

# *Profile of the Old Testament*

By Dr. Manford George Gutzke

## ***Old Testament History***

The first 17 books of the Old Testament record events that happened in history from the Creation of the World until the restoration of Israel after the captivity in Babylon. Though historical in style these books do not present a history.

In the first 11 chapters of Genesis there is a broad sketch of Creation, the Fall of Man, Judgment in the Flood and the dispersion of man over the earth after the Tower of Babel.

The rest of Genesis tells of four generations of the family of Abraham. After 400 years in Egypt the children of Israel were brought out to go across the desert into Canaan, which had been promised to them. This Exodus was the greatest single event in the Old Testament. After living in the land of Canaan for about 400 years in tribal fashion, God began to reveal His plan to achieve the realization of His promise of blessing given to Abraham, through His chosen Messiah who would rule as King.

The history of Israel under the kings demonstrated the failure of man, even called men with the blessing of God, to achieve perfect obedience. God promised to send one chosen by Him, called the Messiah, who would perfectly obey God and lead His people into the promised blessing.

The other books of the Old Testament were written during the time of the Kings and reveal truth about living in godly obedience and trust.

## ***The Bible – Old Testament – The Pentateuch***

The first five books of the Bible are often called "The Pentateuch." This big strange word is of Greek origin and means "The Five Books," which often are called the five books of Moses. They do not claim to be written by Moses but tradition does say that Moses is the author.

The New Testament speaks of them as the Writings of Moses.

Jesus of Nazareth asked: "If ye will not believe his writings, how will ye believe my words?"

Genesis is the book of beginnings. The first 11 chapters tell about the Creation of the World, and the history of man until the Tower of Babel. This includes the Fall of Man and the Flood. The rest of the book tells about the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Exodus tells the story of the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt, with the Passover, the Crossing of the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, and the building of the Tabernacle.

Leviticus tells primarily about the proper procedures of worship which Israel should follow as they came to worship God.

Numbers tells of the wanderings of the Children of Israel as they came to Kadesh Barnea and then spent thirty-eight more years in the desert.

Deuteronomy tells of coming up to Canaan from the side of the Arabian desert and records three major addresses by Moses as he prepared Israel to enter the land of Canaan. This book ends with the death of Moses.

The next book, Joshua, is sometimes included with these five and this portion is then called "The Hexateuch."

## ***The Bible: Old Testament – History, Poetry, Prophecy***

After the Pentateuch the next 12 books in our Canon of Scripture deals with the history of Israel from the time they settled in the land of Canaan until they returned after the captivity in Babylon.

Joshua is sometimes grouped with the first five because Joshua was above all else the deputy of Moses, and simply carried out the plans Moses had projected.

Judges is a record of things that happened in about four hundred years of living in the land.

Ruth is a sweet story of an event that happened during this time.

I and II Samuel and I and II Kings are sometimes called the "Four Books of Kings." I Samuel tells about Samuel the last judge and Saul the first King. II Samuel tells the story of David, the greatest king Israel ever had. I and II Kings continues the history of Israel from the time of Solomon, through the division of the Nation, to the destruction of Israel and then the captivity of Judah.

I and II Chronicles are like parallel reading on the history of Israel from the Creation of Man until the end of the Babylonian Captivity.

Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the Restoration of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Esther is another personal story of events that happened during the time of the captivity.

The Poetical Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are grouped together because of their poetical form, their philosophical and devotional style. They were not all written in the same period of history.

The Prophetical Books are the writings of some of the prophets that appeared in the time of the Kings. The division into Major and Minor Prophets is entirely a matter of custom probably based on convenience of reference.

## ***Genesis***

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It opens with the account of the Creation of the World and of Man in the image of God. In chapter 3 is the record of the beginnings of Sin by Adam and Eve in the garden. Here is also the beginning of salvation by the grace of God. And here also is the beginning of prophecy about the coming Savior as the Seed of the Woman.

In chapter 4 is the account of the beginning of violence when Cain killed Abel.

In chapters 6-9 is the account of the beginning of judgment when God sent the Flood. Here is also the account of the beginning of deliverance from judgment when Noah was delivered in the ark.

In chapter 11 can be seen the beginning of community enterprise in the Tower of Babel. Here also is to be found the beginning of alienation when men became strangers and scattered. And so in Genesis 1-11 we have the account of the origin of the world as we know it today.

In chapter 12 is recorded the Call of Abraham and this is the beginning of the Covenant of Abraham in which blessing is received by men who believe in the promises of God. The rest of the book is the story of the Patriarchs – Abraham, the father of the faithful and those involved with him: Lot, his nephew; Hagar, his second wife; Ishamel, his son from Hagar; Sarah, his wife; Isaac, the child of promise.

Isaac whose great wisdom was that he walked in the footsteps of his father, Abraham.

Jacob whose name was changed to Israel.

Joseph who became the savior of his people.

## Genesis "Beginnings"

- 1-11 Creation To Tower of Babel
  - 1-2 Nature of World and of Man
  - 3 Fall of Man
  - 4 Cain and Abel
- 5-10 Noah and the Flood
  - 11 Tower of Babel
- 12-50 The Patriarchs
  - 12-25 Abraham
  - 21-35 Isaac
  - 25-50 Jacob

## *Exodus*

After the children of Israel had lived in Egypt about 400 years the time of the promise God had given to Abraham drew nigh, when He would give the land of Canaan to the Seed of Abraham.

In the book of Exodus is given the account of how the Hebrews were abused by the Egyptians until they cried to God for deliverance.

God prepared and called Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Pharaoh was not willing that they should go. Using Moses as His servant, God sent plagues until Pharaoh consented to let the children of Israel go after the death of the first born.

Israel was delivered from that plague in the Passover.

At the Crossing of the Red Sea Pharaoh was destroyed.

Guided by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, Israel journeyed across the desert.

God showed His grace and mercy in caring for Israel as they travelled.

At Mount Sinai Moses received the Law which showed how God's people should live, and instructions about the Tabernacle which showed how God's people should worship.

Then there is the record of how the people brought the materials needed, how certain persons with special skills were appointed to build the Tabernacle exactly "as the Lord commanded Moses."

When the Tabernacle was finished, with all the furniture in place, the Shekinah Glory filled the Tabernacle showing the approval of God.

## The Exodus "Deliverance"

- 1-11 Conflict between Moses and Pharaoh
- 12-13 The Passover
  - 14 Crossing the Red Sea
- 15-19 From Red Sea to Mount Sinai
- 20-40 At Mount Sinai

## ***Leviticus***

After the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses had built the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him on the Mount, instructions were revealed as to the procedures of worship and of living in the will of God. The book of Leviticus outlines the offerings to be brought by the priests on behalf of the people, and gives the details, regulations and requirements to be observed by both priests and people that they might qualify for the blessing of God.

