expressed to Betty Martin for her tremendous help in typing these materials.

Let us grow in the grace and knowledge of things divine, holy and eternal (II Peter 3:18).

—Johnny Ramsey

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# GENESIS

In the beginning—God! What a marvelous start to the Bible! Genesis is indeed a rich storehouse of divine knowledge that propels us to a closer walk with our Creator. The first stanza of Holy Scripture ties us to other magnificent passages in Psalms and Daniel particularly:

Psalms 33:9 — God spake and it was done.

Psalms 24:1 — The earth is the Lord's.

Psalms 66:7 — He ruleth by His power forever.

Psalms 93:1 — God reigneth; He is clothed with majesty.

What a joy it is to serve the Almighty who made us in His image even as He created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1, 26). His eternal power and Godhead have been powerfully set forth (Romans 1:18-25). Truly, as the poet proclaimed so do we ardently agree:

"There will always be God!"

In the book of Psalms we find many beautiful thoughts concerning our Maker that ought to produce within us a desire to worship Him in the beauty of holiness as we give God the glory due His matchless name (I Chronicles 16:29; Isaiah 43:7). Let us combine the thoughts from Psalms in these words:

14:2 — God looks down from heaven upon mankind.

19:1 — His handiwork is powerfully seen and deeply admired.

89:7 — We should bow in adoration before Him!

8:3-4 — We should daily consider how glorious He is.

116:12 — What shall we render unto God for all these blessings?

Remember this logical approach:

Something is...

But something cannot come from nothing...

Therefore: Something has always been...

I call that something—God!

It is far more intelligent to believe the Bible view of creation than to accept anything else. Mind over matter is the wiser thought, by far, than to accept the evolutionary absurdity that matter preceded mind. For example, the fact that one holds a watch in his hand suggests a watchmaker. No one believes the watch created a skilled technician but rather that a man made the watch. We believe that Jehovah created man just as the Bible says. Therefore we should always remember that we are the sheep of His hand and humbly worship Him (Psalms 95:6-7). Remember, too, that God made man full-grown. He did not create a baby that evolved into a man! That must be the way He also made the world and all things therein.

In Genesis we have three major passages that form the background for the rest of the Bible. From 3:15, 22:18 and 49:10 of this book of beginnings we learn that a Savior is coming to defeat Satan, provide salvation for all mankind and to establish an everlasting kingdom of peace! What a noble arrangement heaven has set forth for the redemption of us all. How eternally grateful we ought to be for the sublime love, mercy and grace God desires to bestow upon us. One gospel song contains these marvelous words:

*O the love that drew salvation's plan!  
O the grace that brought it down to man!  
O the mighty gulf that God did span  
At Calvary!*

It is significant that these three verses, 3:15, 22:18 and 49:10, follow the tragic work of the Devil with Adam and Eve. In Revelation 12:9 we learn that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was the deceiver of the whole world, Satan! According to Romans 5:12 and Isaiah 59:1-2 sin had come to separate man from God and to introduce death. Adam and Eve were purged from the Garden and from *the tree of life*. Jehovah, at this point, made it clear to the Devil, however, that heaven had a plan to ultimately defeat Satan. In Genesis 3:15 God stated that the seed of woman would crush the power of evil. This is the first promise of the Messiah in the Bible and it speaks of the virgin birth of Christ. Isaiah 7:14 tells us that a virgin would bear a son and he would be Immanuel or "God with us." Micah 5:2 predicted that Bethlehem of Judea would be the place of this unique birth. Matthew 1:21-23 confirms that all of these prophecies took place when Mary, the virgin,

gave birth to Jesus, the Savior. In Galatians 4:4 the apostle Paul affirmed that God sent forth His Son, *born of a woman*. Just as a woman introduced sin into the world so also did woman introduce the Savior as the remedy for sin (I Timothy 2:15).

Many New Testament passages tell us of victory in Jesus Christ over Satan, sin and death. The Redeemer is more powerful than the Devil (I John 4:4) and proved it by casting out demons (Mark 3:27). By His sinless life and triumphant death our great enemy was defeated (John 12:31-33; Hebrews 2:14). The last paragraph of I Corinthians 15 forever shows that the seed of woman overwhelmed the Devil and thus gives us hope of everlasting life.

Then, in *Genesis 22:18* we rejoice to see that God chose a family through whom Christ would come. The seed of Abraham was preserved so that a Savior would come upon the human scene to provide redemption for sinners like you and me. All mankind has hope of cleansing from sin because the seed of Abraham produced the One who alone can redeem us from iniquity. In Galatians 3:16 Paul wrote clearly that the seed of Abraham was Christ! At the end of the third chapter of Galatians we are told that those baptized into Christ become Abraham's seed and heirs of promise. *Genesis* truly forms the basis of New Testament Christianity. How valuable, indeed, is a careful study of this first Bible book. We ought to be extremely thankful for God's plan that begins in *Genesis* and is finalized in the halls of heaven!

In *Genesis 49:10* we come to one of the most eloquent of all Bible passages. By the end of *Genesis*, in a practical way, Abraham's seed is basically found in some 75 people who are known as Jacob and his 12 sons and their families. As the patriarch Jacob is about to die he pronounces his last will and testament. We have it in written form in this chapter. The choice blessing is given to Judah in the beautiful promise that power and authority will be vested in Judah and manifested in Shiloh or the bearer of peace. The spiritual Ruler promised in 49:10 is none other than Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14). The prediction that such a mighty One would come from Judah is documented in two New Testament verses:

Hebrews 7:14 — It is evident that our Lord sprang  
out of Judah.

Revelation 5:5 — The Lion of the tribe of Judah...

These three brilliant verses, 3:15, 22:18 and 49:10 of Genesis, cogently prepare us for the rest of the Bible and center in the Christ, our blessed Savior and Friend. He is the solid foundation of Bible teaching.

## **Great Lessons Learned in Genesis**

### **A. THE POWER OF FAITH**

1. Abel in chapter 4: In Hebrews 11:4 we learn that Abel still speaks to us through his genuine trust in God. He obeyed the command of the Creator in regard to proper worship and devotion (Romans 10:17).
2. Enoch walked with God (Hebrews 11:5).
3. Noah built the Ark exactly as Jehovah instructed (Genesis 6:22; Hebrews 11:7). He is called a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5).
4. Abraham is often called "the father of the faithful." What a great and loyal man! Read Genesis 26:5, Romans 4:20 and Hebrews 11:17-19).
5. Joseph is truly one of the unsung heroes of the Bible because of his unselfish spirit and keen determination to serve God's purpose. Read Genesis 45:5, 50:20, 39:5 and Hebrews 11:22 (Joshua 24:32; Genesis 50:25).

### **B. THE SINS OF PRIDE, SELFISHNESS AND JEALOUSY**

1. Cain's infamous question in 4:9—"Am I my brother's keeper?"
2. The Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:4—"Let us make a name for ourselves."
3. Lot's decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom! Read 13:10-13 with I John 2:15-17.
4. Chapter 18 tells of the end result of this decision. The immorality of Sodom had a tragic effect upon Lot's family. One of the great questions of the Bible comes out of this section: Genesis 18:25—*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*
5. Jealousy, as seen in the lives of Esau and Jacob (chapter 27) and Joseph's brothers toward him (chapter 37) prove what Proverbs 14:30 states: *Envy is the rottenness of the bones.* See also Galatians 5:19-21.



### C. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS CLEARLY MANIFESTED

Though men may be as unstable as water (Genesis 49:4), our Creator never changes (Malachi 3:6). For that constant certainty we should be forever grateful. Though human feelings may deceive (Genesis 37:35), divine revelation is clear and definite and honest (II Corinthians 1:13).

1. Genesis 9: The rainbow still reminds us of Jehovah's power to keep His word!
2. Genesis 18: He will punish evil-doers.
3. Genesis 22: He did preserve Abraham's Seed so that a Savior came!
4. Genesis 16:13: God does see us at all times. "Thou, O God, seest me." Read also Proverbs 15:3 and Hebrews 4:13.
5. Luke 17:32 tells us to *remember Lot's wife*. God warns us not to look back to a life of sin (II Peter 2:21) but to press on to greater moments of spirituality (Philippians 3:14).

### D. LASTING MEMENTOES FROM GENESIS

1. *The Law of Procreation*. After miraculously and instantly creating man out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2), God set in motion the natural law of procreation: "Multiply and replenish the earth." That system cannot be perpetuated by homosexuals or lesbians. Moral purity is demanded (Hebrews 12:14; 13:4).
2. *The Tree of Life* in the Garden of Eden and the same tree in Paradise or the garden of God in Revelation 22 show the continuity of heaven's plan. Obedience to Christ provides for us what sin destroyed for Adam and Eve. Nothing is more precious than communion with Deity. Read Hebrews 5:9, I John 5:3 and Revelation 22:14.
3. *Melchizedek*: Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7. In one of the Bible's deepest arguments, the inspired writer of Hebrews compares Christ and Melchizedek as he contrasts the Old and New Covenants. To prove that Christianity was superior to Judaism, so that Hebrew Christians would stay with the Lord and not go back to Moses, the point is made that Christ is superior to Moses just as Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.

The Levitical priesthood system of the Jews came out of the heritage of Abraham, but the father of that arrangement, Abraham, acknowledged that he was inferior to Melchizedek by offering gifts to him and being blessed by him as he bowed before Melchizedek (Genesis 14). The writer of Hebrews then concluded in Hebrews 7:21, "Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." A brief encounter in Genesis 14 is made clear by this reference in the New Testament.

#### **E. THE LAND PROMISE TO ABRAHAM'S SEED**

In Genesis 12:7 and 15:18, that great man of God is told by the Creator that the land of Canaan would be given to the descendants of Abraham some 400 years later, after a period of bondage. The exact boundaries are specified, and in Joshua 1:4, 2:24, 21:43 and 23:14 the fulfillment of this promise was absolutely a reality. Anyone today who teaches that the land promise to Abraham has not yet been fulfilled is violating clear-cut Bible teaching!

#### **F. THE MEANING OF ISRAEL TODAY**

In Genesis 32 and Hosea 12 we learn that *Jacob's* name was changed to *Israel*. That word means "Prince of God" or "those who have power with God." In Galatians 6:16 we learn that Christians make up the Israel of God today. See also Philipians 3:3 and Galatians 3:29. *There is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek*, is the message of the gospel in Romans 10:12, for God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11). All those who obey the Lord have power with God (Acts 10:34-35). Salvation in New Testament days comes not by physical birth, but by the new birth (Hebrews 8:6-13; John 3:1-7). It is not a matter of earthly inheritance but spiritual relationship.

#### **G. THE BREVITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE**

Isaac spoke for all of us in 27:2 of Genesis: "I know not the day of my death." How swiftly time passes and how suddenly death comes. We must, therefore, be ready at all times to meet the Lord in that inevitable Day of Judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Truly, *there is but a step between us and death*, as we learn in I Samuel 20:3.

## H. SUMMATION VERSE FOR CONTENTS OF GENESIS

I John 3:8 tells us: "For this cause was the Son of God made known, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Through the virgin birth of Christ, the promised One of Abraham's seed and the Prince of Peace from Judah, the demons in hell are made to tremble (James 2:19). Christians have every right to be cheerful and optimistic even as Paul stated in Philipplians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Genesis boldly promised that a Savior was coming. Praise God that Christ did come and that when He comes again we shall meet Him in the air and be forever with the Lord. Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

## Questions Based on the Text of Genesis

- A. What lessons do we learn on *the subject of obedience* from:
  - 1. Cain and Abel—I John 3:12?
  - 2. Noah and the Ark—Genesis 6:22?
  - 3. The Life of Abraham—Genesis 26:5?Does God mean what He says?
- B. What does the Bible account teach us in Genesis 2 concerning *the establishment of the first divine institution* (marriage)? See Matthew 5:31-32, 19:1-9 and Malachi 2:16.
- C. *The Way of Cain* is referred to in Jude 11. What characteristics do we find in his life that we need to avoid?
- D. *The Tower of Babel* incident in Genesis 11 has several practical points. Find them and discuss by way of application to us. Use John 17:20-21 and I Corinthians 1:10-13 and Romans 15:6.
- E. *Esau and his descendants* make interesting background material for consideration. The crude Herodian family of the first century came out of that heritage. Material for discussion could well be Obadiah 3 and Hebrews 12:16-17. What a price Esau paid for temporary pleasure! May we never be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Read II Timothy 3:4 and Matthew 6:33.

- F. *Can feelings deceive us today?* Read Deuteronomy 12:8 and Proverbs 14:12 as you recall Jacob believing Joseph to be dead (Genesis 37), even as Paul admitted his feelings to be wrong when he persecuted Christianity. See Acts 23:1, 26:9 and I Timothy 1:15.
- G. *Joseph's brave and pure decision to resist evil is clearly set forth in 39:1-9. Especially notice and discuss verses 5 and 9. See also Daniel 1:8, Acts 11:23, I Timothy 4:12 and II Timothy 2:19.*
- H. *Do not sin against the child* is the striking statement of 42:22. In what ways do parents sin against their children? Can we sin against our own soul? Read Habakkuk 2:10, II Kings 20:1, Ephesians 6:4 and II Timothy 3:2.
- I. In Acts 7 Stephen preached that *Joseph had the spirit of Christ* in that he was forgiving toward his brethren who had mistreated him. How can we develop this attitude of non-retaliation? See Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60 and Romans 12:17-21. Also see Matthew 5:43-48!
- J. *Who is your favorite character in Genesis? Why? What is the greatest lesson you have learned?*

### **Things We Should Learn from Genesis**

1. God created all things.
2. We owe full allegiance to Him!
3. Loving obedience should be natural for us.
4. The power of faith in our lives is tremendous.
5. The rainbow reminds us of God's goodness.
6. Disobedience will result in Jehovah's wrath.
7. Though Satan is powerful, the Creator is stronger.
8. Pride truly is one of mankind's worst problems.
9. God can use us to His glory if we allow Him.
10. Men like Abraham are rare indeed!
11. Punishment awaits those who turn back to sin.
12. We cannot escape the all-seeing eye of God.
13. The rewards of righteousness are tremendous.
14. Envy and jealousy war against the soul.
15. Esau reminds us that spiritual values are best.
16. Joseph helps us to believe in the providence of God.
17. It never pays to try to get even with our enemy.

18. Feelings can deceive just as Jacob was mistaken.
19. Jesus Christ came from Judah to give us peace.
20. God can overwhelm the evil intentions of wicked men.

May the Lord help us to benefit from the rich treasures of Holy Scripture as we daily study, meditate upon and put into practice the beauty of heavenly mandates.

# EXODUS

The word *exodus* means "departure." This great second book of the Old Testament tells us of Moses leading God's people (Abraham's seed) out of Egyptian bondage, through the wilderness and up to the promised land of Canaan. It will be a rugged journey due to the shameful, faithless attitude of many of the Israelites. At times Jehovah almost blotted the whole nation out of existence (Exodus 32). Thousands would perish in the wilderness because of sin (I Corinthians 10:1-12). The drama of Exodus centers around three major points:

1. The Leadership of Moses
2. The Weakness of the People
3. The Providence and Justice of God

In Stephen's eloquent speech in Acts 7 he told an angry mob of Jews that God once raised up Moses but his brethren rejected him. Nevertheless, Moses would later deliver them. As we enter the discussion of Exodus, Moses has been rejected and is tending sheep on the backside of Midian. This has been his lonely task for 40 years. For a man who could have been heir of the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:25 ff) this was quite a decline in honor and power. But Jehovah had plans for that meek and wise person. At the close of the Genesis record the descendants of Abraham had been saved from extinction by the kindness of Joseph and the providence of God. But, Exodus 1:6-8 tells us that enough years had passed for a Pharaoh to arise *who knew not Joseph!* Instead of blessing and privilege, Israel now knew poverty and oppression. Egyptian bondage, slavery and sorrow became the daily portion of God's chosen people.

From a burning bush God appeared to Moses in Midian and boldly stated: "Go down to Egypt and let my people go." Moses made a plea of not being eloquent, so God gave him

Aaron as a mouth or spokesman. Jehovah empowered them with miraculous ability—shown powerfully in the Ten Plagues that filled Pharaoh and his hosts with terror—to make the deliverance from Egypt a reality.

The holy ground today—for us—has to do with God's authority. His sovereignty and power overwhelm the humble Bible student and produce reverence toward divine mandates. In worship, teaching and living we all should stand in awe of His Word (Psalms 119:161) and sin not (Psalms 4:4). If there is one New Testament verse that sums up God's care for Israel in the scenes of Exodus it would be Hebrews 13:6 where the Lord says:

"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

### **The Ten Plagues**

The ten plagues displayed the miraculous power of God which was given to prove that Moses' words came from God. This was always the purpose or function of miracles in Bible times (see Mark 16:20, Romans 15:17-19, Matthew 11:1-6 and Hebrews 2:1-4). The plagues were:

- (1) Water of Nile turned to blood
- (2) Frogs
- (3) Lice
- (4) Flies
- (5) Murrain upon cattle
- (6) Boils
- (7) Hail
- (8) Locusts
- (9) Darkness
- (10) Death of the firstborn of the Egyptians

The fact that these calamities escaped Israelites showed Pharaoh the hand of God upon evil men and deliverance for Abraham's seed (read I Peter 3:10-12). It is interesting to check the phrases dealing with Heaven's power. For instance: The *finger* of God, the *hand* of God and the *arm* of the Lord!

Pharaoh's magicians tried to duplicate the miracles of Moses and Aaron but finally admitted their "sleight of hand craftiness" could not compete with God's glory. In II Timothy 3:8 we learn the names of these men—Jannes and Jambres. In I Samuel 6:6-7 we learn that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. In fact, that's why Jehovah sent Moses to Egypt—in

order to release the Israelites from cruel oppression. However, when God's word is preached it either opens honest hearts (Acts 16:14) or hardens evil hearts (Romans 9:17). For "the entrance of God's word giveth light," as Psalms 119:130 affirms. When people thrust the word of God from themselves (Acts 13:46) they make themselves unworthy of eternal life (Romans 11:22).

The tenth plague—death of the firstborn among the Egyptians—is a prelude to the coming of Christ. To escape such visitation from God the Israelites placed blood over their doorposts so that God would pass over them. In I Corinthians 5:7 Paul tells us that "Christ is our Passover." The Old Testament tells us clearly that *Christ was coming!*

As Moses leads the seed of Abraham out of Egypt they came to a great barrier—the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army pursues them and sudden death seems sure. But the Almighty opens up the Red Sea and Moses leads the huge assembly through it as on dry ground. The Egyptians perish therein as no such miracle spares them. On the other side of the assumed barrier the Israelites sing a song of deliverance and victory (Revelation 15:3). In the language of Exodus 14:14 they learned:

"The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace."

## **In the Wilderness**

In addition to such graphic displays of heavenly power the practical provisions of manna, water and quail, to say nothing of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, eloquently spoke of God's presence in their lives, day by day.

Moses was surrounded by heavy responsibilities in leading and judging the people. It was too much for one man. Jethro, his father-in-law, advised him to select men to help him on lesser matters. This is probably the beginning of the Sanhedrin concept of Jesus' day (Exodus 18).

In Exodus 19-34 the central theme of the book develops. At Sinai, God gave the Law—the Ten Commandments—to the Israelites. Notice how pivotal this matter is to understanding the Old Testament. At Sinai God gave:

1. To His special *people*
2. A special *law*
3. Leading to a special *land*



4. For a special *purpose*
5. The coming of a special *person*

*Christ is coming* is the major thrust of the Old Testament. About 50 days after Abraham's seed left Egypt they came to Sinai. God's law went forth, but due to sin 3,000 were slain (Exodus 32:28). In New Testament days the law of Christ went out from Jerusalem and 3,000 were saved (Acts 2:41). Read Hebrews 12:19-29 for this vivid contrast.

While Moses was on the Mount receiving God's law, Aaron and the people were at the foot of Sinai disobeying the very first commandment which forbade idolatry. As Moses came down from the presence of Jehovah he was dismayed to see the people dancing and worshipping around a golden calf image. He broke the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments and severely rebuked a rather flippant Aaron (32:24). The opening refrain of the Decalogue tells us that God is a jealous God and will allow no rival (Matthew 4:10; Exodus 20:1-3).

Moses goes again to the Mountain to commune with Jehovah and after 40 days comes again with the Ten Commandments which set forth the proper relationship Abraham's seed must sustain before God and with man. An interesting point of discussion refers to the veil Moses had to place over his face as he came into the camp of Israel after receiving the Law from God. When one reads carefully Exodus 34 and compares Paul's use of that passage in II Corinthians 3, it tells us that the glory of the Old Testament began to fade even as it was given because it was not intended to last forever (Galatians 3:19). Christ is the end of the law (Romans 10:4). He died in vain if men are still justified by the law (Galatians 2:21). He came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17) and that purpose was fulfilled (Luke 24:44). Paul's point in II Corinthians 3 was simply told: The law Moses had when he had to veil his face is that system that has now been abrogated, taken out of the way and abolished. The glory of the Old Covenant fades and wanes in the rather glorious light of the New! Have you ever noticed the salient message of Hebrews 8:13?

"In that he saith a new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

In the later chapters of Exodus provision is made for the work of the high priest and the function of the tabernacle. The book of Leviticus will develop the priestly system and the feast days of Judaism more explicitly.

Some of the memorable texts in Exodus challenge us to follow divine principles. For instance, Exodus 23:2 says:

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

Had thousands in Israel obeyed that injunction so many would not have perished in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:19).

In John, chapter six, Jesus contrasted the physical food of manna with Himself—the Bread of Life! What a joy it is for us today to be provided with spiritual sustenance which only Christ can provide.

One of the most beautiful verses in the entire book of Exodus is 19:5. God said to Israel:

"If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."

But sadly, as Exodus 6:9 affirms we learn that due to their broken spirit and cruel bondage the people did not hearken to Moses.

Perhaps no verse sums up the greatness of Moses' heart and the dire need of the Israelites more than 14:33:

"Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. . ."

Jehovah bore them on eagle's wings (19:4) and Abraham's seed should have always echoed the sentiment of 15:2 of Exodus:

"The Lord is my strength and my song  
and has become my salvation."

Instead of doubting—"Is the Lord among us or not?" the people—so blessed—should have always cried:

"The Lord is my Banner" (17:15).

## Conclusion

In closing, let us recall the solemnity of Exodus 32 where God's patience had finally run its course. Moses learned that the names of the Israelites were to be blotted out of the book of remembrance. He pleads urgently with the Creator to spare the people but to blot out the name of Jehovah's servant—

Moses! God clearly tells the meek mediator from Midian that He, not Moses, took care of the Book of Life and that those who needed to be blotted out would be! Let us wisely choose to so live that our names shall be found in the Book our Maker keeps!

The most sobering thought I have ever learned from Exodus is the following truth:

"It took one night for Israel to come out of Egypt;  
but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of them!"

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) the inner depth of Christianity is contrasted with the external nature of the Ten Commandments. Thoughts, motives and attitudes play a rich part in the gospel age. We are not to look on a person with lust in our hearts, much less to commit adultery. We are not to bear false witness against *anyone*! Not only are we not to kill, we are not to think evil or hold anger in our hearts toward others.