The concept of "clean and unclean" was emphasized in the consciousness of the people by many regulations which specified what should be done in the interests of health, hygiene and social righteousness. This was important because the blessing of God involved His presence among them, and He was holy; therefore the people must be "clean."

Detailed regulations about public procedures resulted in a calendar of special events, such as feasts and fasts as well as stipulations about the use of the land, the supervision of economic practices providing for the relief of the poor at the expense of the rich. This was also involved in the implications of the presence of God in their midst.

This book is a manual of procedures that were designed to structure the life, private and public, and the worship of the children of Israel, who were being brought into the Promised Land by the grace and the power of God, that it would be possible for God to be in their midst.

### Leviticus "Holiness"

- 1-7 The Offerings
- 8-10 Consecration of the Priests
- 11-20 Clean and Unclean
- 21-22 Regulations for the Priests
- 23 Regulations for the Feasts
- 24-27 Regulations for Living

## ***Numbers***

The book of Numbers gets its name from the contents of the book. The first four chapters give the report of the census taken of the children of Israel as they left Mount Sinai on their journey to Canaan. The membership of the twelve tribes and the tribe of Levi was recorded by families and the total numbers noted for each tribe respectively. Hence the name of the book was "Numbers."

After several chapters of special instructions given to the priests for their guidance in their leadership of the people, the further journey story across the desert is set forth. As the people travelled they manifested their discontent about various conditions by murmuring and complaining. In each case they were chastened by discipline in the will of God.

Several incidents of rebellion against the leadership of Moses occurred which were reported together with the way in which God dealt with the rebels in each case.

When Israel came to Kadesh Barnea after about two years of journeying from Egypt they failed to enter the land as directed because of their unbelief. This was the Great Provocation which angered God and resulted in their being turned back into the desert. There they wandered for thirty-eight more years

until that whole generation of mature men died without ever entering the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb were the two exceptions because they had urged the people to go forward despite the obvious difficulties trusting in God, who would help them to conquer their opposition.

Moses himself sinned in impatience so that he never could enter Canaan, though he was permitted to see it.

This whole book is a sober testimony to the fact that a person may believe in God enough to begin a life of obedience, and yet fail to arrive at the fulness of blessing because of unbelief.

## Numbers "Wandering in the Desert"

- 1-10 Preparation for Departure From Sinai
- 11-12 Complaining and Discipline
- 13-14 At Kadesh Barnea
- 15-25 Wandering in the Desert
- 26-36 Preparation to Enter the Land

## ***Deuteronomy***

This book also gets its name from the contents.

Moses gave to Israel the tablets of stone on which were the Ten Words of the Law when they were encamped around Mount Sinai. More than thirty-eight years later a new generation is about to enter the promised land of Canaan. The older generation who had received the Law at Mount Sinai were now dead, except Joshua and Caleb.

Moses repeated giving the Law to the new generation that they might have the inspiration. This is recorded in this book called "Deuteronomy," which in Greek means "the second Law."

This book is largely composed of three major addresses. In the first address Moses reviewed the history of the Exodus and solemnly repeated the Ten Words to this new generation, as he had given it nearly forty years before to their fathers.

The second address explained the meaning of the Ten Words and gave gracious promises of blessing upon obedience and solemn warning as to the dire consequences that would follow any failure to obey.

The third address was an urgent admonition to this new generation to profit by seeing the results of the mistakes of the older generation and to be obedient to the Word of God.

## Deuteronomy "Repeating the Law"

- 1-4 Review of journey
- 5-26 Second Giving of the Law
- 27-34 Warning and Admonition

## ***Joshua***

This book is called "Joshua" not because he wrote it, but because he is the principal actor in the events recorded.

Joshua served Moses as a sort of deputy. He was the military leader of Israel, as well as a personal aid to Moses in practical matters. He was with Moses on Mount Sinai. He was one of the spies sent to survey the land before Israel attempted to enter. He joined Caleb in voicing confidence that with God's help they could enter the land and defeat the Canaanites.

God told Moses to appoint Joshua as his successor. When Moses died, Joshua immediately assumed the leadership, having received from God instruction to follow the law of appropriation, with the promise "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you."

Joshua's career of conquest is told in this book. His bold frontal attack brought victory by faith at Jericho. But he was unprepared for defeat at Ai, and feared disaster unless God would help Israel. God told him how to deal with secret sin. After judging Achan and achieving a belated victory at Ai, he was tricked into making an unwise agreement to allow the city of Gibeon to escape destruction. In this he followed his own judgment and committed himself to trust in deceitful men, "and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord."

Joshua realized the campaign to conquer Canaan would not be finished in his lifetime, so he divided the whole country among the tribes before his death, with instructions as to how to proceed toward complete victory.

In making arrangements for living in the land, Joshua set aside certain cities to be cities of refuge where accused persons could be protected from vengeful relatives of victims of criminal assault.

Joshua also supervised arrangements to provide cities in which the Levites could live.

Special attention was given to the situation involving Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, to whom the land east of the Jordan had been assigned.

When all his arrangements were completed, Joshua faithfully warned the Israelites to remain true to their commitment to God that they might continue to receive His blessing.

### **Joshua "Entering the Land"**

- 1-5 Preparation For Entering the Land
- 6-12 Conquest of the Land
- 13-22 Division of the Land
- 23-24 Joshua's Final Message

## ***Judges***

The book of Judges records certain selected events occurring in about 400 years of Israel's history after the life of Joshua.

When the Israelites took possession of Canaan they came as twelve tribes, each acting under its own leadership.

From time to time several tribes would join under some common leader to face some common enemy – but no permanent central government existed. The unity of the nation was grounded in its ancestry, all

being the descendants of Jacob; and was kept alive in its worship, all following the leadership of the tribe of Levi, who were the priests for the entire nation.

Because of failure to carry out the instructions given by Joshua the tribes respectively did not destroy the original inhabitants, the Canaanites, but allowed some of these to live in the land as servants. In time these Canaanites influenced the children of Israel to forget God and to join in pagan ideas and practices.

When such apostasy occurred, God would withhold His grace and help from Israel. They would then be overcome and enslaved by the Canaanites. In their bondage the Israelites would suffer until they called on God in repentance. In mercy God would raise up from among them a judge who would lead the people to return to God. Then God would bless them to have victory over their enemies and the land would have peace.

This cycle of events occurred again and again during this period, but the spiritual and moral life of the children of Israel was steadily deteriorating.

"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

## Judges "Living in the Land"

1-2 Failure of Tribes to Obey Instructions

3-16 Oppression and Deliverance

17-21 Decline of Morale in Israel

## ***Ruth***

This book is a story telling how Ruth, a Moabitess, became the great-grandmother of David. This happened during the time of the Judges.