Adventists and a few other Sabbatarians claim that Saturday is the day of public worship for men today. Ellen G. White, the prophetess back of the Seventh Day Advent movement, even tells of her journey to heaven where she "saw a halo of glory around the Sabbath command." But the covenant the Sabbath belonged to is the same one Paul said we are dead to in order to free us to be spiritually married to Christ (Romans 7:4-7). It is also very interesting to note that the first-century church met upon *the first day of the week* to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) and to contribute monetarily to the cause of Christ (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

According to Nehemiah 9:14 and Ezekiel 20:12, the Sabbath "was made known" to Israel after they came out of Egypt. This proves it was not in existence as a Holy Day prior to that!

## **Great Verses in Exodus**

- A. In 1:12 of this rich book we have a passage that reminds us of the value of persecution when hearts are steadfast and loyal. Jesus taught the same principle in Matthew 5:10-12:

"But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

- B. In 6:5-8 we learn that—come what may—God will take care of us. Romans 8:18 and 8:31 blend well with this theme. Notice particularly 6:7 of Exodus:

"And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burden of the Egyptians."

- C. Some believe that 13:21 is of singular import in this valuable and interesting book:

"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."

- D. In 14:14 we read these marvelous words:

"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

- E. In 14:31 we see the end result:

"And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

- F. In 40:16 we find the same compliment for Moses that Noah received earlier:

"So did Moses, according to all that God commanded him."

What a noble and humble man!

### ***Discuss:***

Discuss the previous points from Exodus using and blending these New Testament verses:

John 14:27; 16:32-33; Romans 8:28; I Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 1:29; II Timothy 2:11-12; 3:12; 4:16-18; Revelation 2:10; 3:21

**Remember:** "If there were no difficulties, there would be no triumphs."

## **Unusual Points from the Book of Exodus**

### **I. STANDING ON HOLY GROUND TODAY**

There is no holy acreage, geographically, now. Jesus made that very clear in John 4:23-24, as did Stephen in Acts 7:48-50. However, in a spiritual sense, Exodus 3:5 lives on for us. There are sacred landmarks we dare not forget.

1. The Holy Scriptures — Psalms 1:2 and 119:15-16
2. The authority of Christ — Matthew 28:18
3. The love of God — Ephesians 3:17-21
4. The church of the Lord — Acts 20:28
5. Christian living — Philipplians 1:21 and 2:15-16
6. The plan of salvation — Mark 16:15-16
7. The hope of heaven — Titus 1:2; Hebrews 9:24

### **II. THE PASSOVER AND CHRIST**

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 5:7 that Christ is our pass-over. Not blood over a doorpost as in Exodus 12, but the shed blood of our Redeemer (I Peter 1:18-20) cleanses us from sin (Romans 5:9). In II Corinthians 5:14 and 8:9 we learn that Jesus is the One who died for all to show us the way back to heaven!

### **III. THE MAJORITY IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT**

Contrary to popular slogans the Bible tells us bluntly in Exodus 23:2:

“Do not follow a multitude to do evil.”

Christ boldly stated in Matthew 7:13-14 that only a few will be saved while the vast majority will be lost. Ask Noah if the majority entered the Ark (I Peter 3:20).

### **IV. THE MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS**

In chapter 16 of Exodus the people received bread from God in heaven to sustain their physical being. In John 6, in the New Testament, Jesus plainly taught that He is our “manna” that sustains us spiritually. What a contrast! Again, Exodus truly pointed men toward the superior blessings of Christianity. John 6:51 and Galatians 2:20 help us with this.

## **V. WHO MADE THE GOLDEN CALF?**

One of the most intriguing points in the whole book of Exodus is found in 32:5:

"And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made."

When we participate in an act of evil, whether we are the leader in such shameful conduct or not, we become partakers of the ungodly activity. We must keep ourselves pure and not allow sinful men to engulf us in their error.

***Be sure to study and then discuss these verses:***

Ephesians 5:11

Jude 21

II John 8

I Timothy 5:22

I Thessalonians 5:22

Galatians 2:11-14

## **VI. THE TABERNACLE**

One of the major reasons Exodus is remembered by Bible students is the detail material concerning the Tabernacle. So many references in the rich New Testament book of Hebrews come from this background. It is significant that comparison is often drawn from the Tabernacle and not the Temple in regard to Christianity. The holy place and the most holy place are the two compartments. We will have more to say on this when we study the book of Leviticus. However, please read and discuss Hebrews 6:19-20; 8:5; 9:1-12 and 10:19-20.

## **VII. EXODUS 34 and II CORINTHIANS 3**

No clearer distinction between Old and New Covenants could ever be found than in these two chapters.

- A. When Moses veiled his face as he came down from Sinai with the Ten Commandments, there was an indication that the glory of that arrangement was already fading.
- B. The law Moses had that day was forever abrogated when the New Testament was given.
- C. We are now under the New, which is more glorious.
- D. Read Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 10:9-10; Hebrews 8:6-13.

## VIII. MOSES AND THE BACK SIDE OF MIDIAN

In Hebrews 11:24-27 we learn sterling truths about Moses.

1. He had courageous parents.
2. He refused royalty to meekly serve God.
3. He chose persecution over pleasure.
4. He chose heaven over great earthly wealth.
5. He loved God more than he feared the king.

In spite of all this, he was rejected by Israel and spent 40 years on the isolated plains of Midian as a lonely, broken-hearted man. It is a rebuke to human nature that we often mistreat the very best among us due to false pride, envy and spiritual ignorance. The suffering Moses endured made him a better and wiser mediator, but it is still sad to contemplate the sorrow he bore. Read Acts 7:22-29 and Exodus 3:1. Ephesians 4:1-3 is helpful also.

### Questions and Discussion Points

1. How does murmuring and complaining figure into the problems of Israel in Exodus? Study Philipians 2:14 and 4:4-6 and I Thessalonians 5:16-18.
2. What practical lesson did Moses learn from Jethro in 18:13-24? Does I Corinthians, chapter 12, help us also?
3. What major lessons do we learn from the golden calf incident in chapter 32? Give at least 3 points. *Think* and make application to our own daily living.
4. Discuss the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. *References:*  
Romans 7:1-7; Galatians 2:19-21; 3:19-24; Ephesians 2:14-17; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13 and 9:15-17.
5. What are several major points concerning the Red Sea incident in chapter 14? Read Acts 7:38 and I Corinthians 10:1-13. Discuss.
6. Describe Moses as a leader. What made him a great servant of God? What is your favorite point concerning him? Remember 40:16.

# LEVITICUS

One of the lesser-known sections of the Bible is the Old Testament book known as Leviticus. However, it is necessary to know the contents of this section of Scripture if one would learn the background of many references in the New Testament. Actually, the book of Leviticus is of monumental import regarding holiness, worship, efficacy and the priesthood of believers. Perhaps the major epochal thrust of this rich and vital stanza in Holy Writ is found in I Peter 1:16, that reflects a statement from Leviticus:

"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

From chapter seventeen of the book of Numbers, and subsequent passages, we learn of the value of the Levites in God's scheme of things. From this tribe and the family of Aaron came the high priests in Israel. They occupied a special place in heaven's plan. On the famous Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) those priests, through the years, officiated in the Scape-goat arrangement that pointed toward the coming of our Redeemer. The tremendous statement of John 1:29 hearkens back to that occasion and forever sets forth the supremacy of Christianity. John the Immerser, proclaimed of Jesus:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, which  
taketh away the sin of the world."

We should daily thank the Father above that we do not have to trust in a dumb animal and a sinful Levitical priest and the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats for cleansing (Hebrews 10:1-11). How blessed we are to have a new and living way through the veil of Christ's flesh and the shedding of His precious blood (Hebrews 10:19-20)!

*There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;*



*And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.*

We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (I Peter 1:19) and sustained by the only High Priest that Christianity will ever know—Jesus Christ, the righteous One (I John 2:1; Hebrews 7:26). Leviticus was just a shadow, a foretaste, of glory divine!

The three great feast days of Judaism are mentioned in Leviticus 23. They all point to the coming of the Messiah. We learn in a powerful passage, in I Corinthians 5:7, that *Christ is our Passover*. The feast of Tabernacles was a reminder of Jehovah's providential care for Abraham's seed in the wilderness. Paul tells us in chapter ten of I Corinthians that "the rock that followed them was Christ!" Pentecost was a special day for the Jews also. It served as a reminder of the law that went forth at Sinai and pointed to a powerful occasion in Acts 2 where a harvest of spiritual sowing would come to fruition. It is overwhelming to realize that when the law God gave through angels to Moses pealed forth at Sinai 3,000 were slain because of sin (Exodus 32:28). Conversely, when the gospel shed forth its glory on Pentecost 3,000 were saved and added to the church *by the Lord* (Acts 2:41).

*We have heard the joyful sound:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*

Truly, redemption's sweet song reflects Leviticus' background. We also come to realize that worship, devotion, homage and loyalty were salient themes in Old Testament days. What we offer to our Maker comes from "our own voluntary will" (Leviticus 1:3) and must be according to heaven's mandates. When mankind fails to worship in the beauty of holiness, we do not give God the glory due His name (I Chronicles 16:29). This can only result in alienating ourselves from our Creator. Such was the severe mistake of the sons of Aaron mentioned in the tenth stanza of Leviticus. Similar to Aaron's flippant attitude concerning the golden calf incident was the sinful action of Nadab and Abihu, who offered to God what they deemed best instead of doing what Jehovah commanded. Today we can see definite trends in the same direction of *will worship* (Colossians 2:18-23) rather than a humble spirit that desires the Father's will (James 4:15). Homage,

*in spirit and in truth* is all that heaven approves (John 4:24). We must offer worship that is according to Truth (John 17:17) and expressed in sincere devotion (Psalms 95:6-7).

*O the pure delight of a single hour  
That before Thy throne I spend;  
When I kneel in prayer and with Thee, O God,  
I commune as friend with Friend!*

Most Bible students would agree that 17:11 is the key verse in Leviticus. It is here that we learn that *the life of the flesh is in the blood*. We should all be abundantly grateful that the blood of Christ supersedes the blood of bulls and goats. Hebrews 9:22 makes it clear that without the powerful efficacy of Calvary's sacrifice we would be forever lost!

Our Savior was alone in Gethsemane (Matthew 26), He was mocked at Gabbatha (John 19) and vicariously died at Golgotha (Luke 23). Yet, by the power of the Holy Spirit, up from the grave He arose (Romans 1:4; 8:11) as the bands of death were burst asunder (Acts 2:24). The shadows of Leviticus became the splendor of New Testament fulfillment.

*When my love to Christ grows weak,  
When for deeper faith I seek,  
Hill of Calvary, I go  
To thy scenes of fear and woe.*

The superlative riches of the gospel age reflect the pathos of Leviticus and make us genuinely appreciative of God's eternal purpose. The mural of God's divine love flows from Genesis through Revelation and gives us reason to echo the joy of Revelation 19—*The Lord Omnipotent Reigneth!*

## **Worship**

In a most impressive setting of Holy Writ, our Redeemer stated in John 4:24:

*"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him  
must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

So many people believe that just any kind or type of worship will be acceptable unto God. This passage sets forth the homage that pleases Jehovah. For our expressions of adoration to be commended by our Maker, we must offer them reverently and in harmony with the Scriptures. To worship in *spirit* simply means to be spiritual or reverent as expressed in Psalms 89:7 and 95:6.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

These verses should cause all of us to be more attentive and respectful during assembly worship. Children who misbehave while the preaching of the gospel is set forth or the praises of God are being sung evidently have not been properly trained. If we are irreverent during the Lord's Supper, we "eat and drink damnation" to our souls (I Corinthians 11:29). We should, as Christians, be more spiritual in our public and private devotionals.

But Jesus taught us also to worship in truth. In John 17:17 He said: "Thy word is truth." Therefore, to worship in truth involves engaging in only those items of worship Christ has authorized for His church. Since Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:20-23) we must adhere to His directions in regard to worship in the church. We, in the church of Christ, do not count beads when we pray because the word of truth does not include this. We do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship because Christ has only authorized vocal music for His church (Colossians 3:16-17; I Corinthians 14:15). We do observe the memorial of the Lord's Supper each Sunday because Acts 20:7 so directs us.

Since followers of Jesus are to "walk by faith" and that faith comes by hearing the word of God (II Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17), we must obey the Scriptures if we worship in spirit and in truth.

The book of Leviticus demands proper worship, ardent devotion and absolute obedience. It is noteworthy that Jehovah has always demanded sincerity of purpose and a conscience void of offense (Acts 24:16). The dimension of homage has ever been of keen interest to our Maker. We must seek God with our whole heart as Jeremiah 29:13 proclaims. When "our heart is not in it" we are a reproach to heaven (Ezekiel 33:31).

## **The Law of Exclusion**

Far too many members of the church still ask the question: "What is wrong with it?" In putting "our approval on that

which is excellent" (Philippians 1:10), we should find biblical authority for our practice. I do not have to show someone what is wrong with drinking and dancing. Those who practice such are duty bound to show where the Bible *approves* of such behavior. This is an example of speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent!

We need to resurrect some of our old sermons on mechanical instruments of music and the errors of the Missionary Society because there is a lot of "fuzzy thinking" in our midst today in regard to authority in religion. No one can find Bible sanction for the use of an orchestra, or any part thereof, in the worship in Christ's church. The nine references to music in worship in the New Testament all refer to vocal music (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). Sometimes in an effort to offset this evident point, proponents of such innovations will say: "But the Bible does not say not to use a piano or an organ." Yes, *it does!* When we are told *what to do* that rules out anything else. As an example of this, when God told Nadab and Abihu what to offer, they sinned by offering something else (Leviticus 10:1-2). When you order a steak from a menu, that rules out chicken or ham! In fact, your exact order cancels all the rest of the menu in that category. The *Law of Exclusion* also rules out any other day for the Lord's supper except "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7) as well as any other elements than the bread and the fruit of the vine (Mark 14). We cannot put apple jelly on the bread to "aid our worship" nor can we substitute cake and ice cream for the proper elements of the Lord's table! To go beyond the doctrine of Christ is sin (II John 9) just as surely as falling short of his directives (James 4:17).

Suppose that you send your six-year-old son to the grocery store to purchase a pound of bacon. He returns in an hour with \$300 worth of goods. You question him concerning the matter and remind him that he was authorized to get only one specific item. To your utter amazement he replies: "But you did not tell me *not* to get everything else in the store." How foolish! Yes, his attitude is parallel to a lot of the thinking in the religious world—and lately some brethren seem to be reasoning along the same lines. Those who practice loose morals and liberal trends must give scriptural authority for such endeavors. It is not our duty to show what is wrong; it is incumbent upon them to affirm their actions with "thus saith the Lord!"

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).

There are some very challenging aspects of this principle that demand consistency upon the part of its devotees. Leviticus 10:1-3 clearly affirms this principle.

## **Day of Atonement**

The key chapter in Leviticus is the sixteenth. The famous "Day of Atonement" is the point of emphasis. This is the incident of *the Scapegoat*. On this occasion, once each year, the High Priest alone would enter the most holy place in the Tabernacle. He would offer for his own sins and also for the sins of the people. One animal would be sacrificed and the other—the Scapegoat—would be released into the wilderness indicating their sins had been taken away. This was the best they could do because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin *actually* (Hebrews 10:1-11). When the High Priest of the Levitical system placed his hands on the Scapegoat's head it was only symbolically, figuratively—in a metaphor—that their sins were taken away. In I Peter 1:18-19 we can see the beauty of Christ Jesus our Lord who as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, offered Himself to remove our iniquity. How thankful we are for this more glorious arrangement of New Testament Christianity. As one reads the book of Hebrews he can readily see the superior nature of the gospel system wherein Christ is the one and only High Priest who offered the perfect sacrifice—Himself—to forever cleanse us (Hebrews 7:25-28). Praise God for such tremendous love! Indeed, as Colossians 1:20 proclaims, Christ made peace by the blood of the Cross!

## **The Blood of Christ**

Some of the greatest passages in the Bible refer to the death of our Lord and the power of His shed blood. Notice several of these as we reflect upon the superiority of the Lamb of God in contrast with the scapegoat in Leviticus.

Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 1:4;  
Romans 5:9; I Peter 2:24; Philipians 3:9-11

In Hebrews 10:12 we learn that Christ made one sacrifice for sin forever and through the blood of the everlasting testament we can be drawn nearer, still nearer, to God (Hebrews 13:20; Matthew 26:28).

*O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to hide from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.*

Truly, Paul made it clear that Christ died in vain if we are still under the law of Moses because the Savior died that He might live in us. Therefore, we glory only in the Cross! Read Galatians 2:20-21 and 6:14.

### **Man Is a Creature of Choice**

Leviticus 1:3 makes it quite clear that each one of us has the ability "of our own voluntary will" to either serve God or Satan. Notice the following verses, all over the Bible, teaching this same basic truth.

Exodus 23:2; Deuteronomy 30:15; Joshua 24:15; John 7:17;  
Acts 13:46; Romans 11:22; Matthew 7:13-14; John 5:40;  
Matthew 23:37; Revelation 22:17

If we do not choose to open the door of our hearts and let the Lord in we shall have made a poor decision but the Savior will not knock the door down and force us to serve Him!

We must *come, take and learn* if we accept the invitation of Christ to bear the yoke of righteousness (Matthew 11:28-30).

### **The Royal Priesthood**

In the Old Testament only those who were Levites could be priests but in New Testament days *every* Christian is a priest unto God (Revelation 1:6-9). We are members of *the royal priesthood* (I Peter 2:9) and there is only one High Priest who is Christ Jesus (Hebrews 7:25-26). He is the one and only Mediator between men and God (I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1). We pray to the Father in the name of the Lord (John 16:24; Ephesians 5:20) and not through Mary or St. Jude, etc., as

Catholic doctrine teaches. We as Christians have rich privileges through prayer.

**Discuss:**

Revelation 4:1; 8:4-5; Hebrews 4:16;  
I Peter 3:10-12; James 5:16; I John 5:14

Colossians 3:16-17 magnifies these points.

**Be Ye Holy**

Leviticus 11:44 is the bulwark passage in the whole book. It is quoted to Christians in I Peter 1:16. God speaks through inspiration:

"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

We cannot glorify God until and unless we offer pure lives and constant loyalty. The following passages should be read and discussed and, then, put into daily practice by all of us.

Matthew 5:13-16; I John 2:15-17; Colossians 3:1-5;  
Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 4:20-24; Acts 4:13;

Let us strive to remember the thought of John 15:19 and I Peter 2:9-12.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What can we do to improve our worship unto God? What does *attitude* have to do with this subject? Does *gratitude* also directly relate to the subject of homage and devotion? In what ways could we better *prepare* to worship in spirit and in truth? Read Psalms 89:7; 95:6-7; 100; I Chronicles 16:23-29 and 29:10-13.
2. Ponder Leviticus 10:1-3 in regard to doing exactly what God tells us to do. Notice these verses also: Luke 6:46; John 2:5; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14.
3. Discuss the significance of John 1:29 as it relates to Leviticus 16. Why is New Testament Christianity superior to the sacrificial and priesthood system of the Old Testament arrangement?

# NUMBERS

The book of Numbers gains its *title* from the numbering of God's people who left Egypt headed toward the promised land of Canaan. In the first six chapters of this section of the Old Testament we learn that 603,550 men, aged 20 years and above, made the Exodus. Figuring a conservative addition of women and children, one could safely estimate two million as the population for those of Abraham's seed who made the trek through the wilderness. Sadly, the vast majority of that original number perished on the journey and many failed to enter Canaan "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Thousands fell due to the sins of immorality, ingratitude and idolatry (I Corinthians 10:1-12; Numbers 31).

## The Nazarite Vow

The Nazarite vow of Numbers 6 is an interesting example of how some chose to maintain a closer walk with God. Samson and John the Baptizer were Nazarites all their days. In Micah 2:11 and Amos 2:12 we can see how depraved Israel became prior to Babylonian and Assyrian captivity (722-606 B.C.) because they mocked the Nazarites and rejected the prophets. Basically, to take this vow simply meant that one pledged to live closer to God. It is probably the Nazarite vow Paul engaged in as Acts 21 unfolds. One of the most beautiful and poignant statements in the Bible is Numbers 6:24-26:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:  
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee,  
and be gracious unto thee:  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee,  
and give thee peace.



## Results of Disobedience

Had Israel's intention to live close to God been as genuine as God's love for His people the story of the sojourn in the wilderness would have been much brighter. In chapter 13, for instance, one can read an incredibly sad story of ten faithless men who came back from a task of 40 days duration with a report concerning Canaan. It was truly a land flowing with abundant provisions, but Israel was too weak to occupy the land. In other words, their verdict was a reflection upon Jehovah and His power. They were admitting that Satan's host towered above Heaven's will for Israel. Evidently they forgot the Red Sea, the Manna, the Passover—yes, every display of the Creator's dynamic love. Though two of the twelve men sent in to look over the promised land—Joshua and Caleb—had faith in God's promises, the bulk of Abraham's seed listened to the ten spineless men and the result was 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness of Sin. A journey of a few days eventuated in 40 years of going around in circles. That is what men always do when they disobey God!

Shortly after this heart-breaking incident, the people beg for "a captain who will take them back to Egypt." When men first want a captain it will not be long until they ask for a *King* (I Samuel 8). Seeds of apostasy begin in short steps on a long journey to Hell. It will be well to recall that *only Joshua and Caleb* of the original 603,550 men entered Canaan years later. There will always be a reward for loyalty and devotion for those who stand up for Truth (Romans 8:18; I John 5:4).

In Numbers 16 the tragic rebellion of Korah and his cohorts is set forth. In Jude, verse 11, in the next to the last New Testament book, we are reminded one last time about "the gainsaying of Korah." He opposed the authority of God vested in Moses, and for such insurrection he and his friends were swallowed alive as the very earth opened up and consumed them. Chapter 17 tells us of Jehovah's choice of the family of Aaron to serve as High Priests in the Levitical system. Aaron's rod that flowered was placed in the Ark of the Covenant as a memorial of this selection and divine arrangement.

In chapter twenty of this monumental book we read of the sin of Moses. For this indiscretion the valiant leader was forbidden to enter the promised land (Deuteronomy 34). This is but another example of God's absolute authority. Anarchy for

even a moment was not tolerated. When Moses did more than was commanded, or something other than what was exactly stated, he was guilty of sin. It is interesting to note that one reference calls his sin *unbelief* and another passage labels it *disobedience*. There is no difference between the two in Heaven's view (see Numbers 20:12 and Deuteronomy 32:51).

## **A Book of Sorrows**

The book of Numbers is a sad story of the lack of trust in God that caused Israel to wander aimlessly in the Wilderness of Sin. It would seem that 13:33 is the epitome of their problem: "And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." It is interesting to note that Joshua 2 mentions that the people inside Canaan were actually afraid of Israel so the inferiority complex mentioned in the preceding verse was uncalled for.

In many ways the main incident in Numbers was the sin of Moses. In Psalms 106:32-33 we have a divine commentary on this epochal event:

"They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

Truly, the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (James 1:20)! Compelled by the mighty hand of God (Exodus 3:19), Abraham's seed had been delivered from Egyptian bondage only to be enslaved by their own captivation of sin and shame.

A typical scene of sorrow in Numbers is found in chapter 21 in the incident of the fiery serpents. Because of murmuring and complaining against God (Philipplians 2:14), fiery serpents were sent among the people and many died. Admitting their iniquity and pleading for mercy, Israel was given an opportunity to be spared. Jehovah told Moses to make a serpent of brass, put it on a pole and cause the people to look upon it if they would be spared. In John 3 our Lord used this as a parallel to Christ lifted up on the cross. We as sinners must look at Him in obedient faith (Mark 16:16) if we would be saved!

Sadly, according to II Kings 18, we learn that the people kept the brazen serpent as an heirloom of idolatry. Years later

Hezekiah destroyed it with other objects of apostasy. That noble King cried: "Nehushtan—it is only a piece of brass!"

For passages on the shallow nature of idolatry please *read and discuss the following*:

Colossians 3:5

I John 5:21

I Kings 18:25-27

Psalms 135:15-18

Habakkuk 2:14-20

Romans 1:18—end of chapter

Acts 17:16

### **False Prophet, Balaam**

The last chapters focus upon a lingering narrative that deals with a false prophet, Balaam; an evil ruler, Balak; and God's chosen people who finally succumb to the doctrine of Balaam when his power to place a curse upon them had failed. When we compare Numbers 31 with Revelation 2 we find the serious nature of the false teaching Balaam did. He got the children of Israel to commit sin and this meant Jehovah would punish them. In Joshua 13:22 Balaam is referred to as a soothsayer and in Joshua 24:9-10 his nefarious schemes are mentioned. In Numbers 23:10 Balaam desired to die as a righteous man but his own wicked life prohibited his request. Numbers 32:23—an outstanding reminder—certainly had an application to Balaam:

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Perhaps the most remembered point in regard to Balaam is the incident recorded in Numbers 22:30 where his donkey was empowered by God to warn his master. Taking this matter out of the realm of controversy, however, is the New Testament, in II Peter 2:16, which documents the matter entirely. As the poet declares so we ardently believe:

*What the early Bible prophets wrote,*

*Christ and His apostles quote.*

*So trust no creed that trembles to recall*

*What has been penned by one and verified by all.*

In Numbers 24:17 is a passage that many Bible students believe is a prediction of Christ. For sheer beauty of expression it is excellent.

"I shall see him, but not now:  
I shall behold him, but not nigh:  
There shall come a Star out of Jacob,  
and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

Jude, verse 11, is another mention of Balaam's greed.

### **The Doctrine of Balaam**

In the book of Revelation we learn that God hated the doctrine of Balaam as it pervaded the lives of His people in both Old and New Testament days. What is the Scripture referring to? What did Balaam teach that was damnable? In Numbers 36 we see that he taught the people to engage in idolatry and immorality in the name of pagan gods and thus what Jehovah would not allow Balaam to do—curse Israel—God himself had to do, due to the shameful conduct Balaam encouraged Israel to engage in!

Balaam desired silver and gold for his services (Numbers 22:18) and Jude 11 and II Peter 2:15 remind us of the appeal of such mundane matters.

*Out of this life I am unable to take  
Things of silver and gold that I make,  
All that I cherish and all that I keep  
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.*

The love of money (I Timothy 6:10) has caused spiritual compromise in far too many people through the years!

### **Our Sins Will Find Us Out**

The poet powerfully wrote these words:

*You can fool the hapless public,  
You can be a subtle fraud,  
You can hide your little meanness,  
But you cannot fool God.*

The book of Numbers clearly informs us that we do indeed reap what we have sown. Study the following verses and then remember *Korah*, *Balaam*, and *Moses* in this section of the Old Testament.

Ecclesiastes 11:1

Hosea 8:7

Galatians 6:7-8

The children of Israel often made poor decisions that they lived to regret because their sins came back to haunt them. Someone wisely wrote:

"You can bury the past but you cannot  
keep the ghosts from walking."

### **The Sin of Pessimism**

God surely expects His devoted followers to lead lives of optimistic cheerfulness. Read and discuss these passages:

Hebrews 13:5-6  
Philippians 4:13  
Psalms 144:15  
Romans 8:31  
I Corinthians 15:57-58

When we allow Satan to talk us into an inferiority complex we forget I John 4:4:

"He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world."

Israel thought of the enemy as giants and of themselves as grasshoppers (Numbers 13). What a tragedy! Remember this statement:

Were it not for the optimist, the pessimist  
would never know how happy he was not!

If Christ loved us enough to leave heaven, come to earth and die for us, we must be important. How can we "love our neighbors as we love ourselves" if we have low esteem of self (Matthew 22:37-40)?

#### ***Study and discuss:***

John 3:16-17  
II Corinthians 5:14; 8:9  
I Corinthians 15:10

### **Limiting God**

The book of Numbers is a classic example of people living beneath their privileges. Truly, Israel provoked Jehovah and limited the Holy One of Israel (Psalms 78:41). With high-handed, deliberate, presumptuous sin (Numbers 15; Psalms 19:13) they alienated themselves from the Creator and blessings that should have been theirs (Isaiah 59:1-2). How sad to

realize that folk today do the same foolish things in rebellion to God. Discuss the following points:

(1) *A failure to pray properly:*

Psalms 66:18  
Luke 18:1  
James 4:1-3; 5:16  
Matthew 7:7-11  
I Thessalonians 5:17  
Philippians 4:5-6

(2) *A lack of Bible study:*

Psalms 119:9-11  
Hebrews 5:12-14  
Hosea 4:6  
II Timothy 2:15

(3) *Generous giving:*

Luke 6:38  
II Corinthians 8:5; 9:6-11  
Matthew 6:19-21

## **Review Points for Class Discussion**

1. Why is the sin of Moses called *disobedience* in one place and *lack of faith* elsewhere?

John 3:36  
Proverbs 7:2  
Acs 2:41  
Luke 7:29-30  
Hebrews 5:9  
John 8:24  
Luke 6:46

2. How did a lack of gratitude contribute to Israel's wandering in the wilderness?

I Corinthians 10:1-12  
Philippians 2:12-16  
I Thessalonians 5:16-18  
★Psalms 78:19-42

3. Notice the contrast between Moses and Christ in Hebrews, chapter three. Especially discuss 3:12, 15, 19.

4. *Discuss the vanity of mankind:*

Genesis 11 — "Let us make a name for ourselves"  
Numbers 14 — "Let us make us a captain"

**I Samuel 8 — "Give us a King"**

**Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 — Solomon's sorrow at the end!**

**5. Now read Matthew 6:33, John 6:68 and I Timothy 6:17.**

# DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy literally means "one more time." It is the Law restated, a summary or recapping of the other books of the Pentateuch. It is a very logical section of the Bible that sets forth the blessings and cursings of the Law of Moses (see chapter 27 especially). In the book of Deuteronomy one can read of God's promise, peace, provision and power. As one writer has aptly stated: "Obedience (the key thought of Deuteronomy) is the *call* of the past, the *duty* of the present and the *guarantee* of the future."

In the last chapter of Deuteronomy we read the sad news of Moses as he views Canaan from Pisgah's lofty crest but dies short of the promised land due to the sin recorded in Numbers 20. Buried somewhere known only to God (34:6), the valiant leader passes from the scene of duty. "Moses, my servant is dead" is truly one of the heart-breaking verses of the entire Bible (Joshua 1:2). Can there be any higher tribute than Deuteronomy 34:10?

"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face."

In this challenging book we learn that the motive for obedience is God's *goodness* while God's *word* is the standard of it. The incentive for obedience is God's *faithfulness* and the only alternative for obedience is God's *justice*! If we forsake Jehovah, or forget Him, or presume to exchange our will for God's demands we will come to a bitter end. But, as 30:15 tells us, we do have a choice:

"See I have set before thee this day: Life and good and death and evil."

We are warned, cogently, in 4:2 to carefully abide in the mandates of heaven—not adding to nor subtracting from—



the precise will of God. In fact, parents were told to emblazon the Word of the Lord upon the hearts and minds of their children so that the oracles of Jehovah would always be in remembrance wherever we go! And, one of the strongest sections of the entire Old Testament, 21:18, tells of the putting to death of the disobedient, rebellious son!

If there is one salient theme that saturates Deuteronomy it is the fact that God's word should be our constant guide and protection. Jehovah's patience with His unfaithful people is a tender touch of the sublime majesty of this closing book of Law. In fact, the familiar refrain of another thrilling verse—II Chronicles 7:14—serves as an apt commentary on the contents of Deuteronomy:

"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

A parallel is Deuteronomy 23:21 where the people were required to keep their promises to God or reap the sad dividends of disobedience. The favor of Heaven would, however, overshadow them, if they would only surrender to God. Notice the beauty of the following verses in Deuteronomy:

31:6 — "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

33:27 — "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms."

32:9-10 — "For the Lord's portion is his people. . . . He found him in a desert land. . . . He kept him as the apple of His eye."

When Israel failed it certainly was in spite of all that God had done! Chapter 28:47-48 pungently informs us of the dilemma sin produced—"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee. . . ."

## **New Testament Applications**

Several Deuteronomy passages hold tremendous background for New Testament usage. For instance, 19:15 sheds

light on Matthew 18:20, John 8:1-11 and I Timothy 5:19 in regard to the necessity of "two or three witnesses" being required to sustain an accusation. The sad scenes of the Cross are mentioned in Deuteronomy 21:23 and in a New Testament reference in Galatians 3:13—"Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Christ changed the curse into a blessing; he made the symbol of defeat a definite sign of victory and the representation of shame a shining memento of glory! In Deuteronomy 25:4 a practical provision for animals in the field—"Do not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn"—became a principle that demanded financial support for gospel preachers in I Corinthians 9.

But, by far, the outstanding New Testament usage of a passage from Deuteronomy is the pertinent application to Christ of 18:15 where Moses predicted "a prophet like unto me" whom God would raise up. Stephen in Acts 7 and Peter in Acts 3, in the first century, boldly stated that Christ was the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy! Those who fail to hearken to the Savior will be cut off from the favor of God (Acts 3:22-23).

In Deuteronomy 8:2-3 one can find the gist of the book laid out in vivid array. Notice carefully these well-chosen pronouncements given by Jehovah to a gainsaying generation:

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know: that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

Yet in the very face of all that God had done for them, we read this sad lament in Deuteronomy 9:24:

"Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."

Therefore, an arrangement called "blessing and cursing" came into existence (11:26-28). This later became a major ceremony to be conducted in the Valley of Shechem between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. This memorial reminded Israel of the value of obedience and the tragedy of turning from God

(see Deuteronomy 27, Joshua 8:30-35 and Joshua 24).

It is chapter 12:8 and 12:32 that forever underlines the problem Abraham's seed had as well as the remedy for their spiritual malady. The first passage warned them about the vanity and misguided notion of following their own ideas and verse 32 plainly demanded that Israel observe, without addition or subtraction, whatever God commanded. That still is an excellent formula for us to follow today!

In Deuteronomy we forever learn that refuge was provided by Jehovah and therefore He demanded righteousness. Since they were "the children of the Lord your God" (14:1) the reality of His sovereignty was ever before them. To live beneath the dignity and privilege of godliness was their rebuke. In 33:13-17 one can learn about "*the precious things of heaven*"—the rich provision and bounty of God's benevolent hand. Today, we in the sunlight age of the Gospel can list numerous blessings that come from the Almighty:

- (1) The Creator Himself.
- (2) The Christ.
- (3) His church.
- (4) Forgiveness.
- (5) The privilege of prayer.
- (6) Persecution that purifies us.
- (7) Fellowship with the saints.
- (8) Purpose in life.
- (9) Wisdom from above.
- (10) The hope of heaven.
- (11) The honor of serving the Lord.

May we never forget that *the eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms* (33:27). Moses missed the promised land, but if we follow Christ, our forerunner to heaven, there yet remains a rest for us (Hebrews 6:19; 9:24; 4:9). Deuteronomy draws us nearer to our Maker!

## **Major Lessons from Deuteronomy**

### ***Points for Discussion***

There are 80 references from this book in the New Testament and 30 direct quotes. In the Temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 our Lord quoted from this book to send the Devil on his way. When asked in Matthew 22 what the great commandment was, Jesus referred back to Deuteronomy 6:5

where men were told to love God with all their heart. This is a rich and fervent section of the Bible. Here are some of its powerful points:

1. We need to go beyond meditation and put into practice what we learn. Deuteronomy teaches *action!* Read James 1:21-22; Galatians 5:6. Notice Deuteronomy 1:6.
2. We must not go beyond what God reveals — 4:1-2.
3. Parents have tremendous responsibility — 6:1-7.
4. We reap what we sow! — 11:26-28.
5. It is folly to follow our own ideas — 12:8.
6. God's faithfulness versus man's unfaithfulness! — Romans 3:4.
7. Christ is coming! — Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22-23.
8. How sad to miss the promised land — Hebrews 3:12-19.
9. We cannot bribe God — 10:17; Galatians 6:7.
10. Do not offer God blemished gifts — Deuteronomy 17; I Peter 1:18-19.
11. Pessimism and fear hinder us — 1:26; I John 5:4.
12. *The Ten Commandments were not given to us* — Exodus 20:1-3; Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:2-3.
13. God will keep His promises — Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Genesis 18:25.
14. Do not listen to false prophets! — 13:1-5; 18:22.
15. Honor the silence of the Scriptures — Deuteronomy 17:3-4; Acts 15:24; Hebrews 1:5.
16. Remember the value of the Old Testament! — Luke 24:44; Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:6-11; Galatians 3:24.
17. Moses graciously prepared Joshua to take his place of leadership — 31:14 ff.
18. *Remember the power of God!* — 11:1-7; Romans 13:1; Daniel 4:25; Psalms 90:1-2.
19. God's providence and man's obedience — 8:11-20; Isaiah 6:8; Acts 9:6.
20. *God is our refuge and strength* — Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalms 46 (*read and discuss*).

### **Special Contexts for Study**

#### **A. 8:10-20**

Do not forget the blessings God pours out upon you. Always be grateful.

**B. 15:5**

Carefully obey the commands of Jehovah.

**C. 26:15-19**

Be God's holy people. Show your appreciation by doing heaven's will. Keep your promises unto God!

**D. 28:1-12**

Abundant blessings flow into your life from God.

**E. 29:26-27**

God is angry (Psalms 7:11) when we serve idols or allow anything to turn us away from our Maker!

**F. 32:35**

Vengeance belongs to God and we should allow Him to punish the wicked. We should not repay evil men with unkindness. Discuss Romans 12:17-21.

**G. 34:5-12**

The death of Moses is a sad moment in Old Testament history. He was a great and good man. Notice and discuss verses 10-12.

***What qualities made Moses a noble  
servant of Jehovah?***

***Discuss these Traits:***

Meekness  
Perseverance  
Unselfishness  
Compassion  
Loyalty  
Sincerity  
Sorrow for sin

## **Cities of Refuge**

In Deuteronomy 19 and Joshua 20 we have interesting background material that sheds light on an important matter. There are those who teach that Abraham's seed, the Jews, in a physical sense, have not yet received the land promise given in Genesis 15. However, as we shall study in Joshua, such a claim is totally false (Joshua 2:24; 23:14). But in Deuteronomy 19 and Joshua 20 we forever learn that the

land promise was fulfilled when Joshua led the people in 50 years of conquest in Canaan. God told Moses to instruct the people to add three cities of refuge to the three they already had once they occupied Canaan *in order to prove God had kept the promise and had given them the land!* Read Deuteronomy 19:7-9 and Joshua 20:1-8.

We today have Christ as our refuge, hope and forerunner to heaven (Hebrews 6:18-20). Those in Christ are now Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29).

# JOSHUA

One of the stalwart characters of the Bible—truly an unsung hero of Old Testament days—was Joshua. A valiant, courageous and successful leader was this man who picked up the mantle of Moses and delivered Israel into the Conquest of Canaan for 50 years of power, peace and prestige. Seldom has anyone ever lived up to the charge and promise of God so well. In Joshua 1:7 he was told by Jehovah:

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

As we study this 24 chapter book we are deeply impressed with the dedication and commitment of Joshua. He truly found a place for the Lord *first* in his affections (Psalms 27:4; 132:3-5; Matthew 6:22, 33). Perhaps the single most powerful human speech in the Old Testament is Joshua's farewell address in chapters 23 and 24. One would be hard pressed to find a more brilliant tribute to God and warning to man! Joshua—who had escorted Moses into the camp of Israel after God had given the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32), and Joshua—who had prevailed in the battle against the Amalekites, (Exodus 17) now will gallantly press through the walls of Jericho and conquer Canaan for God.

God proved to the seed of Abraham that Joshua was as worthy of leadership as Moses by duplicating the Red Sea incident and the saga of the burning bush (or holy ground). Read Joshua 4:14:

"On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life."

So effective was the work of Joshua that 2:24 tells us:

"And they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us."

The land promise, given to Abraham and his seed (in Genesis, chapters 12 and 15), which so many people today use as though it were future tense, was fulfilled when Joshua, by God's power, conquered Canaan. (Read 2:24, 21:43 and 23:14 of Joshua.)

The interesting drama of the spies, Rahab and the taking of Jericho illustrates the blend of God's providence, man's obedience and the part faith plays in the success of such an arrangement. In Hebrews 11:30 we have this divine comment upon the matter:

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days."

When men set themselves apart (3:5), God can use them.

In Joshua 7 we learn the solemnity and tragedy of sin and its rampaging influence. The army of Israel had run roughshod over all enemies until the little nation of Ai repelled them handily. Joshua knew that sin had entered the camp so he began to pray fervently. God told him to quit praying and purge sin out of the midst of Israel or victory would elude them. A man named Achan had grievously blundered in disobedience to God. Not until Achan and his family were put to death in the Valley of Achor did the army of Zion succeed. Years later, when Israel was on the verge of captivity, Hosea 2:15 challenged them by stating that "the Valley of Achor is our door of hope." Discipline, purity and righteousness were necessities for the host of Israel.

Sometimes Bible students seriously ponder the problem of all the wars and killing commanded by God in Old Testament days. How can this be harmonized with New Testament teachings on loving our enemies and non-retaliation found in Romans 12 and the Sermon on the Mount? One word—*Theocracy*—explains it. In Old Testament days Jehovah ruled Israel as a Theocracy, that is, a system of government where God ruled a nation in both a civil and spiritual way. Israel was Jehovah's nation, if you please. The purpose of the Old Testament was to preserve Abraham's seed (Genesis 22:18) so Christ could come (Galatians 3:16). This often



meant that physical enemies of the nation of Israel had to be defeated so that the spiritual promise of the Messiah might be preserved. In New Testament days, now that Christ has come, God's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36) and His devotees do not engage in carnal combat (II Corinthians 10:4).

In the isolated, uncontaminated, productive land of Canaan God's peculiar people prospered. Cities of refuge were arranged for those who shed blood (Genesis 9) innocently (see Joshua 20). It is noteworthy that Hebrews 6 tells us that we flee to Christ for refuge today!

Much controversy surrounds the incident in chapter 10 concerning *the sun standing still*. There is no question to Bible lovers in regard to the major point: God did intervene on behalf of His people on this occasion. Truly, "Jehovah fought for Israel." But what exactly did He do? Was the sun *silent* (hidden from view) so the heat would not tire the soldiers? Did the great hailstones—sent to rout the enemy—block it out so that Joshua's troops could have the advantage of darkness in their surprise attack? Did the sun shine longer than a normal day would allow? Was this just poetic language from the book of Jasher (see II Samuel 1:18; Psalms 46:10; Judges 5:19-21 and Habakkuk 3:1) to emphasize that the phenomenal power and providence of God won the battle for Israel (Joshua 10:14)? Most commentaries are divided on this matter, but let us never miss the major point—God was on Joshua's side! Romans 8:31 tells us that "if God be for us" that is all that counts.

In Joshua 22:5 we have the unanswerable argument for success in the sight of Heaven. Here are the characteristics of the individual blessed by God:

- (1) Take Diligent Heed
- (2) Do the Commandments
- (3) Keep the Law of Jehovah
- (4) Love Him
- (5) Walk in His Ways
- (6) Cleave unto Him
- (7) Serve Him with All Your Heart and Soul

At the age of 110 years, Joshua bids farewell to the nation he has led so well. In a powerful speech the great man instructs, reminds, challenges and warns Israel in the final two stanzas of this scintillating treatise. Those who have

carefully read Joshua 23 and 24 know that one of the greatest sermons ever preached on earth is contained therein. Here are the salient points from Joshua's lips:

- (1) God has brought you to this land.
- (2) You owe all you have and are to Him.
- (3) He has been patient with your failures.
- (4) You have not been as grateful as such blessings demand.
- (5) There is a divine purpose behind this blessing.
- (6) Do not forget your heritage.
- (7) When you turn from God captivity awaits you.
- (8) The desire to be like the nations will corrupt you.
- (9) Remember: God has kept every promise He made!
- (10) You cannot lightly serve Jehovah.
- (11) You must make a choice.
- (12) Idolatry has corrupted your relationship with God.
- (13) Jehovah is still a jealous God.
- (14) He must be Lord *of* all of not *at all*!

When they failed to be separate from the nations and when they intermarried with the idolatrous ones, bondage loomed on the horizon. Joshua's influence lived on after his death (24:31).

Finally, Joshua 24:32 tells us that the bones of Joseph, carried from Egypt to Canaan (Genesis 50:25), were buried in the promised land. What an act of faith by that ancient Patriarch!

### **A Genuine Life of Faith**

Joshua and Caleb were the only two who truly stood up for God back in Numbers 13. They trusted in the promises of Jehovah and in His power to deliver the promised land to Israel. The other ten who were with them in reporting to Moses and the people after forty days in Canaan did not believe that Israel could take the land. It is significant that out of the original 603,550 men who left Egypt heading toward the promised land only Joshua and Caleb of that number entered Canaan! Throughout the book of Joshua we marvel at the blessings bestowed upon people of deep trust in the Almighty. Conversely, those who depended upon their own strength met failure time and again (Zechariah 4:6; Proverbs 3:5-6). In Joshua 1:7 and 14:6 we learn of the rich provisions of spiritual strength to be found in these two great and loyal men of God. Caleb was given the mountain he

desired because "he fully followed the Lord God of Israel." Joshua was blessed beyond measure due to deep convictions and unabated zeal for righteousness.

***For Discussion and Meditation:***

1. How can our faith increase and our sojourn on earth be brighter as our faith in the Lord abounds?
2. Read II Corinthians 10:15; 5:7; 13:5; as well as Hebrews 11:6 and I John 5:4.