Because of famine Elimelech and Naomi, of the tribe of Judah, went to live in the land of Moab with their two sons. While there, Elimelech died and the two sons married two maidens in that land. When the two sons died, Naomi told her daughters-in-law to go home to their families because she was about to return to the land of Judah. One of these was Ruth who requested the privilege of staying with Naomi.

In time Naomi sent Ruth to glean in the harvest fields of her kinsman, Boaz. Boaz noticed Ruth among the gleaners and fell in love with her. When Naomi saw that Boaz was attracted to Ruth she arranged to have Ruth visit Boaz where he was sleeping.

Rather than to expose Ruth for intruding upon his privacy, Boaz made her his wife.

In this way Ruth not only became the great-grandmother of David, the greatest king Israel ever had, but she became one of the ancestors of the promised Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.

This simple story conveys much truth to the reader of Scripture. The grace of God was available to Gentiles as well as to Jews. The providence of God can overrule local circumstances to make all things work together for good to them who are called according to His purpose.

## Ruth "Chosen to Be the Bride"

1 Ruth Deciding

2 Ruth Serving

3 Ruth Waiting

4 Ruth Rewarded

## *I Samuel*

First Samuel is the first of four books of history reporting events that happened from the time of the last of the judges, Samuel, until the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. These books are sometimes called the Four Books of Kings. In our Bible they are I and II Samuel and I and II Kings.

The "First Samuel" presents principally selected events in the careers of the last Judge, Samuel, and of Saul, the first king.

The birth of Samuel is an unusual testimony of the power of earnest persevering prayer. Hannah prayed for a son for personal reasons and her request was granted, and she gave birth to a son who became one of the greatest servants of God in Israel.

The training of the child Samuel is a classic demonstration of the power of faithful child nurture. The example of the sons of Eli is an eloquent testimony that God is no respecter of persons. The failure of the sons of Samuel enforces this truth. When Israel insisted on having a king, even though Samuel wisely advised against this, God granted their request, and instructed Samuel to collaborate in finding a king, against his own superior judgment.

Saul was chosen and anointed to be king even though he was from a small tribe. He began his reign with marked success, but in impatience and in disobedience he disqualified himself so that another king was chosen to rule after he was gone.

Samuel found and anointed David while he was still a lad. Despite Saul's jealousy, and treacherous hostility, David conducted himself bravely and wisely above reproach, because of his obedience to God.

### I Samuel "The King Is Anointed"

1-8 Samuel as Judge

9-12 Saul as King

13-15 Failure of Saul

16-31 David Anointed to Be King

## *II Samuel*

The events recorded in II Samuel follow in the history of Israel after the defeat of Saul in battle and his death as a suicide. Since Jonathan, the heir apparent, was slain in the same battle, the throne was vacant after the death of Saul.

Judah promptly crowned David as king, but the rest of Israel made Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, king to succeed Saul. A bitter civil war was waged between the house of David, led by Joab, and the house of Saul, led by Abner. In time Abner felt such strife was unwise and came to make peace with David. Joab treacherously slew Abner, but the pact of peace was verified after the forces of the house of Saul had been defeated in battle.

David showed great wisdom and true statesmanship in uniting the whole nation under his leadership. He treated the defeated northern tribes with respect and fairness. He built Jerusalem as his citadel, and then launched a campaign against hostile neighbors, subduing them until the land of Israel enjoyed peace and prosperity.

David's sin with Bathsheba marred his excellent record. Though he was forgiven this sin, he was



troubled by rebellion in his own family. This book records the exploits of David, with the great support of his wonderful friends and the bitter hostility of his enemies.

David was not permitted to build the Temple which he wanted to do, but he did receive a covenant from God pledging dominion over all forever to his seed.

## II Samuel "The Throne Is Established"

- 1-5 David Crowned as King
- 6-10 David Establishes His Throne
- 11-12 David's Sin Against Uriah the Hittite
- 13-24 David's Troubles

## *I Kings*

I Kings continues the historical record of events in the history of Israel after the reign of David through the time of Jehosaphat.

Solomon, the son of David, appointed by his father to be king began his reign wisely. He built the temple which David had planned and carried out his father's instructions in the administration of national affairs. He made peace with neighboring nations and brought great prosperity to Israel.

But Solomon allowed the influence of his many pagan wives to cause him to tolerate pagan worship in the land. This resulted in judgment from God, who raised up enemies against Solomon so that his later years were troubled by strife.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, succeeded to the throne but proved to be incapable of the leadership needed in that hour. Jeroboam, a popular agitator against the government, who had been exiled by Solomon, was asked to return from Egypt to lead the ten northern tribes in their rebellion against Rehoboam.

In his attempt to establish his own throne, Jeroboam projected a substitute form of worship which would make it unnecessary for his people to go to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. He built a rival altar and authorized priests of his own choosing, so turning the ten tribes away from the God of Israel, and thus causing Israel to sin.

There was continual conflict between Judah and Israel, though sometimes their leaders formed alliance against some common enemy.

Although Jehosaphat, king of Judah, was a godly capable man, he "joined affinity" with Ahab, king of Israel, who was an evil man. In mercy and grace God watched over Jehosaphat to protect him, even though he had been foolish in his association with the evil kings of Israel.

## I Kings "The Nation Is Divided"

- 1 David Appoints Solomon as King
- 2-11 Career of Solomon
- 12-22 Division of Kingdom

## *II Kings*

This is the fourth and last book, recording events in the history of Israel, from the death of Jehosaphat until the Captivity of Babylon. In the days of Rehoboam the nation had been divided into a northern group of ten tribes, called Israel, whose capital city was Samaria, and a southern group of two tribes, called Judah, whose capital city was Jerusalem.

Generally, the kings of Judah were godly men. The kings of Israel were all evil, and in that nation pagan ideas were readily accepted. God, in His mercy, sent great prophets to warn Israel of their inevitable destruction, if they did not repent and turn to Him. Despite the ministry of such servants of God as Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha, Israel remained incorrigible, and in His time God raised up Assyria to invade and destroy Israel, carrying the people away as captives. This destruction was permanent.

The kings of Judah because of foolish association with the kings of Israel permitted Baal worship to come into their land. But God raised up Jehu to become King of Israel, who destroyed Baal worship in Israel. Also in Judah God raised up the priest Jehoiada, who led in drastic measures to stamp out Baal worship in the southern nation.

But Judah was not able to maintain consistent obedience to God. Despite revivals under Hezekiah and Josiah the nation also became incorrigible. God raised up Babylon to capture Jerusalem, destroying the Temple, and carrying the people away as captives.