**Twelve Books of History**

From Joshua through Esther we scope the entire historical and chronological life of Abraham's seed. The five books of Law, Genesis through Deuteronomy, give us the promise of the Messiah, the departure from Egypt of God's special people toward the promised land, the priesthood system that attended God's law given through Moses, the wilderness wandering for 40 years due to rebellion and ingratitude as well as the system restated in Deuteronomy and a summary of God's providential care and just punishment upon the people because of sin. But in the next twelve books of history, beginning with Joshua, we learn of the difficult days Israel brought upon themselves from the end of Egyptian bondage through the sorrow and shame of Babylonian Captivity! In the conquest of Canaan, so powerfully administered by Joshua for 50 years, we see the guiding hand of a loving Creator and the skillful work of Joshua (Psalms 78:72). It is an overwhelming tribute to the life of obedience and humility portrayed by the man who took the place of Moses and bestowed upon Abraham's seed the magnificent blessings Jehovah alone could give. In the absolutely brilliant farewell speech of Joshua, in the last two chapters of this book, we see the devotion and commitment to duty in the heart of God's noble servant, Joshua.

***For Discussion and Meditation:***

1. Blend Joshua 1:7; 22:5 and 24:15 into a thought-provoking class discussion. See also Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21; John 14:15 and 15:14.

2. What qualities of Joshua do we all need in our lives?
3. Read 24:15 and discuss how choices we make affect our whole lives. See Romans 6:16-18.
4. What is the common trait in children who disobey parents and people who will not obey God? See II Timothy 3:2 and Romans 1:28-32.

### **Pivotal Statements and Chapters**

1. Genesis 22:18 — *Abraham's Seed Will Produce the Savior*
2. Exodus 3:10 — *Deliver God's People from Bondage*
3. Exodus 14:14 — *God Will Fight for Us!*
4. Numbers 14:4 — *Let's Get a Captain to Lead Us Back to Egypt*
5. Joshua 1:2 — *Moses Died Short of the Promised Land*
6. Joshua 24:15 — *Serve God and Not Idols of Man!*
7. Judges 17:6 — *Selfishness Brings on Bondage*
8. I Samuel 8 — *"Give Us a King" (see Ezekiel 20:32)*
9. I Kings 12:28 — *Jeroboam Divides Israel*
10. II Kings 17 — *Israel Goes into Assyrian Captivity*
11. II Chronicles 36 — *Judah Enters Babylonian Bondage*
12. Ezra 7:10 — *The Word of God Is Taught Again*
13. Nehemiah 4:6 — *Wall Rebuilt to Keep Abraham's Seed Safe So Christ Can Come!*
14. Esther 4:14 — *Evil Men Not Allowed to Destroy God's People*
15. Read Judges 2:11-19; Ezekiel 36:21-24 and Jeremiah 7:23-28, as well as Zechariah 7:11-14, for discussion concerning the difficulty God had in saving Israel and Judah due to their own indifference and wickedness.

## **Challenging Verses in Joshua**

### **1:2 — Moses Is Dead**

What a sad day in Israel to learn that a valiant leader had passed from the earthly scene. However, as great as the mediator of the Old Testament was, he was not indispensable. Joshua did a tremendous work in granting God's people 50 years of conquest. Often we are in despair when a great elder or fine gospel preacher dies. And we should lament godly people. However, only Christ is irreplaceable (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; I John 2:1-2).

### **2:24 — The Land Promise Was Fulfilled**

It is against the Bible for men today to teach that the Jews should still be looking forward to earthly acreage promised to them by God in Genesis 15 when Joshua 2:24; 9:24; 21:43 and 23:14 forever prove the promise was fulfilled in Joshua's day!

### **4:24 — Fear and Reverence for God**

This is necessary if we would surrender our will unto heavenly matters. Solomon tells us that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). When we fail to hold Jehovah in the deepest awe, we are foolish indeed. Read and discuss Psalms 89:7; Hebrews 12:28-29; Psalms 119:161.

### **Chapter 6 — God's Grace and the Walls of Jericho**

Even though Jehovah had given them the city of Jericho there were certain obedient actions on the part of Israel that were necessary to receiving the gift. Thirteen times they marched around the walls over a seven-day period. Then the priests blew the trumpets and the people shouted. In Hebrews 11:30 we learn that these acts of obedient faith caused the walls of Jericho to come down by the power of God. Grace, faith and obedience still work together (Galatians 5:6).

### **Chapter 7 — Sin in the Camp**

Achan disobeyed the Lord and brought sin into the camp of Israel that hindered progress and victory for God's people. Not even Joshua's fervent prayer could replace the necessity of purging evil so that victory could once again come to the

army of Israel. Today we must keep the church pure also.

***Read and discuss:***

Acts 5:1-14; I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3;  
Romans 16:17; Ephesians 4:20-24; 5:11 and  
Revelation 18:4-5.

**Chapter 8:11 — A Valley Between Right and Wrong**

There has always been a clear line of separation between truth and error, heaven and hell, God and Satan and right and wrong.

***Read, discuss and apply these verses:***

Matthew 6:24; 7:13-14; 12:30;  
Colossians 3:1-7; Romans 12:1-2;  
II Corinthians 5:17; James 4:4;  
Galatians 1:10; John 15:19; Luke 6:26

**Special Points to Consider**

**A. RAHAB AND THE ONE HOUSE OF SAFETY**

A woman listed in the genealogy of Christ is first introduced to us in chapter two of Joshua as a harlot. This has caused much discussion through the years by students of the Bible. Especially is this true when further mention of Rahab is found in the New Testament passages of Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. Does the Bible uphold her lifestyle when she is first introduced or does it simply record the truth, impartially, and then compliment the good deeds she performed? The Bible in no place and in no way agrees with or praises evil but it does tell the truth about people and their actions. In the account in James we have an unusual grouping of Abraham, a spiritual giant, and Rahab, a woman with a bad reputation. No one is so good he needs not obey God and no one is so bad he cannot. We all stand on level ground in our need for participating in the righteousness of God!

In 2:19 and 6:17 of Joshua we learn that the only house of safety in Jericho was Rahab's. Make application of Psalms 127:1; I Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:1-7 and Acts 4:12.

## **B. ONE MAN SHALL CHASE A THOUSAND**

In Joshua 23:10 we learn a great Bible principle that tells us that one person strongly devoted to God can defeat all odds and disadvantages:

“One man of you shall chase a thousand; for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.”

Against all odds we have an anchor that keeps our souls safe and secure in the Lord.

*Read and discuss these verses:*

Romans 8:31; Acts 5:29; Philipians 4:13;  
Deuteronomy 33:27; I Peter 5:7-9;  
Revelation 2:10

## **C. CHOOSE YE THIS DAY!**

The monumental utterance of the book of Joshua is the famous farewell declaration of the great man of God who gave 50 years of victory to Israel.

*For Discussion and Meditation:*

1. Why should we choose to obey Jehovah?
2. Why do some foolishly choose the world?
3. What can we do to help others make wiser decisions?
4. Read and discuss Galatians 6:7-10 and Numbers 32:23.
5. Never forget the power of Joshua 21:43 and 24:13-14.

# JUDGES AND RUTH

## Judges

Following the brilliant leadership of Moses and Joshua in the Wilderness, and later in the Conquest of Canaan, Bible students are introduced to an extremely weak section of Old Testament history known as the period of the Judges. Over three hundred years in this era of time finds Israel "doing that which was right in their own eyes" (17:6; 21:25) and thus forsaking the will of God. From Joshua's death—and his warning of the sad dividends of apostasy—until valiant Samuel would come upon the scene, Abraham's seed would definitely go downhill spiritually. One of the most graphic illustrations of the wages of sin found anywhere in the Bible is Judges 2:11-19. A careful reading of those verses defines the tragedy of men who forsake Jehovah and follow sensual, secular pursuits. Notice their points of weakness and shame:

- (1) Idolatry overwhelmed them.
- (2) They forsook God.
- (3) Ingratitude for Heaven's guidance.
- (4) Enemies, once subdued, now captivated them.
- (5) They would not hearken to leaders God appointed.
- (6) Israel refused to obey God's commands.
- (7) Their stubborn will prevailed.
- (8) Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery.

Most readers of *Judges* would agree that the one word best describing the actions of the people depicted therein would be the word "confusion." Everyone was "doing their own thing," as our modern parlance would state. Rebellion and spiritual anarchy would certainly sum up the scene. Sadly, God's will was pushed into the background as error gained the ascendancy. There was an extremely low spiritual thrust.



After Joshua's death Israel was oppressed by the Canaanites, Perizzites, Moabites, Midianites and Philistines. God raised up Judges to destroy the enemies, call Israel back to Jehovah and to rule over Abraham's seed (Genesis 22:18). But, due to idolatry, sensuality and debauchery, Israel declined spiritually and at the end of the rule of the Judges the scene in Israel was at an all-time low ebb! The names of those who served as Judges were:

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Othniel   | 9. Jair      |
| 2. Ehud      | 10. Jephthah |
| 3. Shamgar   | 11. Ibzan    |
| 4. Deborah   | 12. Abdon    |
| 5. Barak     | 13. Elon     |
| 6. Gideon    | 14. Samson   |
| 7. Abimelech | 15. Eli      |
| 8. Tola      | 16. Samuel   |

The pattern of life in these 350 years can easily be summed up in this fashion: Israel would decline spiritually; God would raise up a Judge; Israel would improve spiritually; the Judge would die and then Israel would go down again to the dregs of sin and shame. "Same song; 15 stanzas!" For instance, after Joshua's death a king of Mesopotamia, whose name meant "double-dyed wickedness," oppressed Israel for eight years. Jehovah placed Caleb's son-in-law, Othniel, as Judge over the people. Peace ensued for 40 years but when Othniel died Israel declined. The Moabites dominated God's people for 18 years until Ehud, a left-handed Judge, was appointed and he brought 80 years of conquest to Israel. The sad saga of moral and spiritual decline is the essence of the book of Judges.

There are some outstanding scenes in this section of Holy Scripture. Some of the memorable moments of the entire Bible grace its pages. Great characters like Gideon, Jephthah and Samson leave with us stories of valor, loyalty and courage never to be forgotten!

In chapter seven we begin the dramatic epoch of Gideon and the 300 men of God who defeated 135,000 Midianites. Originally, Gideon had 32,000 soldiers but this number was soon reduced to 10,000 and finally to 300 watchful men. In Judges 7:2 God made it very clear that the purpose of such "odds" (300 vs. 135,000) was to show Heaven's power in winning the battle so that Israel would never say:

"Mine own hand has saved me."

Truly, in the language of Psalms 124:8, we can say: "Our help is in the name of the Lord." The victory was made practical in Gideon's stalwart army as the 300 were divided into three groups of 100 with torches, jars and trumpets designed to put fear into the camp of the enemy. All but 15,000 Midianites were destroyed (8:10). Paradoxically, after telling his men that "only God will rule over you," Gideon took nearly \$15,000 worth of gold and fashioned a god to be worshipped! Gideon was called Jerubbaal—which literally means "referring to Baal." In Judges 8:33-34 we read of the spiritual adultery of Israel after Gideon's death as they bowed down to Baal.

Verse 34 laments: "And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side."

*Judges* forever impresses upon our minds that when a nation forsakes God its destiny is dark because human leadership is always limited. We also learn that a major danger in our life is self-sufficiency after victory. Also, one of our downfalls is equating numerical strength with spiritual power. Towering above these mundane considerations is the tragic truth of Old Testament history:

#### ***The Depths of Sin Offer No Real Happiness!***

In chapter nine we have the interesting parable of the bramble bush. Jotham sets forth the story of trees that were to anoint a king over them. They were refused by the olive tree, fig tree and the vine, but the bramble bush, represented by Abimelech, agreed to rule over them. Factually, Abimelech, one of Gideon's 70 sons, has all of his brethren slain except the youngest one—Jotham—and then rules for three years before being slain.

In chapters 10 and 11 we come to the challenging story of Jephthah and his daughter. Controversy surrounds this event and a careful study of the matter is essential. The major point of the story would certainly be: *Do Not Make Rash Vows!* This mighty warrior (11:1) promised to sacrifice unto the Lord whatsoever met him as he returned victoriously from battle. His daughter came out to greet him upon his arrival. Did Jephthah actually kill his offspring? I believe that a careful reading of Psalms 78:63, Matthew 19:12 and I Samuel 1:11-22 will show that Jephthah simply gave his daughter into the full service of God's will just as "Hannah

sacrificed her son to the Lord" as Samuel became a life-long servant of God!

The major character in the balance of the book of *Judges* is Samson. This powerful physical specimen finally learned to be valuable spiritually but it was a monumental struggle. A verse in the New Testament serves as a great commentary on the decline in Samson's life. I Corinthians 15:33 warns us that "evil companionships corrupt good morals." The influence of ungodly people and surroundings weakened this man so destined to greatness even before his birth.

The Philistines, bitter opponents of Israel, had oppressed God's people for 40 long years. A certain man named Manoah, of the tribe of Dan, and his wife were childless. An angel appears to the woman and foretells the birth of Samson who will be dedicated or "consecrated unto Jehovah" as a *Nazarite* (Numbers 6). But, as the lad grew up he failed to desire the spiritual values of his divine calling. In fact, he strongly desired a Philistine maiden for a wife (Judges 14:2). In this section of the book marvelous stories of Samson's physical prowess can be read. He kills a young lion with his bare hands and later a swarm of bees is seen in the carcass of the dead animal. Violating the Nazarite vow, Samson eats the honey (Numbers 6:6). One of the famous riddles of world literature comes forth from these events:

"Out of the eater came something to eat—  
out of the strong came something sweet."

When he is to marry the Philistine maiden, 30 Philistine youth get Samson's bride to tell the meaning of the riddle and the strong man slays the enemy. His wife is given to "the best man" and thus begins Samson's life-long battle against the Philistines. God uses him to overthrow this aggressive enemy nation of uncouth men. Thus, another chapter in the preservation of Abraham's seed is unveiled.

Samson destroyed the grain and orchards of Philistia and on one occasion was responsible for the death of 1,000 of their men. At Gaza he is in a certain house, surrounded by the Philistines. They watch all day and close the gates at night. Samson arose at midnight, tore the city gates from their hinges and carried them 38 miles to Hebron, to the top of a hill!

Chapter 16 is the famous setting of the familiar story of Samson and Delilah with the powerful ending where Samson

slew more in his death than in his lifetime. A careful reading of this section of Judges will teach us many practical lessons. The major point is that we truly reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7) and that our ultimate trust should be placed in God.

The last section of Judges—chapters 17 through 21—magnify the degrading nature of the Israelites existence as the people did what they wanted to do rather than fully submitting to God's way. In Jeremiah 10:23, Proverbs 14:12 and 21:2 we learn that we do greatly err when we strike out on our own. The sin of presumption not only became Adam and Eve's weakness but it plagued Israel during the days of the Judges. It continues as a major tool of Satan (Psalms 19:13).

Joshua had predicted, in his farewell address, the calamity awaiting a backsliding people (Joshua 23-24). As we come to the end of four centuries past Moses, the book of Judges depicts the spiritual sickness hovering over Abraham's descendants. It will not be long until they beg for an earthly ruler so that they can be like the nations about them (I Samuel 8). What a decline we can see from the towering strength of Israel in former days to the scene in Samuel's day when the people of God "did that which was right in their own eyes" (Deuteronomy 12:8).

## **Ruth**

One of the beauty spots of the Bible is the little cameo book of *Ruth*. It is an unusual—even quaint—treatise on the providence of God in using Gentile people in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5-6). So many students of the Bible are unaware of the tremendous import of Ruth's life upon the powerful character David, who was actually the grandson of this sweet and godly woman. For sheer romance and adventure, one would be pressed hard to find a nobler piece of literature.

This challenging masterpiece finds its setting in the days of the Judges during a time of famine. A family of Israel sojourned into the territory of Moab to escape famine at home. The man, Elimelech and his wife Naomi, with two sons, Mahlon and Chilion "continued there." The father died in that foreign land leaving Naomi with two sons who soon married two women of Moab whose names were Orpah and Ruth. Sadly, the two sons of Naomi also died and she was left alone

in a strange place. However, her daughters-in-law were gracious unto her. Word came from the land of Israel that "The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread" (1:6). Naomi immediately made plans to return to Judea. The two women of Moab started to accompany Naomi back to her homeland. Unselfishly, the older woman urged them to stay in Moab with their family. She expressed deep appreciation for the kindness of the two young women who had been so comforting to Naomi in the death of her husband and sons. Orpah did as her mother-in-law suggested, but Ruth would not depart. In one of the tender scenes of the Old Testament, this sterling character said to Naomi:

"Entreat me not to leave thee nor 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."

Naomi and Ruth journeyed to Bethlehem and the people of Naomi's hometown greeted her. She asked them to call her by the name of *Mara*, which meant "bitterness," due to the mournful passing of her loved ones while in Moab. However, her sorrow would turn to happiness due to the subsequent events in Ruth's life. Naomi would live to see much brighter days. Like Job, God would bless her "latter days more than the beginning" (Job 42:12).

Another brilliant character now enters upon the scene. His name is Boaz, who is a kinsman of Naomi's departed husband. In the Levitical system there was a marriage law whereby kinsmen were obligated to raise up seed on behalf of a dead relative. This arrangement is referred to as the Levirate Law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). *Levirate* literally means "husband's brother." In Leviticus 25:25 additional material pertaining to matters in the book of Ruth can be helpful to the Bible student. An excellent comment is found on page 789 of the *New Bible Dictionary*:

The book of Ruth shows that the custom extended farther than the husband's brother. Here an unnamed kinsman has the primary duty, and only when he refuses does Boaz marry Ruth. A further extension of the custom here is that it is Ruth, and not Naomi, who marries Boaz, presumably because Naomi was too old to bear a child. The child is called "a son to Naomi" (4:17).

One of the richest verses in Ruth is 2:12 where Boaz speaks

to Ruth—"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust."

An interesting ancient custom is found in chapter four when Boaz gets the right to marry Ruth by purchasing the land belonging to Naomi's family by marriage. This practice of casting one's shoe upon the acreage to denote ownership sheds some light upon the action of the Prodigal Son's father in Luke 15. According to Psalms 60:8 and Ruth 4:7-8, that familiar passage in Luke informs us that the Prodigal would own the land on which he stood. He would be an heir and not a slave!

As the poignant story of Ruth draws to a close we learn that Boaz and Ruth were blessed with a child because "the Lord gave her conception and she bare a son" (4:13). It is significant that a Gentile entered the Messianic lineage and became an important link in the Davidic chain. As II Samuel 7:12-14 tells us, Christ came out of the loins of David! See also Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7. The story of Ruth is a powerful episode in the unfolding literature that finally eventuated in the Redeemer. "Christ is coming" was the definitive message of the Old Testament.

## **Pertinent Lessons for Discussion**

### **I. JOSHUA'S GREAT INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION**

In Judges 2:7 we read words that truly pay tribute to a great man of God:

"And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel."

Sadly, after this, however, some 300 years of sorrow and shame entered the sojourn of God's people. Mediocre and even wicked rulers contributed mightily to the downfall of Abraham's seed. Not until Samuel came upon the scene did things measurably change for the better. The power of influence, for good or ill, cannot be overlooked.

***Read and discuss these verses:***

Hebrews 11:4

Matthew 5:13-16

II Corinthians 3:2  
Philippians 2:15-16  
Galatians 2:11-14  
I Corinthians 11:1

## II. THE SIN OF FORGETTING GOD'S GOODNESS

In II Peter 1:12, that great apostle told his brethren that he stirred up "their pure minds by way of remembrance." Though they knew the truth, he underlined it one more time lest they forget God's holy and blessed word! Over and over again in the book of Judges we see the tragedy of minds that forgot the rich blessings God had poured out upon Israel. In the stern rebuke of Judges 2:11-19 we read these words:

"They turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord, *but they did not so.*"

When we, today, overlook God as our source of blessing we seek in vain to live properly and honestly. A lack of appreciation for divine providence is the result of shallow minds.

### *Read and discuss:*

Psalms 116:1, 12; 8:3-4; 27:1  
Acts 14:17; 17:28-29  
James 1:17-22  
I Thessalonians 5:16-18

## III. PEER PRESSURE

Idolatry had become a way of life with so many of the people in the period of the Judges. It was the popular way to go in that ancient setting. God's people were bowing down to Baal and Ashtaroath, pagan deities from Jezebel's home of Tyre and Sidon. Though Jehovah had guided them safely from Egypt and had sustained them with manna from heaven, now Israel depended upon heathen idols to give them crops! Truly, how fickle and frail are human hearts. In 2:17 of Judges we read this stern rebuke:

"They went a whoring after other gods,  
and bowed themselves unto them."

The very first statement in the Ten Commandments forbade having any other gods since the Father above deserved full allegiance, homage and loyalty.

Today, idolatry of a different, yet definite and dangerous nature, exists in our midst.

***Read and discuss the following:***

I John 5:21  
Colossians 3:5  
Luke 12:15-21  
I Timothy 6:6-17  
Matthew 6:19-33

**IV. HUMAN PRIDE**

In 7:2 of Judges it becomes very clear that God does not want us to take glory unto ourselves for spiritual victories won! Pride is a deadly vice that can be destructive indeed. More people will be lost eternally because of human vanity than perhaps any other thing. We dare not overly esteem our own worth nor underestimate the power of our Creator.

***Read and discuss these verses:***

Micah 6:8  
Proverbs 16:18; 3:5-6  
James 4:10  
Luke 14:11  
Obadiah 3  
II Corinthians 3:5; 10:18  
Zechariah 4:6  
Galatians 6:14

Let us give God the glory for every victory won and never believe that we can conquer anything apart from the power of Christ (Philippians 4:13).

**V. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN "WE DO OUR OWN THING"?**

The sordid events chronicled in chapters 17-21 of Judges tell us the result when *everyone does that which is right in his own eyes* (17:6; 21:25).

We should never argue with God (Romans 9:20-22) but humbly submit to heaven's will (Romans 12:1-2). When we think we can guide our own steps we ought to read:

Jeremiah 10:23  
Deuteronomy 12:8  
Luke 9:23  
Revelation 22:14



Why would anyone desire to stumble and fall through his own human blunders when he could follow the Lord in successful ways? Do we sing these words honestly?

*Have Thine own way, Lord,  
Have Thine own way;  
Mold me and make me  
After Thy will,  
While I am yielded and still.*

***Questions for Discussion and Meditation:***

1. Why do so many fail spiritually?
2. What obstacles keep us from humbly obeying our Maker?
3. What attitudes produce stubborn rebellion?
4. How can parents train children to be obedient and not rebellious?
5. Why should children obey parents? Read Ephesians 6:1-4

**VI. PEOPLE GOD CAN USE**

We have read of great Bible characters who gave themselves heartily unto their Creator. Notice carefully this list and give at least one major trait that made them helpful and influential in matters that are divine and spiritual.

Noah  
Abraham  
Moses  
Joshua  
Gideon  
Naomi  
Ruth

*Now, discuss negative points concerning these:*

Cain  
Lot's wife  
Pharaoh  
Aaron  
Balaam  
Samson

What qualities should we have in order to be useful to the

cause of God? Read Romans 8:31-39 and Romans 12.

## **VII. BEWARE OF EVIL COMPANIONS**

The sad saga of Samson's spiritual decline should clearly warn us of the truth of I Corinthians 15:33:

"Evil companions corrupt good morals."

Samson's weakness in often surrounding himself with unspiritual associates reminds us of the tremendous impact, for good or bad, that our friends have upon us. Ahab and Jezebel brought out the worst in each other, as did Ananias and Sapphira. Read I Kings 21-22 and Acts 5:1-14. On the other hand, think of the great amount of good to be derived from the blending of lives in John's parents (Luke 1:6), the friendship between Paul and Timothy and the work of David and Jonathan.

### ***Read and Discuss:***

II Corinthians 6:14-7:1

I Thessalonians 5:22

Ephesians 5:11

II John 9-11

# I SAMUEL

The continual struggle to preserve Abraham's seed takes a new turn in the book of *I Samuel* as we are introduced to the period known as the *United Kingdom*. The 12 tribes of Israel will leave the age of the Judges to be ruled by Saul, David and Solomon, 40 years each, as Kings. But, the real man of emphasis, beginning with Samuel, is the *prophet* of God. He spoke for God to the people and often had to stand alone against popular desires of weak men. Prophets rebuked Kings (II Samuel 12; I Samuel 15:22) and the rulers admitted that such an arrangement was proper.

In I Samuel 3:1 we learn that "the word of God was precious in those days." It had become a rare and priceless item due to the spiritual decline in the days of the Judges. Fervor for things divine had decayed and the prophetic nature of Joshua's parting words rang through the Judean hills—

"If you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good" (Joshua 24:20).

In Psalms 78:60 we learn that "God forsook the Tabernacle at Shiloh" due to the ungodly, unconcerned attitude of Israel.

*I Samuel* does, however, have its bright spots. Samuel and his devoted mother, Hannah, are two of the rich characters that grace the pages of the book. Hannah's deep desire for a child—lest she be barren—and God's subsequent blessing of opening her womb and granting a son to her is one of the dearest stories in the Bible. The prayerful Hannah kept her promise and gave Samuel, her precious offspring, into Jehovah's service all his days! The famous words of I Samuel 3:9 portray the devotion of the young man:

"Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth."

Working under the careful guidance of the great priest Eli, Samuel proved to be much more valuable than the sons of Eli. They were wild and undisciplined due to their father's failure to train them properly (I Samuel 3:13). In fact, the shameful lives of those young men, as well as the inadequacy of Samuel's offspring, helped Satan to cause Israel to cry in chapters 8 and 12:

"Give us a King that we might be like  
the nations round about us."

After the death of Eli (4:18) the burden of leadership was squarely placed upon Samuel. In chapters 5-7 the Philistines oppress Israel by taking the ark of God away from its proper place and setting it up in the house of Dagon in Ashdod, a major city of Philistia. Due to God's displeasure, the people there were afflicted with boils much like the bubonic plague. Wherever the ark was moved among the Philistines pestilence followed for—

"The hand of God was very heavy there."

Eventually, Jehovah's providential care returned the ark to Israel. As a memorial to God's protection, Samuel erected a stone called *Ebenezer* saying:

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

As a wonderful tribute to Samuel's godly rule we read in 4:13:

"So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no  
more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord  
was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

It must have been with a broken heart that Samuel listened to the faithless cry of the children of Israel who begged for an earthly sovereign to compete with God for their allegiance. Jehovah made it clear that the people had ultimately rejected Him and not Samuel. In two passages in other places in the Old Testament, we learn exactly how Heaven felt about this juncture point in Israel's history:

**Psalms 106:15** — God granted them their request but  
sent leanness into their souls.

**Hosea 13:11** — He gave them a king in His anger  
and took him away in His wrath.

Saul, a towering, impressive man, was made the first King of Israel. At first his choice seemed wise but shortly Saul's

lack of spiritual strength became evident and the hope of Abraham's seed was destined to fall upon Samuel again. One of the truly sad refrains of all the Bible is I Samuel 12:23 where the grand old prophet laments to Saul and Israel:

"But God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. . ."

However, even the fervent prayer of a righteous man (James 5:16) could not overwhelm the wickedness of Saul! In chapters 13 and 15 the King presumptuously disobeys God in offering priestly service at Gilgal as well as failing to utterly destroy the Amalekites. His weak defense in 15:24 is the epitome of a life of compromise. Saul stated unto Samuel:

"I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."

Saul's desire for popularity reminds us of the salient words of Christ in Luke 6:26:

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you for so did their fathers unto the false prophets."

In I Samuel 26:21 the first king of Israel woefully admits that he erred exceedingly, played the fool and sinned to the hilt. His envious attitude toward David and his sad trek to the Witch of Endor would be two expressions of the futility of Saul's later life. His spiritual decline is one of the sad moments in Old Testament history. I personally believe he hardened his own heart toward God just as Pharaoh had (I Samuel 6:6-7). The poor performance level of Saul reflected upon the poor decision of the people to seek a king! Does not 12:25 sum up their dilemma?

"But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Because of Saul's shallow nature, a search was begun for his replacement. Against all odds, a young shepherd boy, David, son of Jesse, was appointed to the awesome task of leading the host of Israel. He was truly "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22) as inwardly the Judge of all could see his devotion and loyal love (I Samuel 16:7). The great faith and trust David had for God's power is graphically set forth in the monumental confrontation with the giant champion of the Philistines—Goliath! A man ten feet tall was no small barrier,

especially since he had put fear in the hearts of Israelites everywhere. How majestic and thrilling are the marvelous words that fell from David's lips as he courageously stood before Goliath (I Samuel 17:45):

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Under the authority, providence and protection of Jehovah, the giant was slain by David. An instant hero often has difficulty with applauding crowds and jealous associates. A favorite song of the people taunted Saul with pungent words:

"Saul has slain his thousands and  
David his ten thousands" (18:7).

Saul's envy led to constant plots to slay David and to drive a wedge between the young hero and his dearest friend, Jonathan, who was Saul's own son! The story of Jonathan's love for David and his unselfishness in putting the young hero above himself is one filled with pathos and tears. Years later, even after Jonathan's death, David makes provision for the care of the son of Jonathan (II Samuel 9), a crippled boy by the name of Mephibosheth. One verse that comes out of the obsession Saul had for the death of David contains the famous words of I Samuel 20:3:

"There is but a step between me and death."

Truly, Proverbs 14:30 defines what Saul's hatred of David produced in his own life:

"Envy is the rottenness of the bones."

To the contrary, one can rejoice to see David's gracious spirit toward his oppressor. Time and again the shepherd king shows a forgiving attitude and a longsuffering nature toward the very one who sought his life. When news finally came to David of Saul's demise, the son of Jesse was deeply grieved and begged the Israelites not to rejoice or even whisper the fact to the Philistines (II Samuel 1).

## **Major Points for Discussion**

### **A. HOW TO REMEMBER CONTENTS**

The first seven chapters of I Samuel still refer to the

period of the Judges. Eli and Samuel are the last two of the fifteen Judges that ruled Israel. Chapters eight through the end of the book will deal with the rule of Saul as the first king over the 12 Tribes. For forty years this man will demonstrate the folly of seeking human guidance rather than divine leadership. Saul declined, sadly, and the people suffered due to his weakness and poor decisions. The last few years of his life convey the frail nature of unspiritual monarchs and magnify the desperate need we have for heavenly insight. A nation that forgets God is always on the brink of certain disaster.

***Read and discuss the following passages:***

Psalms 127:1; 124:8

II Chronicles 7:14; 13:12; 26:5

Daniel 3:17 and 4:25

Acts 5:29

Romans 13:1

## **B. ELI, HANNAH AND SAMUEL**

These three outstanding people form the major characters in the first seven chapters of I Samuel. It is rare to find as godly and sincere folk in any era of time. Hannah is the epitome of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 whose "children rise up and call her blessed." She deeply desired and fervently prayed for a child. Should Jehovah bless her with a son, Hannah promised to give him to the service of God all the days of his life. Thus, Samuel, her long awaited offspring, becomes a brilliant servant in the spiritual realm. Her love for God and her child is truly a beauty spot in the Old Testament.

Eli made grievous blunders in the rearing of his own sons, but contributed mightily to the godliness of Samuel. His influence upon the young man helped build into Samuel a constant devotion to the work of the Lord.

***Read and discuss these verses:***

Proverbs 7:2; 12:7; 14:11

Ephesians 6:1-4

II Kings 20:1

I Samuel 3:9

### C. GIVE US A KING!

Recall that the people earlier wanted a captain to lead them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4) and you will see how apostasy grows. First a captain, later a king! How fickle is the heart of man and how frail is human faith. Once we turn away from divine guidance and seek the flimsy and uncertain leadership of men we are in trouble. The popularity craze of wanting to be like the world and desiring the acceptance of our fellows can often lead us into grievous blunders.

***Read carefully these verses:***

Luke 6:26

Galatians 1:10 and 4:16

Matthew 7:13-14

James 4:4

II Thessalonians 2:10-12

It is significant that God allowed them to make poor decisions. We are creatures of choice. Read carefully the example of James and John in Mark chapter ten for a parallel in the first century. They misunderstood the nature of Christ's kingdom and desired places of prestige. They did get near to the Lord in the Kingdom but it was not what they had in mind. James was slain (Acts 12) and John was banished to Patmos for "tribulation in the kingdom" (Revelation 1:9). Let us be careful what we ask for.

### D. THE SAD SAGA OF KING SAUL

Saul is an interesting person to study and carefully observe. His demise in the spiritual realm is a point of sorrow in Bible matters. He told the absolute truth in I Samuel 26:21. Notice his statement of sadness:

- (1) I have sinned
- (2) I have erred exceedingly
- (3) I have played the fool

His basic problem is summed up in 15:24:

"I feared the people and obeyed their voice."

Today we call that *peer pressure*. So many folk in our era of time lack the courage to stand strong for the Lord (Ephesians 6:10-17). The desire to be popular with the



crowd has been the downfall of thousands. It takes spiritual stamina to stand up for Jesus but the price we pay for truth and purity is worth it!

***Read and discuss:***

I Samuel 15:22  
Proverbs 23:23  
Jeremiah 9:3; 5:30-31  
I Kings 18:21; 22:14  
Acts 4:20; 26:18  
Colossians 2:1-10  
Hebrews 5:9  
Revelation 22:14

**E. GOD LOOKS UPON THE HEART**

In the selection of David to take Saul's place as earthly leader of Israel, we find the monumental utterance of I Samuel 16:7 to forever remind us that Jehovah looks upon things differently. We may emphasize the external while heaven views the inward part of man very closely. At this point in David's sincere and simple devotion, the young shepherd boy was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). Later, when David seriously transgressed the way of righteousness, he was not pleasing to Jehovah until deep repentance was reflected in the fervent prayer of Psalms 51. It is essential that we never allow ourselves to be deceived by outward, pompous, insincere professions of purity. We must be genuine, noble and obedient followers of the Lord.

***Read and discuss fully:***

Jeremiah 17:9  
Ezekiel 33:31  
Mark 7:7-13  
Psalms 19:14  
Psalms 139:1-24  
Titus 1:15  
Luke 6:46  
Matthew 7:21-28

**F. JONATHAN AND DAVID: The Value of Good Friends**

In chapters 14-21 of I Samuel we learn of the poignant, rich and unselfish friendship that existed between David

and Jonathan. This relationship is even more beautiful when we understand that Jonathan was Saul's son and that ruler despised David. Nevertheless, Jonathan was willing to endanger his own peace of mind and the good will of his father to be a true friend and comrade to David. This story is one of the finest illustrations of how precious good friends can be. Not very many people would endanger their own life, as did Jonathan for David, in order to maintain earthly ties or close bonds of concern and love.

The value of good friends cannot be too highly esteemed. One of earth's grandest joys surely is the care and loyalty of close friends. Are you a truly good friend to others? What are the qualities we rate so highly in this regard?

**Read and discuss:**

Proverbs 18:24

John 15:13-14

Mark 5:19

Remember Paul and Timothy, Christ and John the apostle. Also notice the words of the song: *What a Friend We Have In Jesus*.

## **G. THE WITCH OF ENDOR**

In chapter 28 of I Samuel we learn that Saul purged wizards and witches from Israel just as Leviticus 19:31 had commanded:

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God."

In Jeremiah 44, Jehovah rebuked Judah for making cakes for the Queen of heaven which error referred to idolatrous worship and paying homage to pagan deities such as astrology and the Zodiac today. In Acts 13, Elymas, the sorcerer, is called the child of the devil! Many passages, such as Ezekiel 21:22, Isaiah 8:20, II Kings 9:23, Deuteronomy 18:11 and Psalms 58:5, clearly warn us to stay away from fortune-tellers, witchcraft and the like. However, Saul willfully violated all of these teachings and his own decree (I Samuel 28:3) by resorting to "the witch of Endor." By this time, though tall in stature, Saul had become a spiritual pygmy due to disobedience and envy. A

study of I Samuel 28 is enlightening and very sad regarding human nature.

**Questions:**

- (1) Why should Christians put absolutely no trust in so-called magic?
- (2) Discuss Prayer and Providence and Faith in God.

## II SAMUEL

While the book of I Samuel deals mainly with the reign of Saul, it is the kingship of David that occupies center stage in *II Samuel*. If ever a piece of literature—secular or divine—emphasized that “we reap what we sow” it is this section of the Bible!

Jerusalem gains the ascendancy as the place of God’s dealings with Israel as the Jebusites are purged and the ancient city of Salem becomes the city of Daavid and the hub of Judah’s activities (II Samuel 5 and 6). In chapter six we have the demanding story of the sin and subsequent death of Uzzah who disobeyed explicit instructions in regard to transporting the Ark of the Covenant. God means *exactly* what He says and all modern liberals and skeptics need to beware. It will not do to plead for “liberty in Christ” to cover our lack of respect for the *commands of Christ*. (Read Galatians 5:13 and 6:2.)

The wonderful connection between David and the Messiah is found in II Samuel 7:12-14. Out of the loins of David—a key figure in the genealogy of the Lord—came a Savior. Notice the statement of Jesus in Matthew 22:42-46. How could the Jews magnify David and then consistently reject Christ, whom David prophetically called “Lord”?

The most famous scene in this part of the Bible is unfolded in chapters eleven and twelve. King David was supposed to be out in battle but instead he stayed at home. Being out of proper place, he left himself wide-open for sin. He looked in a lustful way upon Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, a valiant soldier who was away in battle. David coveted her, committed adultery with her and later had Uriah murdered. The intrigue that ties these sordid truths together displays the depths of sin and shame men and women often plunge into. Had Bath-

sheba been as modest as the Bible tells women to be (I Timothy 2; I Peter 3) perhaps David would not have looked upon her lustfully. However, each one paid the high cost of low living *as the sword never departed from their house* (12:10). Nathan, as God's mouth (prophet), plainly told David what a sinner he had been (12:7) and bread cast upon the water would return not many days later (Ecclesiastes 11:1). When we sow to the flesh we reap corruption (Galatians 6:8) and our sins have a way of finding their way out into the open view (Numbers 32:23). David had "sown to the wind" and would certainly "reap a whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). Enemies of God would now blaspheme the cause of heaven because a leader in Zion had fallen into grievous iniquity. It was the day many had waited for in mockery and derision (Lamentations 2:16). When the child born of the adulterous union died, David spoke of the innocence of babes and the longing of his heart in 12:23:

"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Sometimes critics of the Bible latch onto these dark moments in David's life and exclaim that the Bible has such sordid stories in it! Actually, the honest, impartial depiction of the heroes of the Bible proves the inspiration of the sacred text. The good Book only knows one perfect man and in straightforward journalism sets forth the weakness of Abraham, Jacob, David, Simon Peter and all the rest. The *impartial* nature of Bible teaching is an earmark of its own inspiration. God is no respecter of persons! (Romans 2:11).

The terrible impact of David's sins shattered his family as well as the nation of Israel. Ungodliness of every sort—even incest and rebellion among his children—paved the way for some of the truly shocking scenes of ancient history. Perhaps no lesson for parents is more indelibly fashioned than the never-to-be-forgotten decline and death of Absalom. In chapter 18:33 one can weep with David over the end of his insurrectionist boy, Absalom. Guilty of arrogance and anarchy, this handsome offspring of the King meets his doom while in the process of dethroning his own father. Word comes to David from a military leader that his enemy is dead. But the King knows that it is his beloved boy who has perished. In contrite agony a penitent King cries:

"O my son Absalom, my son,  
my son Absalom!  
Would God I had died for thee,  
O Absalom, my son, my son!"

How careful parents ought to be in regard to their influence. The tender heart of David is also beautifully set forth in Psalm 51 where he pours out his very soul in a powerful prayer seeking forgiveness. One would be wise to memorize such lines as these from that eloquent chapter:

"Have mercy upon me, O God... Cleanse me from my sin... Thou desirest truth in the inward parts... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation... O Lord, open Thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise."

David has seen enough men die to know that brief and uncertain, at best, are the moments we can claim as our very own. Is there a more memorable verse on this theme than II Samuel 14:14?

"For we must all die and are as water spilled upon the ground that can never be gathered again."

In chapter 24, verse one, we learn of a further transgression of David in numbering Israel. This was caused by Satan's influence (I Chronicles 21:1) in getting David to trust in numerical strength instead of God's mighty power (Psalms 66:7; Judges 7:2; Isaiah 58:11; Exodus 23:2; Psalms 124:8).

The closing refrain of II Samuel, however, ends on a high note of confidence in Jehovah and loyalty on David's part. Someone else plans to provide the sacrifice the King should offer to the Almighty. But David boldly says:

"I will not give unto the Lord  
that which costs me nothing."

All of us need desperately to recognize the principle that salvation and service are individual matters. *No one else can do the work God has marked for you or me!* David had his weak points, but he definitely knew that judgment is on an individual basis. Romans 14:12 lets us know for sure that each one of us shall give account of himself unto God!

## **MAJOR POINTS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **A. THE SIN OF UZZAH**

In Numbers 4:15 the people were told to touch no holy thing lest they die. In II Samuel 6 Uzzah disobeyed that clear and specific injunction and, for such action, he died! God means what He says and we cannot bribe our Maker. We will reap the sad dividends of such behavior. Many today reason that our attitude is all that counts and our actions are not nearly as important as the spirit we possess. The Bible tells us that true love results in absolute obedience and genuine allegiance to heavenly mandates.

#### ***Read and Discuss:***

Genesis 6:22

Galatians 5:13

I John 2:4 and 5:3

### **B. DAVID AND CHRIST**

In II Samuel 7:12-14 we learn that Christ came out of the loins of David and that God's power vested in Christ would be a sceptre of righteousness forever. In Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7 we also see the important role David holds in the divine plan of the Almighty. Ruth, in the lineage of David and Jesus, is another link in this spiritual arrangement. In the personal ministry of our Savior, men were asked by Christ to explain how they could revere David and not exalt the Redeemer since David referred to Him as Lord. Read Psalms 2, Matthew 22:41-46 and Psalms 110. A great number of Bible passages help us on this point.

#### ***Read the following:***

Genesis 49:10

Isaiah 9:6-7

Hebrews 1

### **C. PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF SIN**

The very first Psalm tells us of those who *walk* with sinners, then *stand* and finally *sit down* with error. David's life cogently illustrates that progression of iniquity. When we get comfortable with sin we are in bad

shape spiritually. Alexander Pope was indeed accurate:

We don't go down with a quick, hard fall,  
We just glide along;  
Little by little we lighten our load,  
Till we cannot tell right from wrong.

In Isaiah 5:20 the prophet tells us of the shameful attitude of Israel and Judah when they thought error was truth and darkness was light!

II Samuel 11:1 tells us that David was supposed to be out in battle, but instead he stayed at home. When we do not partake of God-given responsibilities we leave ourselves wide open for spiritual blunders. Had David attended to duty, the sordid tale of his sin with Bathsheba might never have been recorded. The progressive nature of sin is one of life's saddest stories. Notice the following Bible references on this dramatic point:

- (1) **Cain and Abel**, Genesis 4. Cain's disobedient attitude progressed to envy, selfishness, jealousy and murder. Read Galatians 5:19-21.
- (2) **Ahab and Jezebel**—I Kings 21-22.
- (3) **Ananias and Sapphira**—Acts 5:1-14.
- (4) **Jeremiah** 2:13 and 7:23-28.

*The remedy for the progressive nature of sin:*

I Thessalonians 5:22  
II Timothy 2:19  
Philippians 4:8

#### **D. SOWING AND REAPING**

David was sternly rebuked by Nathan, a very courageous prophet. The king honestly admitted his sin. However, David had already sown seeds of ruin into his life and the future of his family. *The sword never departed from his house* (II Samuel 12:10). The sons and daughters of David had sorrow upon sorrow and the king himself would face many moments of personal anguish due to his poor decisions and actions.

When the son born of the unwise union with Bathsheba died, the troubled heart of David exclaimed that the child could not return to him but that David would go to him



(II Samuel 12:23)! What a beautiful view, or glimpse, of heaven that verse is. See also:

Job 3:17  
Psalms 73:24  
Hebrews 11:16  
II Corinthians 5:1

David's story surely reminds us that we do reap what we sow.

***Read Carefully:***

Numbers 32:23  
Ecclesiastes 11:1  
Hosea 8:7  
Galatians 6:7-8

**E. INTERESTING VERSES**

1. **18:33** — David's deep love for an apostate son is seen in the heartbreaking refrain in this verse. Parents truly must guard their influence and prayerfully remember that no sorrow hurts so badly as the departure from God by our offspring. Daily should we seek for wisdom (James 1:5) in this tremendous responsibility!
2. **23:2** — This is one of the many Bible verses that tells us that the Scriptures contain not the *thoughts* of God but the *words* heaven intended for us to obey.

***Read and Discuss:***

Jeremiah 1:9  
Jude 17  
I Corinthians 2:13  
John 12:48  
I Thessalonians 2:13

3. **24:24** — **David's Sacrificial Spirit.** Giving is one of the major topics of the Bible. Some people are guilty of underestimating the basic nature and tremendous importance of this matter. Our financial contributions to the work of the Lord manifest our interest in divine matters. Someone has well stated:

Our collection is a reflection  
of the divine connection.

The reason so many get so little out of Christianity is

because they invest so little money, time, prayer and energy in that noble cause. Jesus makes this point exceedingly clear in Matthew 6:21:

"For where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also."

**Study and Discuss the Following Verses:**

Luke 6:38

Matthew 6:33

II Corinthians 8:5; 8:24; 9:6-15

Malachi 3:8-10

**Never forget the following challenge:**

**I Counted Dollars**

*I counted dollars while God counted crosses;  
I counted gains while He counted losses;  
I counted my wealth by the things gained in store,  
But He valued me by the scars I bore.  
  
I counted the honors and sought for ease;  
He wept while He counted the hours on my knees;  
And I never knew, until one day by a grave,  
How vain are these things that we spend a life to save.*

# **I AND II KINGS**

The books of the Kings, probably written by Jeremiah, have a rich appeal for friends of the Bible. Those who love Truth will be especially interested in the courageous stand taken by the prophets Elijah, Micaiah and Elisha. The weak conduct of Ahab and Jezebel, contrasted with the heroics of Hezekiah and Josiah, make a study of the kings themselves interesting and provocative. The sad story, however, surrounds the rapid decline of Solomon who started so humbly and ended so insipid, spiritually. The United Kingdom of 120 years featured the rise and fall of all three of its magistrates—Saul, David and Solomon. The various scenes and characters in these two books fashion some of the most colorful hues in the mural of Old Testament drama.