### II Kings "The Nation Is Destroyed"

- 1-8 Elijah and Elisha
- 9-17 History of Israel Till Fall of Samaria
- 18-25 History of Judah Till Fall of Jerusalem

## *I Chronicles*

The two books called "Chronicles" are a puzzle to students of the Bible. They record events occurring in the history of Israel from the time of the first King Saul until the restoration after the Captivity in Babylon. Yet there seems to be no attempt to present a history of the nation. There are notable omissions in the record of what happened to Israel, whereas some events receive special attention. Thus these two books report events occurring during the same time as those reported in the books of I and II Samuel and I and II Kings. Some of the same events are reported, although the accounts are obviously independent of each other. It is interesting to note that though generally differing in details noted, there is no actual contradiction in the facts as they are told.

I Chronicles begins with genealogies through nine chapters, yet there is no mention of Samuel. One short chapter tells about the death of Saul. Nineteen chapters are devoted to the reign of David, but there is no mention of Bathsheba or of David's sin. There is no mention of Absalom or his rebellion. Much attention is given to David's preparation to build the temple.

In the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, the two books of Chronicles are placed in the appendix.

It has been suggested that in those days one record of notable events was kept in the king's court, where the record would be before the view of all the people. This might well be the four books of history called the books of the kings. Another record may have been kept in the hands of the Levites who would

have special interest in the affairs of Judah, and especially of David and his household, and whose report of the affairs of David may well reflect the mind of God who forgave David his sin and purged it off the record.

## I Chronicles "Called to Rule"

1-9 Genealogies  
10 Death of Saul  
11-29 Reign of David

## *II Chronicles*

II Chronicles notes events that happened after the death of David and especially in Judah after the division of the nation. The building of the Temple by Solomon is given special attention, as is the report of Solomon's prayer in dedicating the Temple. The glory of Solomon's prosperity and his great wisdom are emphasized.

Various incidents are recorded showing how God blessed the Temple and Jerusalem and Judah, because His name had been put there. Jehosaphat's good reign and his foolish alliance with Ahab is reported, with notations of the admonition and warnings given by the prophets who did not approve such friendly relationship with ungodly men.

The infiltration of Baal Worship through the influence of Jezebel and Athaliah is briefly noted and the function of Jehu and Jehoiada in destroying this pagan error is briefly but clearly recorded.

The subsequent history of the two nations is briefly recorded but special attention is given to Hezekiah and his godly efforts to turn the people to the true worship of God. The wickedness of Manasseh and the godly efforts of Josiah are briefly reported, together with a brief account of the events which culminated in the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

The two series of records in the books of Kings and books of Chronicles are different from each other – but they do not contradict each other in any matter of record.

## II Chronicles "From Glory to Grief"

1-9 Reign of Solomon  
10-36 Division and Destruction of the Nation

## *Ezra*

The two books of Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the restoration of the Jews to the land of Canaan after their captivity in Babylon.

When the people of Israel showed themselves to be incorrigible in their disobedience to God, the judgment of God came upon them. First, the northern nation of the ten tribes called Israel fell before Assyria and was permanently destroyed. The people were carried away as captives, except the poorer

people who lived as laborers in their home land. Other people were brought in to live in Canaan who intermarried with the remaining Israelites, and came to be known as Samaritans.

Later the southern nation of two tribes called Judah fell before Babylon, who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and carried the people away as captives for seventy years.

After the time of the Captivity was past Cyrus, king of Persia who had conquered Babylon, released the Israelites and permitted them to return to the land of Judah if they wished to do so. Not all, but some did return to rebuild that which had been destroyed.

The book of Ezra tells of this return under the leadership of Ezra the priest, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel.

This book records the decision of Cyrus to release the Jews, and the tabulation of those who returned with the equipment they brought. It tells about the beginning of the rebuilding of temple and of the opposition which halted the work. Then it reports the preaching of Haggai and the repeated permission from Persia by Darius to continue the rebuilding. The leadership of Ezra in bringing another contingent of Jews, together with his leadership in bringing the people to return to the sincere worship of God, is also included.

## Ezra "Return of the Remnant"

1-6 First Return of Jews and Rebuilding of the Temple  
7-10 Ministry of Ezra

## *Nehemiah*

Nehemiah held a trusted position in the king's court among the Persians. But when he heard of the ruined condition of Jerusalem he felt a strong desire to return and to help in rebuilding so that it would be "no longer a reproach."

Having gained permission from the king, and a letter of authorization to enable him to secure materials needed in rebuilding, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. First he carefully surveyed the extent of the ruins and then challenged the Jews who had already returned to undertake to rebuild the walls.

With careful organization Nehemiah led an inspired people in the task of rebuilding. Opposition was encountered again and again but Nehemiah was not to be dissuaded. When it came to his notice that abuses were being carried on among the Jews, Nehemiah openly insisted on their correction. Despite persistent opposition the aroused Jews completed the rebuilding of the walls.

Arrangements were then made that Ezra should read the law publicly to the people, and with the help of many teachers the law should be explained to the people.

Nehemiah then led the Jews to make a covenant with God, and recorded the names of all who pledged themselves to obey God.

When disobedience became known, Nehemiah insisted upon repentance and consistent conduct before God.

## Nehemiah "Rebuilding Jerusalem"

- 1-7 Nehemiah Leads in Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem
- 8-10 Great Revival Under Ezra
- 11-13 Conditions in Judah After the Return of the Jews

### *Esther*

Esther is the story of an event that occurred while the Jews were yet captive under the rule of the Persians. This story centers around a Jewish maiden by the name of Esther who was chosen because of her beauty to be the bride of the king. Her uncle, Mordecai, was a wise man greatly respected in the community and by his loyalty in exposing a plot to harm the king, had won the king's favor.

Haman had been promoted to the place of the King's Advisor. In flattering the king he had decreed that all men should bow before the king and himself as the King's Advisor. This Mordecai would not do because he would bow down only before his God. Haman was offended and planned to destroy Mordecai.

He prompted the king to sign a decree that any who would not bow down to the king, and thus in effect worship him, should be put to death. This would involve all the Jews, and so would include Mordecai.

When Mordecai became aware of this plot he sent word to Esther to point out her opportunity to speak to the king directly about this peril to all the Jews, including herself. Despite the risk of being rejected Esther approached the king and told him of the situation. The king issued an order authorizing the Jews to arm themselves for self-defense. Then the king hanged Haman on the gallows he had personally erected to hang Mordecai.

This book gives an insight into conditions under which the Jews lived as captives. It is notable that the name of God does not appear in the book, though the reality of faith in Him and of His grace is obvious throughout.

### Esther "God's Watch-Care Over His Own"

- 1-2 Esther Chosen to Be Queen
- 3-7 Esther Delivers the Jews
- 8-10 Enemies of the Jews Are Destroyed

### *Job*

Job is one of the two books in the Bible dealing with a problem in philosophy. Every culture has a system of philosophy by which people explain their experiences. Hebrew culture is based on the reality and the sovereignty of God; the Creator, Sustainer, and judge of all the earth. For the Hebrew God was a Person, Almighty, Holy and just, who exercised His control over all things, so that all things that happened could be understood as being the will of God.

This idea of God being Almighty and Just creates a problem in understanding human experience: how shall one understand the suffering of the righteous? This is a form of the more basic question of the problem of evil: if God is good why is evil permitted?

The book of Job is developed around the career of the man Job, who is described as a righteous, godly man who suffered the loss of property, loved ones and finally health. The reader of the book is told that all this happened in the course of spiritual conflict between Satan and God. God pointed to Job as an example of obedient faithfulness to the will of God. Satan intimated that Job was obedient because it was profitable to be so. God then gave Satan permission to test Job by taking away all but his life.

The book presents a dialogue in which four friends of Job try to explain Job's suffering as being the natural consequence of his own sin or ignorance. Job defends himself by reasoning that what they say is not true. If his sin were involved, why did God not forgive him?

When his accusers are silenced the Lord Himself speaks to Job, chiding him for trying to understand the ways of God, which are far beyond man's scope of knowledge. Job humbly confesses that he is utterly unable and unworthy to understand. The basic question is never answered – because it is beyond human comprehension – but the trusting soul is richly blessed.

## Job "The Suffering of the Righteous"

- 1-2 Job and His Troubles
- 3-31 Job and His Friends
- 32-37 Address by Elihu
- 38-41 Addresses by the Lord
- 41 Job's Blessing

## ***Psalms***

This book has been called "The Song Book of Israel." it is a collection of 150 poems written at various unknown times by different authors, many unknown. David, called "the sweet Psalmist of Israel", is generally held to be the principal author, but it seems evident that some were written before David's time and some as late as the Babylonian Captivity.

The Scriptures do not at any place emphasize the authorship, the circumstances at the time of writing, nor the immediate historic bearing of any portion of the Bible. The text in itself "as it is written" is the significant feature.

This is particularly obvious in the Psalms, which are written as expressions of meditation, praise and prayer in the worship exercises of some believing soul.

The 150 Psalms are often divided into five groups or books which are sometimes seen as parallel to the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses.

It has been said that every phase of human emotion can be found in the Psalms, and for this reason they are helpful in promoting worship in the heart of any believer at any time in any situation.

Psalms that are quoted in the New Testament as referring to Christ are known as the Messianic Psalms.

Some psalms give expression to judgment and condemnation of the enemies of God and His people: these are known as the Imprecatory Psalms.

This portion of Scripture has brought comfort to God's people in trouble, and inspiration to praise for people being blessed. They are obviously suited primarily to hearts that believe in God.

### Psalms "Praise the Lord"

- 1-41 Psalms by David
- 42-72 Historical Psalms
- 73-89 Liturgical or Ritualistic Psalms
- 90-106 Psalms Before Fall of Jerusalem
- 107-150 During Captivity and After Return to Judah

### *Proverbs*

This book is a collection of apt expressions of insight into the course of human affairs. These expressions do not directly reveal the salvation plan or program of God as set forth in Christ, but they reveal the operation of natural processes that are grounded in the Law of God.

They are useful in thought because they state succinctly and simply, profound truths which could be learned in the course of experience, but which in a proverb are made available to anyone when that expression of observation has been stated.

The book has no overall plan – though some grouping of certain parts can be noted.

Traditionally it is considered that Solomon was the author of the larger portion of this collection, but just how many of the proverbs were written by him cannot be firmly established. Several other possible authors are mentioned in the text, but the principle to keep in mind is that the Word "as it is written" is what helps the soul.

Many persons have noted how the 31 chapters fit the length of the month in days, and have set up the program of reading each day the particular chapter of Proverbs that has that number; e.g., on the 9th day of the month, read Proverbs chapter 9.

Any mind equipped in memory with these proverbs can readily be wise in understanding, and in interpreting human experience.

### Proverbs "The Benefits of Wisdom"

- 1-9 Commendation of Wisdom
- 10-22 Contrasts and Observations
- 23-24 Exhortations and Warnings
- 25-29 Comparisons and Contrasts
- 30-31 Descriptions

### *Ecclesiastes*

This is the other book of Philosophical discussion in the Canon of Scripture, and is thus a companion to the book of Job. Just as Job was developed in discussion of "Why do the righteous suffer?", so

Ecclesiastes raises one basic philosophical question: "What is the greatest good?"

It is generally held that Solomon is the young king who seems to have written this book as his personal memoirs. The text seems to report how this young man, gifted and wealthy, began the search for the greatest good through pragmatic experimentation.

Ecclesiastes is the most nearly modern in tone of any book in the Bible. It actually demonstrates the technique of scientific research. Having raised the question as to what is the greatest good, the young man proceeds to research by experiment.

First he sought wisdom through acquiring knowledge as the key to true happiness, but soon discovered that increased knowledge only increased sorrow.

Then he sought satisfaction in folly, indulging himself in all such foolishness as his wealth and position made possible. But he soon saw that the sad results of folly far outweighed any temporary pleasures. He saw that wisdom exceeded folly, but neither could assure blessedness.

Then he applied himself to work, and in this he found some real satisfaction but not anything permanent. Even if in work wealth was accumulated, this could be dissipated by foolishness later.

The book then reports many of his observations, as if they were notes he had made during his research. These statements show penetrating insight into the course of events, but never do find the answer to his quest.

In the last chapter he advises that man should "fear God and keep his commandments" – but it is significant this was not discovered in his research!

## Ecclesiastes "The Greatest Good"

1-4 Vanities of Life

5-7 Practical Wisdom

8-11 Rules for a Happy Life

12 Conclusion of Search for the Good

## *Song of Solomon*

The Song of Solomon is often considered as the most surprising in the Bible. When read, it hardly seems to be of such material as to warrant inclusion in Scripture. It is in the form of a love poem and gives expression to the thoughts of a man and a woman deeply in love with each other.

As the name indicates, it is commonly assumed that the young man involved in the poem was Solomon himself. No one has offered any acceptable suggestion as to which of his wives the young woman might be. But here again is demonstrated the fact that Scripture is not a report of the biographical or historical Song of Solomon events of specific persons or periods of time. It is the text that matters.

Many students of the Bible take this book as an expression of the emotions of true love, and see in this poem a description of the total affection of the Church as the Bride of Christ, and of Christ as the Bridegroom who loved His Church.

In various parts of the world where man-woman relations are known only on a low physical plane these expressions of personal joy and commitment are actually helpful to better understanding of the potentialities of human relationships.