## **I Kings**

In I Kings 2:12 we are introduced to the major person in the first half of the book when we learn that, through Bathsheba's urgent request, Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father and his kingdom was established greatly. It is chapter three that tells the brilliant story we remember from our childhood. Most children blessed by godly parents heard the lesson of Solomon's humble request for wisdom (a heart of understanding) when we were young and sat at the feet of those who believed in the Bible absolutely. It pleased Jehovah greatly that Solomon desired above all else the ability to guide Israel properly. God granted him the request of his heart and immediately Solomon used this wisdom to make a decision in a very serious matter. The result of God's blessing can be read in I Kings 3:28:

"And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged and they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment."

In chapters 4-11 the topic of discussion in *I Kings* is the building of the Temple. This great undertaking involved seven years, 185,000 workers and millions of dollars. Gold, ivory and the cedars of Lebanon were important features of the building itself. It might be well for us to remember that Stephen clearly taught in Acts 7:48-50 that "God does not dwell in temples made with hands" lest we try to use Solomon's expenditures to condone ornate cathedrals for our day. It is clear from I Corinthians 3 and 6 (both chapters) that individual Christians, as well as faithful congregations, make up God's temple in New Testament days. We can even read in I Kings 8:27-39 that heaven was God's dwelling back in Old Testament days! Notice verse 27:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"

In chapter 10, verse one, we find fascinating words that Jesus refers to in Matthew 12:42 when he made it quite clear that he was greater than Solomon. I Kings 10:1 states:

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions!"

After careful scrutiny of Solomon's wealth, power, riches and prestige she admitted that "the half had never been told" as to the tremendous influence of the favored King! Sadly, though, when the eleventh chapter is unfolded we find that "Solomon loved many strange (foreign) women" who turned his heart after their gods and away from Jehovah. So serious was this apostasy that we can read in I Kings 11:9-11 that *God was angry with Solomon and would rend the kingdom from him!*

In I Kings 12 we come to a truly pivotal point in Old Testament history. *The United Kingdom* gives way to over three centuries of *The Divided Kingdom* as Solomon's spiritual weakness gives an evil man named Jeroboam opportunity to divide Israel. In 12:28 we find words that ring in our ears. Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, said: "It is too much to go up to Jerusalem." In other words, this divider of Abraham's

seed was proclaiming:

"We have obeyed God long enough."

He set up altars at Dan and Bethel and by-passed divinely prescribed arrangements. In later years, when anyone sinned grievously, it was stated that "they walked in the way of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin." This proverbial statement can be found over twenty times!

Ten of the twelve tribes will form the Northern empire of Israel with headquarters eventually established in Samaria. The two remaining tribes of Benjamin and Judah will form the Southern Kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as their chief city. For over 300 years this separation would exist. In II Kings 17 we learn that Israel went into Assyrian Captivity (in 722 B.C.) while II Chronicles 36 informs us of Babylonian bondage for Judah in 586 B.C.

The main difference in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms was the fact that at least a few of Judah's kings were good. The corrupt nature of such rulers in Israel as Jeroboam and Ahab caused the people to decline rapidly.

Had it not been for the great work of God's prophets, the story of this era of time would have been bleak indeed. Coming upon the scene at a most demanding moment were bold men like Elijah and Micaiah. The confrontation between the prophets of Baal—introduced into Israel by the ungodly Jezebel—and Elijah, on Mount Carmel, is truly one of the grandest scenes of Old Testament history. The man of God taunted the ambassadors of Baal when no one came to their aid. But Elijah did not call upon Jehovah in vain. The absolute sovereignty of Heaven was clearly shown on that occasion. The immortal words of I Kings 18:21 forever remind us that God demands that we get off the fence and take a definite stand in spiritual matters:

"How long halt ye between two opinions?  
If the Lord be God, then follow Him."

We cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We are either for God or against Him (Matthew 12:30). As Amos 5:15 pointedly set forth, so must our allegiance be:

"Hate the evil and love the good."

The shallow lives of Ahab and Jezebel can be clearly seen in the closing section of *I Kings*. First of all, they had a definite

dislike for God's messengers, the prophets. They counted Elijah and Micalah as enemies. Secondly, these evil monarchs were covetous, greedy and without mercy, as the event concerning Naboth's vineyard proves (chapter 21). In the third place, and this is the most devastating one, they did not care to seek God's will on any matter. This proved to be the fatal blow as it produced Ahab's death. Going against the clear words of Micalah, the spineless Ahab goes against Ramoth-Gilead in battle. He disguises himself in the garb of a common soldier and remains in the rear of the battle. Nevertheless, an accidental, aimless weapon pierces his body and the dogs by the pool of Samaria lick up blood—royal blood—the blood of a king who thought he could disobey God and still prosper. But God is not mocked!

There is one basic thread that runs so true throughout *I Kings*. It is the same old story: God punishes sin; He rewards obedience. For instance, in chapter 13 we read of the young prophet who obeyed Jehovah in rebuking Jeroboam, but then disobeyed by being tricked by an old man who *claimed* to be God's servant. When we fail to implicitly "trust and obey," we do greatly err! In *I Kings* 22:14 we find the marvelous attitude of Micalah, Jehovah's spokesman. His words remind us of the proper attitude:

"As the Lord liveth and speaketh  
unto me, that will I say."

In spite of the threat of the King and the lies of the men of Ahab's court, the prophet stood firm and defied popular acclaim. This is a lesson we all need to learn as we develop more spiritual backbone in our war against Satan and sin!

## **II Kings**

The second book of *Kings* takes us through the period of the Divided Kingdom all the way down to Babylonian Captivity. The exciting exploits of Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah and Josiah grace the pages of this eloquent treatise. Idolatry and compromise bring about the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria. In spite of timely work against paganism and indifference by Hezekiah and Josiah, even Judah will finally be destroyed.

The wonderful work of Elijah will be brought to fruition as that grand old prophet is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind

(2:11). Like Enoch of old (Genesis 5) he did not see death. After the work of Elijah another great prophet comes upon the scene to do God's will. Elisha, who desired "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit (2:9), did outstanding work for Jehovah. Especially in the story of Naaman the leper, do we find an interesting narrative. This story in II Kings 5 proves that God was interested in Gentiles as well as Jews (II Kings 16:6) in ancient days. In fact, Jesus refers to this point in Luke 4:27 by saying:

"And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

In this story we see the important influence of a little maiden of Israel who worked for Naaman's wife. She caused her master, Naaman, to make a journey to Israel to Elisha's house that Naaman might be healed of his dreaded disease of leprosy. However, the simple nature of God's commands did not agree with Naaman's preconceived ideas. "Behold I thought" was the leper's exclamation as he went away in a rage *still uncleansed!* Many people today often show disregard for "the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Corinthians 11:3) while they walk away *unsaved!* Not until Naaman actually obeyed the exact command of the prophet was his problem solved. Human arguments never win out over divine mandates.

In II Kings 7:9 we have a verse that tells us to never be selfish with blessings that ought to be shared with others. "We are not doing right" is a good theme song for any of us when we are stingy or guilty of hoarding good things. Especially is this true when we keep the glad tidings of the gospel from a lost and dying world.

In chapter nine of *II Kings* we find the gruesome details of Jezebel's death. Such an evil person finally reaped what she had sown (Galatians 6:8). Under the chariot of Jehu, she was crushed to death. Only her feet, skull and the palms of her hands were left for burial. Jezebel was such a symbol of rampant sin that her name is attached to ungodliness in Revelation 2:20!

In II Kings 12:4 we learn that giving unto God in Old Testament days did involve the heart. It is wrong to refer to the Law of Moses as "just a legal code." Not only did the people abide by the rules of tithing, they also had the privilege of bringing to the Lord "all the money that cometh into any

man's heart." Under the rich provisions of Christianity, we are to cheerfully purpose to be liberal givers to the cause of Jesus (II Corinthians 8:5 and 9:6-7).

A powerful king in Judah was Hezekiah. He was especially effective in ridding the Southern Kingdom of idolatry. In II Kings 18 he even destroyed the brazen serpent Moses had erected (Numbers 21) which the Jews had preserved for centuries and were, by Hezekiah's day, using as an object of idolatry. *Nehustan*—it is only a piece of brass—proves how shallow paganism can be! But II Kings 19:30 shows us the real dimension of spiritual strength—"take root downward and bear fruit upward." Idolatry within and the oppression of the Assyrians without, make Hezekiah's rule a serious challenge over Judah. However, God intervened by slaying 185,000 of the enemy in one night (19:35).

The great prophet Isaiah steps to the forefront in chapter twenty. He powerfully warns Hezekiah:

"Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live."

Every parent needs to be reminded of such responsibility for "except the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it" (Psalms 127:1). Hezekiah naturally did not want to die, so he begged for an extension of time for his life. God granted the request and the king got fifteen more years which he spent unwisely. The Bible often stresses that it is not how *long* we live but how *well* we live that really counts. To be honest, Hezekiah even helped Babylon to covet the treasures of Jerusalem and the Temple by showing the ruler the precious vessels used in the worship of Jehovah. In Isaiah, chapters 35-40, we can find parallel passages. One of the most beautiful is Isaiah 38:5 where God mentions that He heard Hezekiah's prayer and had seen his tears. Heaven does see and care (I Peter 5:7).

There is a vivid contrast in the last chapters of *II Kings* between an atrociously wicked ruler named Manasseh and the good king, Josiah. The evil monarch even offered children in the fire as sacrifice, while Josiah put an end to such shameful practices. For most of his life Manasseh hated God's word, while Josiah, in a spiritual revival, restored the reading of God's law that had been forsaken, violated and forgotten. It is true that, very late in life, Manasseh repented of his rebellion against divine authority but it was too late to



offset much of his influence. Sadly, we learn that his son, Amon, followed the evil influence of Manasseh's life rather than the latter commitment. II Kings 21:21-22 tells us that Amon "served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: and he forsook the Lord God of his fathers and walked not in the way of the Lord." Too many parents forget that we are building today the spiritual house our children will live in tomorrow. The little bit of good in Manasseh's life could not overwhelm the multitude of evil he engaged in. The poet was so very correct:

*I saw tomorrow look at me  
From little children's eyes  
And thought how careful I should be  
If I were really wise.*

Josiah enters the throne room of Judah with a monumental challenge before him. Idolatry must be purged and divine worship must take its place. A book containing God's will for Israel is found in the Temple. Overlooked for years had been the marvelous, eternal message designed to keep Abraham's seed close to the heart of God. As Psalms 119:11 brilliantly stated, so Josiah begins to emphasize:

*"Thy word have I hid in mine heart  
that I might not sin against Thee."*

In II Kings 22:13 we find that God's wrath was heavy against Judah because:

*"Our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."*

The passover had not been kept for years, but now the Law was honored. Sins were confessed. A revival of spiritual interest was set in motion. According to II Kings 23:24-25, Josiah even cast all the sorcerers, witches, wizards and idols out of the land. God's word, in complimenting the courageous king, said:

*"And like him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."*

The history of Judah would have been brighter had Josiah lived longer. But, in the region of Megiddo, the young king

was slain in battle. Judah lamented his passing. The noticeable decline in the Southern Kingdom's spiritual fervor sadly followed. Babylonian captivity was just around the corner for people so easily swayed to return to idolatry.

## **Interesting Points**

### **A. SOLOMON**

One of the rare characters of the Bible is Solomon, the last ruler in the United Kingdom of Israel. His spiritual decline, and the lack of good judgment by his son, helped to divide the twelve tribes and bring on three centuries of conflict and chaos. In Nehemiah 13 we learn that Solomon married *many outlandish women*. This abrupt statement is just another example of his folly. In Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 he admitted that his materialistic way of life was "a striving after the wind" and had resulted in vanity and vexation! He had begun so beautifully as a seeker after wisdom (1 Kings 3) but deteriorated due to arrogance, love of money and pitiful decisions. By the end of his days, God's people were in bad shape due to his sorry leadership. His closing words, inspired by God, clearly remind all of us to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The poet wisely wrote:

*Out of this life I'm unable to take  
Things of silver and gold that I make;  
All that I cherish and all that I keep,  
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.*

### **Questions:**

- (1) Why do we put so much emphasis upon physical and secular matters?
- (2) Why is it so hard to be spiritually minded?
- (3) Why do *uncertain riches* tower above definite blessings from God in our thinking?

### ***Read and discuss these passages:***

1 Timothy 6:6-17  
Ecclesiastes 2:1-11  
Luke 12:15-21  
Psalms 37:25  
Matthew 6:19-34

## B. THE HEART-SEARCHER

No verse is more eloquent and powerful than I Kings 8:39 that tells us these sobering thoughts:

- (1) God rules in the affairs of men.
- (2) He has the power to forgive our sins.
- (3) He knows our very inward thoughts.
- (4) We should always deeply revere our Maker.

Many passages tell us that God knows our thoughts, motives, attitudes and words. We cannot escape His honest scrutiny, nor should we ever try!

### *Read and discuss:*

Psalms 139  
Proverbs 15:3  
Hebrews 4:13  
Acts 1:24

## C. THE POWER OF OUR INFLUENCE

Over twenty times in the Old Testament Jeroboam is referred to as an ungodly influence upon the people of God. *He made Israel to sin*, becomes a proverbial statement. What a reputation! Our influence, for either good or bad, lives on also, beyond our years. In Hebrews 11:4 we learn that a righteous man, though long dead, continued to be a reminder of the value of proper influence. In chapter 14 of *I Kings* we have the haunting refrain:

"What shall become of the child?"

The child spoken of was Jeroboam's son and the answer was that he would die and be the only one of Jeroboam's seed that had any good in him! In Luke 1:66, virtually the same question is asked concerning the son of godly parents and the answer was that John the Immerser would be a burning and shining light for God (John 5:35). Parents in love with God and truth make a tremendous difference! In II Kings 20:1 a great prophet told a brilliant king:

"Set your house in order for you shall die and not live."

It is imperative that we guard our influence carefully and never engage in matters that are doubtful or harmful lest we lose our own souls and hinder others who may be looking to us for leadership and example. Jeroboam and Jezebel are tragic illustrations of ungodly influences upon society!

### ***Read and discuss:***

Romans 12:1-9  
Ephesians 4:17-24  
II Corinthians 3:2  
I Corinthians 11:1

#### **D. WHY CAPTIVITY?**

In chapter seventeen, verses 7-23, we clearly see why Israel and Judah went into Assyrian and Babylonian bondage for many years. Notice the points definitely set forth for such calamity.

1. They sinned against God.
2. They walked in the ways of heathen.
3. They tried to hide their evil from Heaven.
4. They engaged in open idolatry.
5. They provoked the Lord to anger.
6. They hardened their hearts.
7. They would not listen to the Prophets.
8. They became exceedingly vain.
9. They offered human sacrifices.
10. They followed witchcraft.
11. They kept not God's commandments.
12. They walked in the way of Jeroboam.

Yes, the exceeding sinfulness of sin overwhelmed them. Read Romans 7:13-14; Hebrews 3:13 and II Kings 17:21.

#### ***Questions for Discussion:***

- (1) Why were God's people so ungrateful toward the rich provisions heaven bestowed upon them?
- (2) Why do we today sin so openly against our Creator and fail to appreciate the beauty of Christianity?
- (3) What can we do to show our appreciation for "all spiritual blessings in Christ," as Ephesians 1:3 states?

## **The Pleasures of Sin**

One of the most expressive verses in the Bible is Romans 6:21, which reads: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." This thought emphasizes the utter futility of the wages of sin. To be sure, even the Bible mentions the momentary thrill of sin. THERE IS PLEASURE IN SIN (Hebrews 11:25), but only "for a season." The Devil causes sin to have a certain allure, but those who nibble at the bait find only fleeting glimpses of true living—even in the present time! Friend of mine, the pleasures of sin are deceptive, temporary, high-priced and eternally a poor bargain. Some have realized too late the high cost of low living! The pleasures of sin are just not worth it. Belshazzar's revelry was abruptly ended with a stern decree from God Almighty: "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Daniel 5). The wages of sin are very high. The pleasure of sin is later changed into remorse, corruption and heartache. On the other hand, the incomparable joy in serving Christ gains new beauty with every passing day. It pays to serve Jesus. Now—and in the life to come. Do not be detoured from this glorious path by the pleasures of sin!

Read the vivid contrast between the goodness of Josiah and the wickedness of Manasseh in II Kings 23:21-28 for a classic section of the Bible in this regard.

### ***Read and discuss:***

Colossians, chapter three

Galatians, chapter five

I Thessalonians 5:12-23

Amos 5:15

Romans 12:9

# I AND II CHRONICLES

These two books are considered difficult by many, and certainly unusual by most students of the Bible. Although page after page contain genealogy lists for land ownership purposes, one can also find some of the most dramatic and exciting stories in this section of the Old Testament.

## I Chronicles

In I Chronicles 9:1 we find the gist of the preceding eight chapters:

"So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression."

The major purpose of all these land records appears to be the necessity of those who returned from captivity being able to relocate in Canaan after seventy years of bondage in Babylon. An example of such procedure can be found in Jeremiah 32, where the prophet secures the field of his kinsman, Hanameel, and has the purchase arrangements clearly documented for future use. Incidentally, many scholars believe Jeremiah is the author of *Chronicles*.

We read interesting words of commendation in 4:9-10 and 5:18-20 concerning Jabez and the offspring of Reuben who were valiant men *who trusted God!* Heaven always blesses *loyalty*. However, Jehovah later severely punished those once called *valiant* because of spiritual adultery. We must maintain righteousness and never rest upon past laurels (5:25-26).

In chapter 10:4-14 of *I Chronicles* we read of the death of King Saul and of the grave mistakes he made. The three major blunders were:

1. The Presumptuous Sin at Gilgal — I Samuel 13
2. Open Disobedience to God's Commands — I Samuel 15
3. Consorting with the Witch of Endor — I Samuel 28

What a vivid contrast the Bible reader finds between 10:14-15 and 14:16-17 in regard to Saul and David. In chapter ten Saul is overthrown because "he kept not the word of God... and inquired not of the Lord." Conversely, in chapter 14, "David therefore did as God commanded him... and the fame of David went out into all lands and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations." This brings to mind the two most brilliant verses in *II Chronicles*:

"O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper" [13:12].

and

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" [7:14].

Those two verses alone make *Chronicles* a rich storehouse of divine knowledge. However, there is much more.

Once again, in I Chronicles 13:9-10, we learn the value of absolute commitment to God's holy Word. Uzzah's fatal mistake of disobedience forever tells us that Jehovah means *exactly* what He says! We do not have the authority to "go beyond the things that are written" (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; II John 9; I Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18-19).

In chapter 16:7-36 all servants of God can rejoice because of David's beautiful psalm of worship. Perhaps the richness of verse 29 is the high crescendo mark:

"Give unto the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Truly, this marvelous thought reminds us of the great truth Jesus uttered in John 4:24 when the Savior told the Samaritan that acceptable worship involves "spirit and truth." Our attitude must be right and the items we engage in must be scripturally correct, or we worship in vain (Mark 7:7-13). Another classic utterance on worship is found in I Chronicles 29:10-13 where "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation." Notice the depth of expression from the shepherd

boy who is now king:

"Thine, O Lord is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty...O Lord and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee and thou reignest above all...Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name."

One of the great prayers of the Bible is from David in I Chronicles 17:16-27. The powerful petition to Heaven contains these pertinent points:

- (1) David's Humility
- (2) God's Greatness and Fairness
- (3) How Wonderful to be God's Servant!
- (4) The Unique Nature of Jehovah
- (5) The Protection God Grants His Children
- (6) Let Us Magnify His Name!
- (7) God Is the Source of All Blessings

Chronicles reveals the sins of David just as clearly as his grand traits. David's willingness to follow Satan's influence in numbering Israel (21:1), his excessive lust for shedding the blood of his enemies—as well as his murder of Uriah—and his adultery with Bathsheba, caused God not to allow him to build the temple (20:1-2; 22:8; II Samuel 12). May we never forget the impartiality of God!

In I Chronicles 28:8-10 we find David's charge to Solomon. Summing up these remarks, as well as verses 20-21, we learn the following points:

- (1) Keep and seek God's commands.
- (2) Possess the land.
- (3) Leave this inheritance to your children.
- (4) Serve with a loyal heart and willing mind.
- (5) If you forsake Him, beware of His wrath!
- (6) Always take heed and be strong
- (7) Never be dismayed for God will be with you.

One of the greatest questions of the Old Testament falls from David's lips as recorded in 29:5 of *I Chronicles*:

"And who then is willing to consecrate  
his service this day unto the Lord?"

That is still a very powerful question! In closing the remarks on *I Chronicles*, one would be wise to compare 29:23 with



I Kings 2:12; Acts 2:30; Revelation 3:21 and 22:1 because we clearly learn from these verses that God's throne, Solomon's throne, David's throne and Christ's throne *are all the same!* This expression does not refer to a gold chair in Jerusalem, but to the sovereign rule of God in heaven! Read John 18:36 and Revelation 5:10-13.

## **II Chronicles**

This book begins with Solomon's wise choice of seeking from Jehovah "a heart of understanding." Because the king "did not seek riches, wealth or honor," neither death of enemies or long life for himself, God blessed him beyond measure. In chapter two, verse four, we read that the attendance of Jewish feast days and sacrificial systems would be "an ordinance forever to Israel." This passage was tied to the temple Solomon would build for the Lord. Sometimes Sabatarians of today latch onto this verse to *prove* the keeping of the Sabbath is a perpetual arrangement—a never-ending agreement between God and His people. However, this argument proves too much because one reads in Exodus 30:8 and 31:16 that the burning of incense is just as lasting as the Sabbath. And in Colossians 2:14-17 we clearly see that Christ's death at Calvary abolished the Levitical system and the Ten Commandments (Hebrews 8:13; Romans 10:4). We are now answerable to the New Testament, sealed by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28; Galatians 2:21). As long as Judaism lasted, *all* of its appointments were honored—incense, animal sacrifices, feast days, Sabbath days, etc.

Chapter three of *II Chronicles* informs us of the extravagant cost of the Temple. This reminds us of Stephen's brilliant proclamation in Acts 7 that God no longer "dwells in temples made with hands." Today, in New Testament Christianity, the individual child of God is His temple (I Corinthians 6:19-20). We are living stones in the spiritual house of the Lord, built upon Christ as the chief cornerstone, as we learn in I Peter 2:5-7.

But when Solomon "dedicated" the Temple in Jerusalem, "fire came down from heaven...and the glory of the Lord filled the house." This statement of II Chronicles 7:1 introduces the powerful fourteenth verse which tells us of God's promise to bless those who would seek His face and do His

will. Later, in 7:19-22, Jehovah also promises to curse or overthrow those who "turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments" as well as "those who serve other gods and worship them." Such ungodly action on the part of Israel would cause Jehovah to "pluck them up by the roots" and "cast out of my sight" such evil ones! Indeed, as Proverbs 3, verses 5-7 state, we must "trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not upon our own understanding." We must always acknowledge Him as the Creator of the universe and the love of our LIFE.