## Song of Solomon "The Beloved"

- is best read as if one were looking at a painting.
- at least three interpretations can be seen.
  1. Love of Solomon for a maid he would take as his wife
  2. Love of God for His covenant people – Israel.
  3. Love of Christ for His heavenly Bride – the Church.

### ***Isaiah***

Isaiah has been called "the Prince of the Prophets." He is mentioned in the historical books and evidently served many years as a prophet.

The book naturally falls into two parts, chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66. The first 5 chapters are a description of the spiritual condition of Judah during the time that Isaiah preached. Chapter 6 tells of his call and commission as a prophet during the days of apostasy. Isaiah foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem but he could also see the coming of Christ bringing salvation in the will of God.

Chapters 7-12 set forth his preaching to his generation which was doomed to judgment.

In chapters 13-35 Isaiah preached to the surrounding nations in which he predicted judgment to be followed by the work of God in grace as He fulfills His promises.

Chapters 36-39 are an historical parenthesis telling of the reign of Hezekiah.

In his prediction of coming judgment Isaiah pointed out that some persons would repent and turn to God to receive His promises: these he called the Remnant.

Chapters 40-66 can well be understood as messages preached to the Remnant.

Peter says (1 Peter 1:10-12) the prophets foretold the blessing God would bring through Christ, but did not understand all that would happen. Here we can see that Isaiah is predicting what living in the grace of God will be like though he himself was living before that time.

### Isaiah "The Truth of God in a World of Sin"

- 1-5 Spiritual Condition of Israel
- 6 Isaiah's Call and Commission
- 7-12 The Syrian Crisis
- 13-27 Messages to the Nations
- 28-35 Messages to Israel
- 36-39 The Assyrian Crisis
- 40-66 Messages to the Remnant

### ***Jeremiah***

Jeremiah has often been called "the weeping Prophet," and also the prophet of pessimism and gloom. Such characteristics were not so much a matter of personal temperament as the result of the times in

which he lived. Jeremiah preached during the time of the Fall and Destruction of Jerusalem. Thus it fell to his lot to predict the disaster which would now befall Judah because of their incorrigible sinfulness.

It was not pessimism in his own spirit but integrity as a prophet that caused him to tell of the collapse of the nation. At the same time Jeremiah predicted Israel would be restored. He personally purchased property that would belong to his family when the people returned to their land.

He called upon the people to repent and warned them of destruction if they did not. They refused to repent and the judgment fell upon them as he said. He called upon the rulers to submit to Babylon and warned them of personal destruction if they refused. They did not submit and they were destroyed.

Jeremiah preached to the surrounding nations warning them that even if Israel were temporarily dispersed they would be gathered again in the Will of God, and all who joined them in repentant obedience to God would be blessed.

He predicted the coming of Christ and the activation of the New Covenant in which the Kingdom of God would be established.

## Jeremiah "The Truth of God in an Hour of Calamity"

- 1 Call of Jeremiah
- 2-6 Spiritual Condition of Judah
- 7-25 Messages to Judah
- 26-38 Messages About Invasion by Babylon
- 39-44 Ministry of Jeremiah after Fall of Jerusalem
- 45-51 Messages to the Nations
- 52 Historical Appendix

## ***Lamentations***

As the title implies, this is a book of messages of lamenting expressions of sorrow because of the disastrous destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of pagan enemies. God had in judgment forsaken His city to the wrath of other nations.

It is so natural to think that if God loved His people He would never allow them to suffer distress – but this actually is an error. "Whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." God is too faithful in watching over the welfare of His people to allow them to persist in sin. The only way a foolish person can be taught is by "the rod of correction."

But God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Even though He will chastise the wayward, He Himself is "touched with all the feelings of our infirmities."

Jeremiah was a weeping prophet because the people he loved were due to suffer so much because of their own sinfulness. Because of the distress of God's people under the hand of God the enemies of Israel actually rejoiced. This drew from Jeremiah imprecations in which he called upon God to visit upon these enemies that destruction which they in their own sinfulness were worthy to receive.

## Lamentations "Mourning For Jerusalem"

5 elegies of lament as Jeremiah foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem.

## *Ezekiel*

After Israel had been defeated and Jerusalem had been destroyed, the people were carried away captive by Babylon. One such contingent of captives were settled by the river Chebar where they lived as prisoners of war.

Exiled from their native land, with Jerusalem and the temple in ruins, these captives became bitter and hard-hearted in despair and doubt. They knew they were supposed to be the people of God but now they were forsaken and at the mercy of their enemies. Unbelief and rebellion was rampant among them.

Ezekiel was called to preach to these captives and to interpret to them the real reason for their distress.

He was prepared for his ministry by visions of the glory of God. These visions are so described that they are practically inconceivable. Descriptions seem to contradict themselves and yet elements are clearly obvious that would imply the majesty and sovereignty of God. While it might be that the ways of God are past finding out, it was still obvious that God was on the throne, bringing His will to pass.

In visions Ezekiel was shown that the distress of Israel was due to their sin against God. Despite the present situation God would eventually restore and rebuild the Temple to His own glory. No one could presume upon God's grace, but He would eventually carry out His promises. Ezekiel was a powerful preacher who battled head-strong unbelief without success.

### Ezekiel "The Truth of God in a Night of Despair"

1-11 Preparation, Call and Commission of Ezekiel

12-24 Messages Interpreting the Plight of the Jews

25-32 Messages to Other Nations

33-48 Messages Predicting the Future of Israel

## *Daniel*

Daniel was one of the captives who had been brought to Babylon. He was one of the young Hebrews chosen to receive special training by the Babylonians because of his personal gifts and ability. He became a servant of the government in the capacity of Superintendent of Civil Service. Today we would speak of him as a layman.

The book of Daniel is not included among the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. It is placed in the appendix. However, Jesus of Nazareth referred to him as "Daniel the prophet" (Mark 13:14).

The book includes many visions together with interpretation of some of the visions.

One of the visions presents a view of history that shows the sovereignty of God who is working to bring His will to pass.

There is a clear prediction that one day God will set up the Kingdom of Heaven under the rule of the Messiah, which shall prevail over all other kingdoms and bring the whole world in obedience to the will of God.

The books of Ezekiel and Daniel were written during the captivity and are marked by visions which would be quite unintelligible to the rulers of that day. Among the prophets Zechariah was written about this time and is similar in its style of cryptic visions.

## Daniel "The Truth of God in a Time of Crisis"

1-6 Daniel's History and Testimony  
7-12 Daniel's Visions of the Kingdom of God

### *Hosea*

Hosea was a prophet who lived at the same time as Isaiah. Israel, as the people of God, were disobedient and wandering away from God in those days. Hosea preached to them about the everlasting love of God, and was used in his own domestic affairs to illustrate the truth of God.

Hosea married and was the father of several children. His wife became unfaithful to him and left his home to live as a harlot. Years later when her beauty was gone so that no one desired her, Hosea bought her on the open market as if she were a slave and restored her as his wife in his home. Such behavior was astonishing and incredible to the people then, and to this day in the history of Bible study there have been scholars who could not believe such conduct could be really true in historical fact.

But this is precisely the message of Hosea. Even though Israel had proven to be unfaithful to God, He abideth faithful to Himself and to His own promise. This incident may well be the inspiration of the common use by the prophets of the idea of adultery when referring to the waywardness of God's people when they worship other gods.

Hosea preached by example and word that God abideth faithful to His Word regardless of how His people may fall into waywardness.

### Hosea "Everlasting Love"

1-3 Domestic Affairs of Hosea  
4-8 Israel Has Sinned  
9-10 Israel Will Be Chastened  
11-13 Israel Is Loved With an Everlasting Love  
14 Israel Will Be Restored in the Grace of God

### *Amos*

Amos is one of the contemporaries of Isaiah, together with Hosea and Micah. He was called to a rather unusual ministry in that though he was born in the southern nation of Judah, he was sent to preach to the northern nation of Israel. Another unique feature was that he was not considered to be one of the prophets in his own time, nor even the son of a prophet. Actually he seems to have been a farmer, called away from his rural tasks and commissioned to bring his message to a strange people, among whom he was not welcome.

The book presents a classic approach in preaching. In bringing a message of judgment because of their sin, Amos began by announcing judgment upon other nations. First he proclaimed the judgment of God upon the pagan nations at some distance from Israel. Then he told about judgment upon some who were

nearer. Finally he pronounced judgment upon Judah: and only then did he directly confront Israel with an indictment of their evil ways.

Students commonly notice that Amos pointed out the social injustices that were common in Israel. It should be noted that this was done to show how wayward and evil the nation had become. It was because Israel was unfaithful to God that they fell into the sin of social oppression.

Amos pointed out that God would not seek to bring Israel back to Him by chastening, but by the preaching of the Law of God as a plumb line to reveal their wickedness. Because they were incorrigible God would destroy the nation – but in the end He would restore to Himself all who repented and turned to Him.

## Amos "God Deals With Sin"

1-2 Nations Are Judged

3-6 Israel is Condemned

7-9 Warnings About the judgment of God and  
Promise of Future Blessing

## *Obadiah*

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. it records the message of the prophet Obadiah about Edom. Edom is the nation that descended from Esau, who was the twin brother of Jacob from whom the nation of Israel descended. Thus the Edomites were kinfolk of Israel in the flesh.

The background for this book was the attitude and the action of Edom toward Israel in the course of history. When Israel was journeying from Egypt to Canaan, Edom refused to allow them passage through their land, forcing Israel to detour around their country. When Israel was attacked by enemies, Edom refused to aid. When Israel was retreating in the face of a stronger foe, Edom refused to allow them to find a haven or refuge among them. In all their conduct Edom was motivated by pride.

Obadiah saw that the time would come when an invading enemy would destroy Edom. At that time Edom would find no help nor deliverance. Their fate would be utter destruction. In contrast, Israel would be delivered and restored to their land. All their possessions which had been taken would be restored, and Israel would enjoy victory and peace.

This is the Classic Message re: all enemies of Israel.

## Obadiah "Edom Is Doomed"

Pride Caused Edom's Sin

Edom Refused to Aid Judah

Proud Nations Will Be Destroyed

But Judah Will Be Saved

## ***Jonah***

Jonah is probably one of the best known books in the old Testament because of the dramatic story of the career of the prophet Jonah. The story is the book. Jonah had been commissioned to go to Nineveh and tell that city of the impending judgment of God which would result in its destruction. The prophet was unwilling to go on this mission, and in rebellion started across the sea in an opposite direction. God in providence brought a severe storm which threatened to sink the ship. The sailors threw Jonah overboard to free the ship from the curse that was upon the prophet. God had prepared a whale which swallowed Jonah. Jonah repented while in the whale, and was then vomited out on the shore. After this, Jonah obeyed His commission and preached to Nineveh. The city hearkened to his message and repented before God. Then God did not destroy that city.

Jonah was troubled because God seemed to be inconsistent, in that He did not do what He had said He intended to do. Using the example of a vine that served as shade to Jonah, God showed Jonah that as he was affected by the change of circumstances which followed when the vine was withered, so it was not unreasonable for God to be affected by the change of conduct which followed when Nineveh repented.

The book has a classic message about (1) the sovereignty of God; (2) the interest of God in the Gentiles; (3) the willingness of God to respect the repentance of the Gentiles as proper ground for the exercise of His grace. Jonah is the outstanding message about Foreign Missions in the Old Testament.

### **Jonah "The Mercy of God"**

1-2 Jonah's First Call and Flight

3 Jonah's Second Call and Obedience

4 Jonah's Distress and God's Mercy

## ***Micah***

Micah is a book containing the message of the prophet Micah. He lived at the same time as Isaiah, Hosea and Amos.

He addressed his messages to all Israel, both the northern and southern nations. Though divided into two nations, Israel and Judah, the people of Israel were all disobedient to God and doomed to judgment. The condition of disobedience to God was common in all classes of society. The worship of God was superficial and unworthy of Him. Relationships between the people themselves were blemished with dishonesty and featured by oppression and abuse. Religious leaders were insincere, judges lacked integrity and the poor were robbed and abused.

Such conduct was utterly unacceptable to God who would in judgment destroy both nations.

However, in His integrity, God would keep His Covenant Promise by saving a Remnant who would hear His Word and obey Him.

In due time, God would restore the Remnant to all that had been promised to Abraham. He would do this through the ministry of His Messiah, who would redeem and save all who would turn to God in repentance through Him.

The complete demoralization of Israel in sin would justify the judgment of God which would inevitably come, but God is compassionate and He will keep His promise to save all who will turn to Him.

## Micah "Judgment Leads to Mercy"

1-3 Judgment Upon Sin Will Come

4-5 God Will Help His People

6-7 Israel Will Turn to God and Be Blessed

## *Nahum*

Nahum is a short book of three chapters, composed of the message of the prophet Nahum, directed toward the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and any message to Nineveh was actually a message to the nation of Assyria.

This book is best understood when it is remembered that at this time the people of Israel were suffering oppression from Assyria. The Old Testament presents the record to show that when God's people obeyed Him they could triumph over their enemies and live in peace. But when Israel forgot God and turned to other sources for help and leadership, even though they had the promises of God, they would be judged. God would withdraw His favor from His people and would raise up enemies who would defeat, enslave and oppress Israel.