In chapter 9 we find the enthralling story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's court. His wisdom, power and wealth truly overwhelmed her as she saw the hand of God in Solomon's greatness. Had he only remained strong in the Lord! What a tragic shame it is to reflect upon the spiritual decline of all three rulers in the United Kingdom of Israel—Saul, David and Solomon! When we are worldly and arrogant, we fight against God's will and this pattern of life can never be successful (13:12 and Acts 5:39).

God's people are divided by evil Jeroboam and by the lack of wisdom displayed by Solomon's son, Rehoboam. (Read II Chronicles 10:11; 10:19; 12:1; 12:14). Parallel passages are in I Kings 11-13.

The favorable reign of Asa in the Southern Kingdom of Judah is chronicled in chapter 14. Among other things, Asa did the following:

1. Took away the altars of strange gods
2. Commanded Judah to seek God and obey Him
3. Guided the land in peace for years
4. Judah built and prospered
5. Caused Judah to trust in God
6. Destroyed the enemy
7. Rebuked his own mother for idolatry

When Asa died, his good influence lived on in Jehoshaphat, his son. So great was the depth of their lives that men blessed by their pure conduct went through all the cities of Judah "teaching the people the book of the law of the Lord" (17:9). Please compare this with Nehemiah 8:8 and Ezra 7:10 where the word of God was read distinctly, applied ardently and rejoiced in mightily. This far reaching influence for good is always the order of the day when spiritual people stand up

for God's way in the midst of immorality!

Chapter 18 is parallel to I Kings 22 and the story of wicked Ahab and the courageous, righteous prophet of God, Micaiah. Lessons taught here include the following:

- (1) God is not mocked
- (2) Man reaps as sown
- (3) Evil compounds evil
- (4) God will not force us to serve Him!
- (5) Physical death is not as bad as spiritual separation from God due to sin
- (6) No one ever deceives his Maker!

In 20:15 we learn that godly men always have added strength in their battle against evil:

"Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."

There is a striking contrast between the epitaph for Jehoshaphat and the one for wicked Jehoram. *No one* cared when Jehoram died, and he was "buried without honor" (21:20) but the good king Jehoshaphat "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (20:32). Sadly, at the very end of his sojourn upon earth, he unwisely made an alliance with the ungodly ruler of Israel. We must *always* be on guard against the ploys of Satan!

In 25:15 we see the vanity of seeking other power than that which God holds for us. The question in this verse reminds me of the point we would make with liberals and modernists today: "Why do you try the same old worn-out sectarian trends when the social gospel has not been a blessing to those who espouse it?" Anytime we are not content with the message God has given, we necessarily choose an inferior path! To document this point even further, notice the brilliance of II Chronicles 26:5 in regard to Uzziah, king of Judah for 52 years:

"As long as he sought the Lord,  
God made him to prosper."

It is, therefore, hard to believe the blunder this ruler later made when "his heart was lifted up to destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord." Uzziah's presumptuous sin caused him to "be a leper until the day of his death" (26:16-21). God will not allow men to take His place and go their own rebellious way and still be blessed by Heaven!

Hezekiah, another good king of Judah, as well as Azariah, the chief priest, show the value of devoted loyalty to God's decrees as we read 30:8-9 and 31:10. Essentially, the message is this:

1. Do not be stiffnecked as your fathers were,
2. Yield yourselves to Jehovah,
3. Worship sincerely and fervently,
4. Never forget God's compassion,
5. —and only then—blessings follow

It is said in 31:21 that Hezekiah, in every work, sought God "with all his heart and prospered!"

Why Judah chose to trust in the arm of flesh (earthly rulers and military might—32:7-8), instead of allowing Jehovah to fight their battles, is a mystery, but it nevertheless eventuated in 70 years of captivity down in Babylon. As one reads the last four chapters of *II Chronicles*, he sees the bitter-sweet drama unfolding. In the panorama, the characters that stand out are the evil ruler of Assyria, who makes a fancy, but futile, speech (32:15) before God destroys his 185,000 troops. Also, Manasseh, a terribly confused ruler who runs the gamut of debauchery, repentance, and then a reformed life that is just too late to salvage his son, is one more person that marches across the pages of *II Chronicles*. Josiah, the wonderful, spiritual evangelist who, in kingly ways, leads a revival in Judah that just cannot be maintained after his untimely death, is a breath of fresh air in an otherwise wicked age. The rich reward of God's approval, when the people obey during Josiah's work, changes violently into the devastating shackles of bondage as Nebuchadnezzar comes upon the scene to overthrow those who "rose up early to corrupt themselves" (Zephaniah 3:7).

In *II Chronicles* 36:14-23 we find all the salient reminders that resulted in seven decades of captivity in Babylon for Judah:

1. Priests and people were in open rebellion.
2. They polluted the house of God.
3. They mocked the prophets.
4. They DESPISED the Holy Scriptures.
5. Babylon burned the Temple, stole the vessels of worship and broke the wall of Jerusalem down.

6. 70 years of bondage ENSUED until Cyrus, King of Persia, let Judah return home!

God's people had sown to the wind and had reaped a whirlwind (Hosea 8:7).

### **Pertinent Passages**

There are many passages of pathos in the almost unknown book of *II Chronicles*. These pertinent points have a definite tinge of sadness that linger in the memory for years. Some of the finest preaching material one could ever expect to find in all the Bible is in this section of Scripture that tells of the last moments prior to Babylonian Captivity. Judah would spend seventy long years in bondage because they had rejected the message of the prophets and had perverted justice as they fought against the mandates of heaven. They were truly without hope and without God because they chose so to be (*II Chronicles* 15:2-3). When men refuse the glory that is available, they dwell in a dungeon of their own misery. May we never forget this maxim:

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark.  
The real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the Light.

In 7:14 of *II Chronicles* we have one of the excellent and pivotal statements of the Old Testament. It is here that the Almighty promises forgiveness, blessing and joy contingent upon Israel repenting, praying and turning to a richer, fuller spiritual behavior. Millions blame God for a lack of success in life when, actually, the culprit would be an existence out of step with the Maker. Paul made it clear in Romans 9 that when the creature "talks back" to the Creator, only chaos exists. Always remember:

"It is not the greatness of my faith that moves mountains, but my faith in the greatness of God."

Someone has well said that we cannot control the length of our life, but we can control its depth and width. In 13:12 of *II Chronicles*, it is crystal clear that when we fight against God we never shall prosper. Conversely, in 26:5 we are blessed to learn that as long as we genuinely seek the Lord, our way will prosper! In John 15:5-7 we hear the Master proclaim that without Him we can do nothing. It is so sad to realize that

shallow man robs himself of available joys almost daily. H. R. Trickett, in a stirring gospel song, wrote these grand words:

*The tempest may rage and the hurricane roar,  
Yea, the wind and the torrents descend,  
And the strong gates of hell  
May assail it in vain,  
For the kingdom shall stand till the end.*

One thing for sure, when men war against Heaven, they can never be victorious!

In 15:16 of this powerful Old Testament book we are challenged to read of Asa, the king who removed his mother from being queen "because she had made an idol in the grove." Asa cut the idol down, stomped it and burnt it. What noble courage it took to stand up for Truth and put Jehovah above family. We need a double portion of that spirit today instead of folk who change their views on marriage and divorce just because their own family is involved! In 19:2 we have a burning question that all compromisers should seriously consider:

"Shouldest thou help the ungodly,  
and love them that hate the Lord."

Only the wrath of God awaited such fence-straddlers! At the end of chapter nineteen we read these fascinating words:

"Deal courageously, and the Lord  
shall be with the good."

What a vivid contrast can be found in the praise Hezekiah received from Jehovah and the stern rebuke given to Judah prior to bondage in Babylon. Notice the distinctive difference in II Chronicles 31:21 and 36:16:

"In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

However, the terse statement God made to Judah rings out:

"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

Jeremiah made it clear that Judah was a nation that obeyed not their Maker and, as a result, they would endure seven decades of misery in a foreign land. It just does not pay to

fight against God. And yet, so many do! J. C. Moore helps us, in this song, to follow a wiser, nobler path:

*Sometimes He leads to the conflict,  
Where foes, strong and mighty assail,  
But in His strength I can conquer  
Through Him I can ever prevail.*

## **Lessons for Discussion**

### **A. CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAPTIVITY**

The last chapter of *II Chronicles* clearly informs us of the reasons for seventy years of bondage in a foreign land for Judah. Notice the major contributions to this sad epoch in the sojourn of God's people:

1. King Zedekiah set a bad example of rejecting the Lord's word by the mouth of Jeremiah.
2. The ruler of the people was arrogant and disobedient and thus set a bad example for the people.
3. He hardened his heart and would not surrender to Babylon as God's prophet commanded.
4. The priests and the people polluted the house of Jehovah.
5. They mocked God's messengers, the prophets.

Ezekiel 36 is another great commentary upon the spiritual famine that produced seven decades of bondage. They had disgraced God's name among the heathen. For this crime against heaven they would spend many days among the pagan people they so desired to emulate (Ezekiel 20:32). Today when men make light of divine mandates they war against the Lord (Acts 5:39; II Chronicles 13:12) and success will certainly elude them!

### **B. FIGHTING AGAINST GOD**

Just as Judah rebelled against the divine will in ancient days, so do millions today engage in such folly. In both eras of time such folk will not ultimately prosper. Seeking first God's kingdom is the magic formula of spiritual success (II Chronicles 26:5; Matthew 6:33) and the sooner mankind realizes this premise, the happier he will be (Psalms 144:15). How do men war against Jehovah today?

### 1. Hypocrisy in Religion

Read the blunt denunciation of insincerity Christ set forth in Mark 7 and Matthew 23. To be genuine in our profession of Christianity is a must for those desiring heaven. A lack of ardent devotion sent Judah into many years of sorrow.

### 2. False Religions

Jesus made it clear that those systems built by men, and not authored by God, would crumble (Matthew 15:13-14; Colossians 2:8-10; Psalms 127:1). Such may flourish in the here and now, but eternally they will be void of comfort or reward. It is the church that Christ promised to build that ought to occupy first place in our affection (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18).

### 3. Ungodly Homes

Since marriage was the first divine arrangement (Genesis 2), we must be keenly aware of its sublime importance. Anyone who defames its beauty, sanctity and importance will give account to God on Judgment Day! The four major Bible points concerning the home, as Jehovah wants it to be, are these:

- a. *God's will comes first* — Psalms 132:3-5
- b. The husband is the head of the home — I Corinthians 11:1-3
- c. The wife is in subjection and yet is the queen of the home — Ephesians 5:22-23; Titus 2:5
- d. Children must be disciplined by love — Ephesians 6:1-4; Hebrews 12

Today, in our nation alone, nearly one and a half million divorces are granted every year. Malachi 2:16 informs us that *God hates divorce!* So should we.

### 4. Lack of Moral Purity

Sadly, millions engage in immorality, filth, debauchery and pornography to the tune of billions of dollars and a corrupt society. To be pure in heart (Matthew 5:8) is almost a lost art. Truly, we war against heaven in the landslide of licentious behavior that overlooks the joy of righteousness and the beauty of holiness. *What can each of us do to turn the tide back to God? Think!*



# **EZRA, NEHEMIAH AND ESTHER**

## **Ezra**

After seventy long years down in Babylon, the children of Israel, Abraham's seed, looked longingly to the hills of home in Judea. Although the majority of the Jews (II Kings 16:6) would never return, there did remain in the hearts of most of them a tender, poignant reminder of "the days that used to be." The scattering, or *dispersion*, of the Israelites gave Gentile people an opportunity to hear of the coming Messiah as both Jew and Greek assembled in the synagogues to hear the Law read. The end of captivity paved the way for the beginning of "the fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4) when "in due time" (Romans 5:6) Christ came! Ezra played a major role in making this hope a reality because his monumental contribution to the preservation of God's chosen family (Genesis 22:18) was the restoration of the word of God in the hearts and lives of the people who returned to the promised land. No verse in the Old Testament has stronger loyalty blended into its words than does Ezra 7:10:

"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Nehemiah rebuilt the walls to keep Jehovah's servants protected from the heathen while Ezra recharged their spiritual batteries to protect them from sin and shame!

According to II Chronicles 36 and Isaiah 45, Persia, under Cyrus, conquered Babylon. This was 536 years before Christ and Persian rule was generally gracious, kind and fair to the Hebrew people. Shortly after Babylon was overthrown, some

50,000 Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, returned to their homeland. Approximately 80 years later Ezra led thousands more back to Palestine. It seems that Ezra had served in the Persian court as Secretary of State on Jewish Affairs and the urgent need in Judea for restoring the spiritual fiber of God's people called him back. In Nehemiah 8 we learn of his brilliant work in reading the law of God. In Ezra 9 and 10 he had the difficult task of getting the foreign wives put away from the camp of Israel. All in all, Ezra served in tumultuous times but in areas of spiritual need that demanded great men like him and Nehemiah as well as noble women like Queen Esther. The last century of Old Testament history shows us many scenes that captivate our minds with challenging stories of the restoration of the Jews. Haggai deals with the rebuilding of the Temple; Nehemiah tells of the walls of Jerusalem rising again; Mordecai and Esther save Israel from Haman's wicked plotting while Ezra puts the sacred word back into hearts and lives that had been spiritually barren. Those were exciting days!

There are *four major lessons* one can learn from the book of Ezra. Actually, these points are timeless; they would be pertinent in any age. We can benefit from a careful analysis of Ezra's work even today. Here are the thoughts that we must consider:

## **I. WHAT A LACK OF BIBLE STUDY PRODUCES**

In Isaiah 5:13 we see that bondage was the result of spiritual ignorance. When we fail to develop into teachers of the Scriptures (Hebrews 5:12) our very lack of knowledge destroys us (Hosea 4:6). For years and years, God's people had forgotten the Law and had drifted into apostasy with short steps of apathy that resulted in a long journey far afield from Jehovah and His will. When Ezra read the word of the Lord to the people they wept bitter tears because their lives were so messed up and they knew they had failed miserably as servants of God. Notice the pathos of Ezra 9:6:

"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens."

Israel had not partaken of the Passover for years and years

and their leaders honestly admitted in 9:10:

"We have forsaken thy commandment."

There is probably no sin more prevalent among us today than that of failing to study and heed God's word. Let us learn from the sad saga of Ezra to be wiser than they!

## **II. MARRYING OUTSIDE GOD'S FAMILY**

Back in I Kings 11 we learn the tragic results of Solomon marrying strange, or foreign, wives who turned his heart from the worship of God. The evil influence of paganism Jezebel introduced into Israel is another weak point from Ahab's life as well. In the New Testament we are taught to "marry only in the Lord" (I Corinthians 7:39). Evil companions do "corrupt good morals" as I Corinthians 15:33 tells us. How can we seek first the kingdom of God if we marry someone not even in that kingdom (Matthew 6:33)? Unequal yoking with unbelievers in any realm of life is a serious mistake (II Corinthians 6:14). One of the gravest problems Ezra faced was getting the Jews to put away their mates who were not God's servants. Provisions were made for them and the children of such alliances but it was a dire necessity to restore the pure lineage of the seed of Abraham. Such stringent arrangements seem terribly harsh today, but spiritual matters take precedence in the Bible. We ought to train our children to "walk in the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19) and seek mates that are loyal and faithful to Christianity lest the cause of Truth be hindered (I Peter 3:1-7). It would help us all to remember the great point found in the statement:

Those who marry a child of the Devil will always  
have trouble with their father-in-law.

## **III. THE POWER OF PREACHING AND PENITENCE**

Have we ever seriously considered what Judah's history would have been without the dynamic work of Jeremiah prior to captivity, Ezekiel's preaching during bondage in Babylon and Ezra's valiant teaching following the seventy years of servitude? The restoration of the Jews was primarily due to getting the Law of Jehovah back in the hearts of the people. Nothing can make an honest man repent of his sins any quicker and more surely than clear pronouncement, with conviction, of Holy Scripture. In Nehemiah 8:8 we see the

impact of Ezra's work:

"So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

In the very next verse we see these solemn thoughts:

"For all the people wept, when they  
heard the words of the law."

However, when penitent hearts respond to sacred truth they find joy in their new found obedience as Nehemiah 8:10 affirms:

"For the joy of the Lord is your strength."

When Ezra set about to lead Israel in the paths of righteousness he admitted in deep gratitude in Ezra 7:20:

"And I was strengthened as the hand  
of the Lord my God was upon me."

When God's holy will blends with man's free will in obedience the result is always a blessing (see Ezra 7:13)! We need bold preaching and sincere hearts today!

#### **IV. THE SORROW SIN ALWAYS BRINGS**

One of the finest passages to illustrate this point is Ezra 9:13-14. Notice carefully these pungent comments:

"And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt seeing that Thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved and hast given us such a remnant as this shall we break Thy Commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations?"

In spite of their mistakes of the past they were told:

But even now there is hope for Israel—  
Arise, it is your task—  
Be strong and do it.

Ezra mourned over the faithlessness of the exiles all one night, refusing to eat or drink, he was so deeply burdened over their sin (10:6). Israel had so "greatly transgressed" that it would "take more than a day or two" to resolve the matter (10:13). In Nehemiah 1:4 we learn that another great man "sat down and wept, and mourned for days" in the midst of "fasting and praying before the God of heaven" because of the

result of Israel's sins. Ezra 8:22 cogently informs us:

"The hand of our God is for good upon all that seek Him, and the power of His wrath is against all that forsake Him."

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and the price paid for following the devious ways of Satan never goes down!

There are several thoughts in the book of Ezra that are "as rich as cream." One point that never ceases to thrill me is 6:10 where Darius, the Persian ruler, not only gives commands authorizing the building of the Temple and the financial backing of the same, he also asks God's people to "pray for the life of the king and his sons." What a compliment to the power of Jehovah! Another passage that ought to cause us to do some soul-searching is 8:22 where Ezra refused to seek help from earthly powers:

"For I was ashamed to ask the king for a bank of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way; since we had told the king, 'The hand of our God is for good upon all that seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all that forsake Him.'"

We should never forget Psalms 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." Our natural response to Jehovah *for all his benefits toward us* (Psalms 107:21) should coincide with Ezra 3:11 where:

"They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."

Ezra was indeed a scribe skilled in the law of Moses and the hand of the Lord was upon him (7:6). He belongs in a very select group of noble servants of Jehovah portrayed on the pages of the Bible. We owe a lot to him!

## **Nehemiah**

Some critics of the Bible scoff at *Nehemiah* as being a bricklayer's book. But there is a much deeper plot than that in this dramatic section of God's word. The purpose of rebuilding Jerusalem's wall was to keep Abraham's seed safe within and the world outside the confines of the city David had taken from the Jebusites (II Samuel 6). It was imperative that Israel remain intact until the coming of the promised Seed

(Galatians 3:16). Following the seven decades of bondage in Babylonia it became very important for the Jews to go back home and build again the walls and the Temple that Nebuchadnezzar had broken down. Nehemiah, a godly servant of Jehovah, rises to the occasion and fills an important role in the restoration of Judah's hopes.

The setting is 430 B.C. during the days of Persian rule. Nehemiah occupies the role of cupbearer to the King. Word filters into Persia telling of the need for help by God's people in Judea. Nehemiah deeply longs to assist in the re-establishment of Jerusalem's power that has been in decadent array for over one hundred years. This great and humble man wept for days and contritely confessed that Israel, his own father's house and Nehemiah himself had sinned grievously. Notice the words of 1:7:

"We have acted very corruptly against Thee."

Nehemiah was so distraught that his countenance was evident to the King. When asked by the ruler the reason for a heavy heart, Nehemiah requested of the King a leave of absence to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild it. It is significant that *prior* to asking the Persian leader, 2:4 tells us that Nehemiah "prayed to the God of heaven." He was truly a man of prayer! Not only did the King allow Nehemiah to leave, but he also provided for a safe journey and material help for the work that was needed in Judea. Notice the beauty and power of Nehemiah 2:8:

"And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me."

As Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem we are immediately introduced to the Samaritans, half-breed antagonists of the Jews who are displeased that "someone had come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." Many taunts, insults and challenges will proceed from these enemies before Nehemiah succeeds in rebuilding the walls. In fact, after arising in the night to secretly assess the gigantic problem before the Jews, Nehemiah acknowledges that the task is so great that only the good hand of God upon them and the zealous work of all Israel can accomplish the task. Added to the desperate problem before them was another frontal attack by the Samaritans, led by Sanballat, who "derided us and despised us" Nehemiah 2:19 affirms. They were tersely reminded that

Samaritans had no memorial at all in Jerusalem so go on back to Mt. Gerizim! Time and again, however, the relentless Samaritans will bother Nehemiah and his fellow-workers. Four of their major tactics, aimed at delaying the task Nehemiah returned from Persia to accomplish, were:

1. Accused the Jews of rebelling against the King.
2. Laughed at the weakness of the wall.
3. Attempted to stall the action by having "summit conferences," but Nehemiah was too busy to talk!
4. Plotted to make war against God's people.

In rebuttal to the burning question of Sanballat: "What are these feeble Jews doing?" Nehemiah 4:6 joyously proclaims:

"So we built the wall... for the  
people had a mind to work."

They prayed to God (4:9) believing He would fight for them, so they were not afraid of the Samaritans (4:14-20). Due to their prayerful, energetic actions, the wall was built in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). In verses nine and sixteen of chapter six we learn a valuable lesson. When God's people persevere in a work ordained by heaven, all the servants of Satan cannot gain a victory over us. Even the opponents of Israel "perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God." Nehemiah's dependence upon the Lord is beautifully expressed:

"But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands."

The result: The nations round about Jerusalem fell in their own esteem and were greatly afraid! What a difference it makes when we are on God's side!

In chapters eight and nine we have the combined, successful efforts of Nehemiah and Ezra. In 8:3 we read:

"And the ears of all the people were  
attentive unto the book of the law."

In verse 18 of this section of the book we further notice:

"And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read  
from the book of the law of God."

Spiritual depth always results from constant devotion to the Holy Scriptures. Nehemiah, chapter nine, contains the eloquent speech of Ezra. It is a brilliant summary of Old Testa-

ment history. The *five main points* in this extremely interesting address are the following:

1. God kept his word in fulfilling the land promise to Abraham's seed (9:7-8). This disproves claims being made today by many preachers who say such promise is yet to be fulfilled.
2. The Sabbath was made known at Mt. Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given. This disproves the idea that the Sabbath was kept from Creation (9:14; Ezekiel 20:12).
3. The presumptuous, rebellious actions of Israel had resulted in many days of heartache and years of bondage. The golden calf incident was an example of such spiritual anarchy.
4. 9:33 sums up the bittersweet relationship of Creator—creature: "We have acted wickedly and thou hast dealt faithfully."
5. The mercy and grace of God is powerfully summed up in 9:30-31:

"Many years thou didst bear with them and didst warn by the Spirit through thy prophets; yet they would not give ear. Therefore thou didst give them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in thy great mercies thou didst not make an end of them or forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God."