Assyria was one of these pagan conquerors, who oppressed God's people. The Assyrians did not realize their success was due to the judgment of God upon Israel, and in their pride and vanity they ascribed special powers to themselves.

Nahum was given the Word of the Lord that Assyria would be defeated. Nineveh, proud as being the greatest city in the world, would be utterly destroyed. The power of Assyria would be completely shattered.

God would not forget His promises to His people. God would restore Israel forever. The present slavery of Israel was only temporary – God would bless His people in glory.

## Nahum "Nineveh Shall Be Destroyed"

1 God Will Judge Sinful Nations

2 Destruction of Nineveh Is Described

3 Sins of Nineveh Are Described

## *Habakkuk*

Habakkuk is another short book of three chapters, composed of the message of the prophet Habakkuk who lived at the same time as Jeremiah. The general theme of the message is, first, the perplexity of the prophet over the prevailing wickedness of Judah and God's tolerance of such waywardness; and then, his perplexity over God's procedure in allowing a wicked pagan nation to defeat and enslave God's people.

Despite great military strength, Babylon could never have defeated the people of God unless God had permitted this. Habakkuk is puzzled and grieved to see Babylon, a pagan power, overcome Judah who were the people of God.

Then the prophet sees a great truth. God's righteous judgment will never be changed. He will bring His judgment upon sin wherever it is found anywhere among any people. Israel will not escape. But for all who respond to His Word with repentant obedience God will not hold His anger forever.

God will keep His promises. He may permit His people to be defeated and overcome by pagan invaders but He will not forsake His people forever. In His time He will restore and bless with joy, but the enemies shall be utterly and permanently destroyed.

The message is classic – this is true always for believers anywhere: God is not mocked: He will do His will.

## Habakkuk "Faith in Time of Trouble"

- 1 Distress Troubles the Prophet
- 2 God Reveals His Promise
- 3 The Prophet Rejoices in Faith

## *Zephaniah*

Zephaniah is another short book of three chapters, composed of the message of the prophet Zephaniah, who also lived at the same time as Jeremiah. The general theme of the book is the pronouncement of the sure judgment of God in dealing with sin among men. Some persons are the people of God because of certain promises God gave to His people in former generations, but God is no respecter of persons. Sin is sin, and God will not tolerate its presence.

Pagans would naturally in pride sin against their Creator, but God's people, even with the Word of God in hand, will turn away from God in pride, in self-will, actually seeking help from pagans. Despite God's grace and faithfulness in sending prophets to declare God's will and to warn of God's coming judgment, His people actually tolerated pagan ideas and sought help from human sources. This showed they were incorrigible, and brought upon them the sure judgment of God.

But the grace of God provided that anyone who repented of the evil and turned to God should be delivered from the penalty and the power of sin. Such believers should be brought into the fellowship of God, having been made in regeneration fully agreeable to obeying His will.

## Zephaniah "God Will Judge Sin"

- 1 God Will Judge Sinful People
- 2-3 God's People Will Repent and Be Saved

## *Haggai*

Haggai is a short book of two chapters composed of the message of Haggai to God's people some time after they had returned to the land of Judah from Babylon. When the Jews came back to Jerusalem they faced the task of rebuilding the city. They had to rebuild their houses, the walls of the city and the



Temple. They rebuilt their houses first and worked to re-establish themselves in the land. When they met opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple they stopped this work.

Haggai preached the Word of God to arouse them to finish rebuilding the Temple. The people claimed that lack of prosperous returns from crops was the reason for not finishing the work. Haggai insisted it was the failure to finish their rebuilding that caused the poor crops. He claimed they were well able to do the work.

Under his inspiration, the leaders of the people were aroused to resume and finish the task of rebuilding. Haggai preached that God would bless their obedience by bringing greater glory into the second temple, which was not so pretentious, than ever came to the grand temple of Solomon that had been destroyed by the armies of Babylon.

Haggai emphasized the promise of God that all enemies would be overthrown and that the government of the Son of David, the Messiah, would be over all.

### Haggai "Repentance Leads to Blessing"

- 1 Failure to Obey God Is Rebuked
- 2 Obedience to God Is Blessed

## ***Zechariah***

Zechariah is composed of messages from Zechariah to the Jews after they had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. He lived at the same time as Haggai and faced the same problem of inspiring the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the Temple.

But Zechariah saw this as much more than simply a reconstruction of a public building. To be sure, the temple was in ruins and the immediate practical problem was the rebuilding of this place of worship. But the greater, deeper meaning was involved in the eternal purpose of God in His will to glorify His Son.

The historical record of Israel set forth in Old Testament Scripture was actually intended to reveal the truth about Salvation by Christ, the Son of God. Man was not is not able to obey God acceptably in his flesh, in himself. But God in grace, by sending the Messiah to redeem and to deliver, makes it possible for sinful man to be saved into the blessing of God.

The record shows that Israel as a people was incorrigibly sinful. Judgment was inevitable. But the grace of God provided a Messiah who would fulfill the requirements of the law in perfect obedience, and enable God to fulfill His promises.

Having fulfilled all the requirements in His own perfect obedience, Christ could bring into blessing anyone who turned to Him in repentance and complete obedience. Serving as High Priest, Christ would make perfect atonement for all who accepted Him, and serving as King He would bring all His people into total obedience.

Zechariah revealed this aspect of God's will in the use of visions, which, like parables, derive their meaning from the spiritual context in which they occurred.

## Zechariah "The Future Is in God's Hands"

- 1-6 Eight Visions Encouraging Repentance
- 7-8 The True Meaning of Obedience
- 9-14 Visions of Messiah and His Kingdom

### ***Malachi***

Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, is composed of messages of the prophet to Israel, which point out the general ungodliness that marked the life of that nation. This is not preaching against sin in general, nor about sin among all men. These messages are directed toward the people who have been blessed by God and favored by Him, and are now disobeying Him in sin.

The Old Testament is based on the Law, as set forth in the Ten Words on Mount Sinai, and the whole system of guidance ministered by the priests and carried forth in the Temple worship. Israel had been called where Edom had been rejected. The Lord had been set forth as the God of Israel to be honored and obeyed. Worthy obedience to God was guided in the ritual of worship led by the Levites. But Israel had wilfully perverted every response to God.

The priests polluted their offerings.

They profaned the Covenant with Levi by not being truthful.

They encouraged apostasy from God to idol worship.

In teaching, they actually twisted the Word of God to teach falsely.

They misled the people by doubletalk in teaching.

They misused the tithe to "rob" God.

They interpreted the Word and the Acts of God in such a way as to foster unbelief.

Against such widespread universal sin, God will send His own Salvation through His own Servant, the Christ.

## Malachi "Vain Religion Is Condemned"

- 1-2 Lack of Love Will Disqualify
- 3-4 God Will Send Messiah to Do His Will