In the very last chapter of Nehemiah we learn that the Israelites had so intermingled with the nations about them that they were speaking half in the language of Ashdod—one of the famous cities of Philistia. Too many times today the language of the world seeps into the vocabulary of Christians. Let us all sincerely pray as Psalms 19:14 tells us:

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

The closing epitaph in Nehemiah is a wonderful thought to close with:

"Remember me, O my God, for good."



## Esther

There is no book in all the annals of history or literature that excels the narrative of *Esther* in the Old Testament. It has a thrilling tempo and a sparkling cadence that puts it in an incomparable realm of drama and pathos. The name of Jehovah is absent from its scintillating pages but His sublime presence pervades every scene. To the student of ancient history, the saga of the Persian throne is pulsating. To the student of Scripture, *Esther* holds a splendor unsurpassed. In a practical way we can glean from this book precious truths that enthrall us and challenge our deepest sense of loyalty as children of God. The providence of Jehovah permeates the sacred text as we become acquainted with Ahasuerus, the Persian ruler, Vashti, the modest queen, Mordecai, the faithful Jew, and Haman, the wicked counselor. But the spotlight is upon a beautiful young woman who comes upon the scene for a strategic occasion to preserve Abraham's seed from extinction. The sovereignty of God, versus the immutable decree of Persian rule, hovers in the background of every salient scene. The promise of the Messiah (Genesis 22:18) is threatened by the sinfulness of man in one of the Bible's most articulate passages. In many ways, the panorama of the sacred story is imbedded in this historical masterpiece. Our general failure to study, preach and write concerning *Esther* has robbed us of a closer walk with our Maker.

If there is one major thrust in this section of the Bible, it is the blazing message Daniel 4:25 recorded in a classic setting:

"Jehovah rules in the kingdoms of men."

Oh, how we need to learn that the destiny of the world is in His almighty grasp and not in the puny machinations of men! Beleaguered saints in John's day learned that Caesar had not pushed God off the throne of glory (Revelation 4:1) just as Babylon's ruler acknowledged the God of Israel as the One who holds sway in the lives of men (Daniel 3:29). For Christians today to live in doubt and fear, in view of the awesome power of our Father above, is but an open confession of our shallow concept of creative genius. Since "He ruleth by His power forever" (Psalms 66:7), wisdom demands that we recognize His absolute sovereignty.

As the story unfolds, we admit to a definite appreciation for Vashti, her sense of modesty, and her desire for purity,

regardless of the cost of such action. The King demanded something of her that pandered to lust and sensual wickedness. Principle came before popularity with the queen. Many women today, in lesser positions, need to learn the beauty of holiness and the challenge of shamefastness (I Timothy 2:9-12; I Peter 3:1-3). Too many women had rather be chased than chaste. If every woman in the Lord's church would just spend as much time studying the Bible as she does before a mirror, knowledge of Truth would double. Vashti put a premium upon purity at a time when pressure dictated an easier decision. We cannot keep from wishing that more women today had a nobler taste for modesty than for fashion madness.

Another brilliant message of *Esther* is, *always be ready for service in God's vineyard*. Mordecai seized the opportunity to prepare Esther "for such a time as this" (4:14) and the pretty damsel was ready to engage in the necessary dangers attendant to the challenge. Hosea's message, "It is time to seek the Lord" is ever fresh and apropos. It is our duty to be alert, diligent and submissive when the Lord needs helpers. Esther proved to be courageous, versatile and perceptive in divine matters.

The prayerful spirituality of her kinsman, Mordecai, was not in vain when the necessary moments of intervention arrived upon the solemn scene. Mordecai's unwavering dedication to the Almighty's sublime leadership is one of the rich fibers of the entire Bible. That man of God would not bow down to Haman's pride or pomp. It takes genuine depth to see through human threats and pompous actions—especially when one is in the definite minority and struggling for survival. But our Redeemer "sees our tears and hears our prayers" (Isaiah 38:5). Often, at a later hour, when we *really* need help in the midst of abject adversity, we reap the glorious dividends of the righteousness we have sown. Mordecai's great courage in saving the king's life received no immediate notice or reward. However, in the very shadow of certain death on Haman's gallows, the deed came to light and received its proper credit. The Lord's time schedule may differ from ours, but His Book of Remembrance is infallibly accurate (Esther 6:1-3; Malachi 3:16). Hagar was correct in Genesis 16:13:

"Thou, O God, seest me."

The somber end of Haman's folly echoes down the centuries. Evil men perish by their own cunning. The gallows of that wicked plotter projected into the sky and called forth the wrath of the Lord of Sabaoth. God is not mocked and sin has its own inevitable reward of ruin. As Proverbs 13:15 and 14:9 graphically foretell, so despicable men finally learn:

"The way of the transgressor is hard."

and

"Fools make a mock at sin."

The one sterling lesson that lingers in our hearts, as we come to the close of the dynamic book of *Esther*, is the fact that *God's will shall be done ultimately*—whether or not *we* participate in concerted action with Him. The sooner we *really say*, "*Thy Will Be Done*," the better our lives will be for time and eternity. E. E. Hewitt captured this pertinent refrain in song:

*Give me thy heart,  
Give me thy heart,  
Hear the sweet whisper,  
Wherever thou art;  
From this dark world  
He would draw thee apart,  
Speaking so tenderly,  
Give me thy heart!*

# REVIEW OF GENESIS — ESTHER

By reading the first seventeen Old Testament books, one can see the scope of the entire 39 books of this part of the Bible. This is true because the 22 books of Poetry and Prophecy which follow fit into the historical setting of *Genesis* through *Esther*. Now that we have come to this breaking point in our summary of the books of the Old Testament, let us briefly review.

In this beginning book of the Bible we have the basic foundation for the rest of God's grand revelation for man. In 3:15, 22:18, and 49:10, *Genesis* tells us that Christ is coming as the Savior of the world. Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), from the seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16), out of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14), would the Messiah arrive upon the scene "in the fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4), or "in due time" (Romans 5:6). The exciting stories of Cain and Abel, Noah, Abram, Jacob, Esau, Joseph and Benjamin add luster to the sacred scenes of *Genesis*. God's gracious providence flows through the entire fiber of *Genesis*. The challenging opening stanza of this first Bible section tells us of the power back of it: "In the beginning God. . . and God said: 'Let us make man in our own image.'" These monumental words thrill our souls!

## Exodus

*Genesis* closes with 75 descendants of Abraham securely placed in a select region of Egypt due to the kindness of Joseph and the sovereignty of God. *Exodus* is the dramatic

book telling us of the *departure* of the Israelites from the land of Pharaoh as they journey to the land Jehovah promised Abraham's seed (Genesis 15). Canaan was not so far away but, due to sin, it took 40 years to get there. The wonderful leadership of Moses, as compared to the shallow lives of so many of the Israelites, is the constant theme of this book. The giving of the Law at Mount Sinai is the central point in *Exodus*. The great blunder of the *golden calf incident* is typical of the serious errors of the people. Provisions for the Tabernacle, the Levitical priesthood system and animal sacrifices take up many verses in this second book of the Bible.

### **Leviticus**

This section of the Old Testament discusses the need for worship as a needful dimension in the lives of God's people. The three annual feast days—Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles—are set forth in Leviticus 23. The extremely important *Day of Atonement* is discussed in chapter 16. This event involved the famous Scapegoat incident. The importance of blood in sacrificial matters is stressed and the major point in the book is: *Be Ye Holy!*

### **Numbers**

This book tells us of the adventures—both good and bad—of Israel in their wilderness wanderings between Egypt and Canaan. This part of the Old Testament is a great study in human nature and divine patience. The main character is Moses; the main problem is apathy or ingratitude. One of the villains in this outstanding drama is Balaam. A constant lack of faith on the part of the seed of Abraham gets them out of one scrape and into two or three more. The rebellion of Korah (16) and the immorality of the people (31) remind us vividly of 32:23: "Be sure your sin will find you out." The sin of Moses, recorded in Numbers 20, kept him out of the promised land (Deuteronomy 34). Joshua and Caleb manifested tremendous loyalty to God in Numbers 13.

### **Deuteronomy**

The fifth book of Law sums up, or restates, the glorious principles of God's will for man in Old Testament days. It is a

compendium of truths that guided Israel in a covenant of blessings and warnings (30:15). Men were taught to never add to nor subtract from the will of Jehovah (4:1-2). Parents were to thoroughly indoctrinate their offspring (6:1-7) in the ways of heaven. Following one's own desires would be foolish (12:8). Courage to stand for Truth was commended (31:6). The powerful promise of Moses' successor (18:15) was fulfilled in Christ (Acts 3:22).

## **Joshua**

The valiant man who picked up where Moses left off was Joshua. The 50 years of the *Conquest of Canaan* was mainly a tribute to his loyal devotion to duty. Seldom has anyone been as successful in a task, doing God's service, as was Joshua. Refusing to be swayed from the way of righteousness (1:7), he chose to obey the Creator always (24:15). His powerful speech, at the end of a victorious life, covers the last two chapters of the book and ought to be required reading for all of us! Joshua purged sin from the camp (7) and urged absolute obedience (22:5) for all Israel.

## **Judges**

The sad decline of God's people after Joshua's death can be best analyzed by remembering Judges 17:6 and 21:25:

"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

For over three centuries Israel went downward due to weak leaders and even weaker followers. It was a sad day in the history of that time when more and more of the world entered the lives of those who professed to follow Jehovah. In spite of the wondrous victory of Gideon's 300 men who put 135,000 Midianites to flight, Israel seemed to forget that God would fight for them (7:2). The exploits of the strong man Samson make for interesting reading in chapters 13-16.

## **Ruth**

One of the sweet, romantic sections of the Bible is the story of Ruth. Though a citizen of Moab, she would play an important role in the genealogy of David and Christ. Her loyal devotion to Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, is chronicled in 1:16-17.

This is also an interesting book because it informs us of several unique customs of ancient days in Israel. The book of *Ruth* furnishes us with insight into the acceptance of Gentiles into roles of prominence in Old Testament days.

## **I and II Samuel**

At the close of the period of the *Judges*, a most important man comes upon the scene. Not only was Samuel a powerful person in God's service, he also introduces the role of a prophet—one who spoke for Jehovah—into Israel's life! Sadly, it was during his life that Israel demanded a king (I Samuel 8) so they could be like the nations about them. Thus, the United Kingdom, lasting 120 years, began. Saul, David and Solomon each reigned 40 years over the 12 tribes of Israel. *I Samuel* deals mainly with the work of Samuel as prophet and Saul as king. Saul's spiritual decline magnified the frailty of human leadership as over against divine guidance. I Samuel 15:22 underlines the seriousness of disobedience and compromise. The book of *II Samuel* deals with the rulership of David—his strength and his shameful actions which resulted in weakened family life.

## **I and II Kings**

Solomon's reign as king over Israel occupies the first half of *I Kings*. The building of the splendid temple in Jerusalem is an interesting feature of this section. There is a major pivotal point in I Kings 12 when the *Divided Kingdom* begins. This separates ten tribes (Israel) from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The sinfulness of Solomon, the weakness of his son Rehoboam and the treachery of wicked Jeroboam make this tragedy complete. For nearly 400 years this division of Abraham's seed will exist. Necessity now magnifies the importance of the *prophet* and his work as God speaks and works through great men such as Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha and Isaiah. There will be a few fine kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah, but far too many rulers will be like Ahab, Jezebel and Manasseh! These are difficult moments for Israel.

## **I and II Chronicles**

Though many parallel passages with *I and II Kings* are found herein, *Chronicles* emphasizes the events that would lead to Babylonian Captivity. In fact, the very best summary of bondage under Nebuchadnezzar can be found in the last chapter of *II Chronicles*. These books give the family units and land provisions for use after captivity. The temporary spiritual revival under Josiah is set forth as well as the terse reminders of punishment for those who fail to obey God (*II Chronicles* 7:14; 13:12).

## **Ezra**

This book deals with the century following 70 years in Babylon with special emphasis placed upon Ezra's work in restoring the word of God into the hearts and lives of Israel. The personal desire of Ezra in *seeking, teaching and doing* the will of Jehovah was a monumental contribution to a deeper yearning by Israel for things divine.

## **Nehemiah**

The major task of Ezra's contemporary, Nehemiah, was the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem so that Abraham's seed could be protected from the world so that Christ could come! In 52 days the fallen walls were rebuilt in spite of taunts and persistent opposition by the Samaritans. Much of the difficulty, the New Testament tells us, that existed between the Jews and Samaritans (*John* 4), goes back to the scenes in Nehemiah. The personal spiritual concern of Nehemiah, a man of prayer, action and dedication, makes this book very rich.

## **Esther**

This seventeenth Old Testament book tells us of the perfect blend of God's providence coupled with fervent spiritual resolve on the part of Mordecai, a faithful descendant of Abraham and his beautiful yet loyal kinswoman Esther, in preserving Israel from extinction.



## **Discussion Points**

### **A. PROPER EMPHASIS**

In Ezra 7:10 we learn of the magnificent obsession of a great servant of God. Several character traits of Ezra prove that he had proper and pertinent priorities before Jehovah and in the presence of his fellow-men. Notice the sterling message his influence conveyed:

1. Preparation of heart and mind
2. Diligently seeking to please the Lord
3. Reverence for the Scriptures
4. Obedience to Heaven's will for man
5. Urgent desire to teach Truth to others

When Christians today have that fervent direction and emphasis many souls will be saved and the church will be stronger indeed.

#### ***Questions:***

1. Do we have the same zeal for God and the Bible that Ezra did? If not, why not?
2. Do we really care if our neighbors know the Truth?
3. Does it bother us that so many church members know so little about Christ and His gospel message?

### **B. ASHAMED TO ASK THE KING**

In Ezra 8:22 we read one of the most enchanting statements in the Old Testament! The noble scribe, Ezra, lamented the fact that some of God's people looked more to earthly rulers for help than to Almighty God whom they claimed to follow! Many times our trust is also misplaced. However, when we forget that the Lord will see us through any problem, we preach a poor sermon before the world. He said:

"We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what men shall do unto me. . ." (Hebrews 13:6).

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. . ." (Matthew 6:33).

Ezra was ashamed to ask the Persian ruler for help when trouble came instead of turning to God for needed strength.

We have a beautiful promise in Psalms 124:8 and 91:15, "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him." What a marvelous thing it would be to always have the bold confidence of the three friends of Daniel who—in spite of the danger of the fiery furnace—calmly stated, "Our God is able to deliver us" (Daniel 3:17). And one of the most dramatic verses in the Bible is Deuteronomy 33:27 in which Moses exclaimed: "The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms."

The psalmist made it clear that from youth to old age the righteous would not be forsaken nor bereft of necessary sustenance. We are informed by the Lord that provides our daily bread (Matthew 6:11), and in I Peter 5:7, "Casting all your cares on him, for he careth for you." Indeed, Paul told the Philippians that "God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). This is a powerful insurance policy, divinely arranged, by the Ruler of the universe.

It is sad to observe many professed Christians in these modern days who act like their only help and hope is to be found in the machinery of our earthly governments! When we, who claim to serve the Lord, whine and cry over mundane matters, we ought to recall Ezra 8:22. We ought to be ashamed to seek consolation from secular pursuits when the Sovereign God is available to assist us. In the last paragraph of Romans 8, the apostle informs us that NOTHING "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 39). For this reason, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (v. 37). When members of the church murmur and complain and worry and fret—just as the heathen do—we lose our impact of influence upon the world. We ought to be ashamed to rely upon the same source of help that the world does. Let us believe what we sing in that wonderful song:

*I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad.  
I found in him a resting place,  
And he has made me glad.*

#### **Points for discussion:**

1. Do we rely too much upon the government and not enough upon faith in God when challenged

to provide for our own needs and the needs of others? Read Galatians 6:9-10.

2. Do we really believe Philipians 4:19 and Psalms 46:1?
3. Is our trust in God and His promises truly genuine?

### C. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

It is certainly regrettable that some of the rankest errors spring from the most precious Bible principles. The devil is not content, it seems, until every facet of the divine realm has been tampered with. Even in the church today one can hear the most absurd and farfetched ideas concerning "the special guidance of the Lord." There are those who even confuse the miraculous and providential. Miracles demand the suspension of natural law. I firmly believe that the Bible clearly teaches the principle of God's guidance for Christians and his presence in their lives. However, this is a general scriptural teaching that does not allow "personal testifying" concerning what "the Lord has specifically done for me." Let us illustrate. Even Mordecai and Paul, great Bible characters, would not attempt to presume upon the workings of Jehovah. In Esther 4:14 and Philemon 15 they carefully guarded their enthusiasm (something our young "Inner-light" spiritualists ought to learn) by saying: "For who knows" and "perhaps." They were aware of Deuteronomy 29:29: "... the secret things belong to God; the things that are revealed belong to man." Joseph's brethren were unaware of God's providence overshadowing their sinfulness until Joseph informed them (Genesis 45:5). If the Bible teaches that God continually guides us (Isaiah 58:11) and that all things from the dawn of creation have happened for the good of the saints (Romans 8:28) and that afterward he will receive us in glory (Psalms 73:24), why do we even need to ferret out the particulars? It is a Bible maxim that "the Lord will never leave us nor forsake us" (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5-6), and that ought to be enough providence for anyone.

We also know that "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14). In I Peter 3:10-12 we are informed that His eyes are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers. In Matthew 7 we are thrilled to

learn that Jehovah wisely gives what we ought to have if we will but ask, seek and knock. Our part is praying, seeking and striving to obey the Lord. God's part is doing "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

When brethren begin to second-guess the Lord's provisions and immaturely affirm that they have been sent by God to a specific place at a specific time, they overlook a basic, salient Bible truth. In Luke 8 we learn that "the field is the world." In Romans 2:11 we find that "God is no respecter of persons." Therefore, we can serve the Lord anywhere, anytime, as one soul is as valuable as another. God does not need to send us anywhere, because the great commission will send us everywhere! We need to pray for wisdom (James 1:5) and trust mightily in Jesus who "doeth all things well" (Mark 7:37). Why should any devoted Christian concern himself with God's providence and its working? Let us determine to "do whatever he tells us to do" (John 2:5; I John 2:4) as we seek first His Kingdom. Whatever we need the Lord has promised to provide (Hebrews 4:16).

The church today desperately needs more consecration and less speculation. We have too many visionary dreamers and not enough practical doers (James 1:21-22). As the poet aptly proclaimed:

*It is not for us to question why,  
It is for us to do or die.*

If we would always stand in awe of God's word and be less impressed with "our experiences," our spiritual usefulness would certainly multiply. In the day of Judgment we shall not be judged by God's providence but by His word! The providence of God is seen in the lives of Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai and Esther.

#### **D. ARDENT SERVANTS WORKING TOGETHER**

Nehemiah's task was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem so that God's people could be kept safe from the world in order to preserve the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18) so that the Savior could come. In chapter four, verse six, the grand treatise bearing Nehemiah's name declares the resplendent result that produced the needed protection—because the people had a mind to work! In I Corinthians 12 we learn that the church of the Lord is like a human body wherein each

member has a necessary function to perform. When we, as sincere Christians, work together in harmony with God's teachings we also get the job done.

***Read and discuss the following passages:***

Galatians 5:6  
James 2:14-26  
Philippians 2:12-16  
Romans 15:6  
John 17:20-21  
Ephesians 4:11-24

***Questions***

1. How does egotism, or selfishness, or envy war against cooperation in the Lord's cause?
2. What can we do to improve participation in Christ's church?

**E. WHAT WILL BE OUR EPITAPH?**

In Nehemiah 2:20 and 13:31 we have a vivid contrast between success and failure. It is sad indeed when men live in such a way as to have *nothing precious to remember!* Conversely, how wonderful it would be to be remembered by The Almighty for our goodness and loyalty to sublime ideals and heavenly goals. Some are so wicked, similar to Haman from the book of Esther, who are "hanged on their own gallows." We will truly reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8), and some folks are always their own worst enemy. Especially, in the spiritual realm is this true of all sinners who harden their hearts (Hebrews 3:13).

When we come to the shadow of death what will our epitaph be? Will we die the death of the righteous or shall we leave this life in the grasp of Satan and the clutches of evil?

***Read and discuss:***

John 8:21  
Revelation 14:13  
Genesis 27:2  
I Samuel 20:3  
I Thessalonians 4:13-18  
John 11:24-26

When we come to the end of the way what will our epitaph be?

## Too Busy

*Too busy to read the Bible,  
Too busy to wait and pray;  
Too busy to speak out kindly  
To someone along the way.  
Too busy with cares and struggles  
To think of the life to come;  
Too busy building mansions  
To plan for a heavenly home.  
Too busy to help a brother  
Who faces a winter's blast!  
Too busy to share the burdens  
When self in the balance is cast.  
Too busy for all that is holy  
On earth beneath the sky;  
Too busy to serve the Master,  
But not to busy to die!*

## F. OUTSTANDING CHARACTERS: GENESIS — ESTHER

*Discuss each one:*

- |            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. Adam    | 21. Jonathan       |
| 2. Noah    | 22. Nathan         |
| 3. Abraham | 23. Solomon        |
| 4. Sarah   | 24. Bathsheba      |
| 5. Isaac   | 25. Jeroboam       |
| 6. Esau    | 26. Elijah         |
| 7. Jacob   | 27. Micalah        |
| 8. Joseph  | 28. Elisha         |
| 9. Pharaoh | 29. Naaman         |
| 10. Moses  | 30. Ahab           |
| 11. Aaron  | 31. Jezebel        |
| 12. Joshua | 32. Hezekiah       |
| 13. Caleb  | 33. Josiah         |
| 14. Gideon | 34. Manasseh       |
| 15. Samson | 35. Ruth           |
| 16. Hannah | 36. Naomi          |
| 17. Eli    | 37. Nebuchadnezzar |
| 18. Samuel | 38. Ezra           |
| 19. Saul   | 39. Nehemiah       |
| 20. David  | 40. Esther         |



## About the Books

Christians in many places have desired quality Bible study materials. Especially in teenage and adult classes have these requests been made. Several godly congregations, elders and preachers encouraged the author of



these four volumes to write some lessons to help fill this need. This volume is part of a set of four books which covers the entire Bible in one year. They are popular for Bible classes and for personal study. The set includes: *Volume I (Genesis - Esther)*, *Volume II (Job - Malachi)*, *Volume III (Matthew - Colossians)*, and *Volume IV (1 Thessalonians - Revelation)*.

## About the Author

Johnny Ramsey is well qualified to write this series of books. He has been preaching the gospel for over fifty years, and has helped train other men to preach.



Johnny Ramsey

He is especially well known for his ability to preach lessons which cover the whole Bible in one series of meetings.

He has authored *Practical Bible Studies* plus *Cover to Cover*, *Bible Treasures*, and two books of sermons. He has preached in Gospel meetings all over the United States.

Iris Ramsey has been the faithful and dedicated helpmeet of Johnny for half a century. She is a very good Bible teacher in her own right. Both Johnny and Iris were honored at Freed-Hardeman University's Christian Training Series in 2002 for their practical Christian service.



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