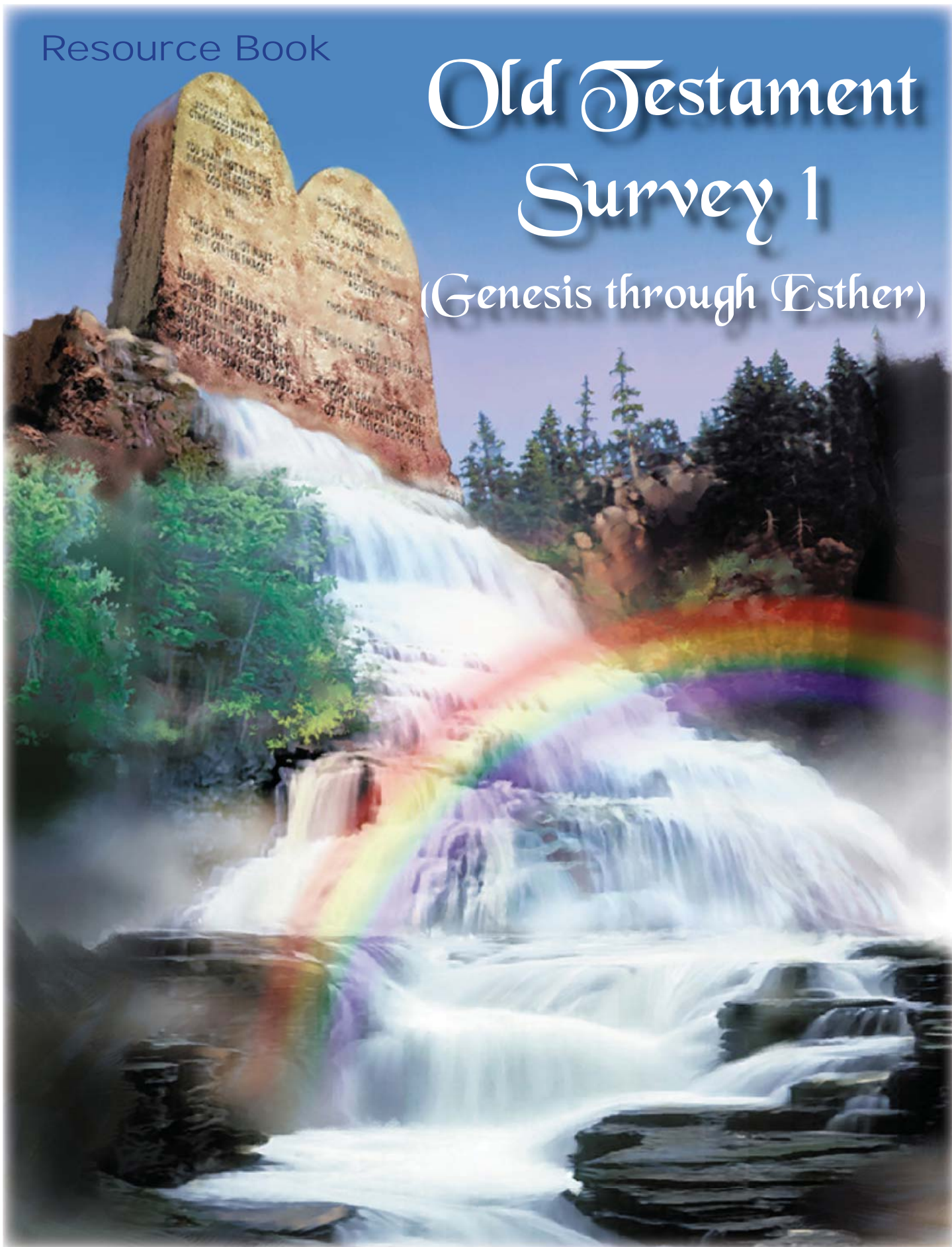


Resource Book

# Old Testament Survey 1 (Genesis through Esther)



# Old Testament Survey

## Course 1

- The Bible is God’s written revelation of His will to humanity.
- Its central theme is salvation through Jesus Christ.
- The Bible contains 66 books (see the chart to the right).
- Written by 40 authors, it covers a period of about 1,600 years.

<b>THE OLD TESTAMENT (Genesis to Malachi)</b>	<b>39 Books</b>
<b>THE NEW TESTAMENT (Matthew to Revelation)</b>	<b>27 Books</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>

### The Groups of Old Testament Books

The 39 Old Testament books may be divided into five groups: The Pentateuch (or the Books of Moses), The Historical Books, The Books of Poetry (or Wisdom), The Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. This course surveys the first two groups, consisting of a total of 17 books:

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Pentateuch</b> <i>Books of Moses (or of the Law)</i>	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy <i>(5 books)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<b>The Historical Books</b> <i>(History of God's People Israel)</i>	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther <i>(12 books)</i>

The Old Testament makes up about three-fourths of the Bible, and the New Testament makes up about one-fourth of the Bible. There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament; the New Testament only has 260 chapters.

The word “testament” means “covenant,” or agreement. The Old Testament is the covenant God made with people about their salvation before Christ came. The New Testament is the agreement God made with people about their salvation after Christ came.

In the Old Testament we find the covenant of law. In the New Testament we find the covenant of grace that came through Jesus Christ. One led into the other (Galatians 3:17-25).

The Old commences what the New completes.

The Old gathers around Mount Sinai—The New around Mount Calvary.

The Old is associated with Moses—The New with Christ (John 1:17).

The authors were kings and princes, poets and philosophers, prophets and statesmen. Some were learned in all the arts of the times and others were unschooled fishermen. Other books soon are out-of-date, but this Book spans the centuries.

Most books must be adapted to age, but old and young alike love this Book.

Most books are provincial and only interest the people in whose language it was written, but not this Book. No one ever stops to think it was written in what are now dead languages.

The Old Testament begins with God (Genesis 1:1). The New Testament begins with Christ (Matthew 1:1).

From Adam to Abraham we have the history of the human race.

From Abraham to Christ we have the history of the chosen race.

From Christ on we have the history of the Church.

**B**rowning wrote years ago: "Image the whole, then execute the parts. Fancy the fabric, quiet, e'er you build, e'er steel strike fire from quartz, e'er mortar dab brick."

**I**n other words, get the total picture of the book. There are two ways of studying the Bible; one is with the telescope (or binoculars) and the other way is with the microscope. This survey course will give you the BIG picture of the Old Testament. Hopefully, it will then intensify your desire to get out the microscope and take a closer verse-by-verse look at these great Bible books!



The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It is inerrant and infallible in its original manuscript which is to be taken as verbally inspired. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

—W.A. Criswell

*In Genesis Jesus Christ is the Seed of the woman (3:15).*

*In Exodus He is the Lamb of God for sinners slain (Chapter 12).*

*In Leviticus He is our High Priest (the whole book).*

*In Numbers He is the Star out of Jacob (24:17).*

*In Deuteronomy He is the Prophet like unto Moses (18:15).*

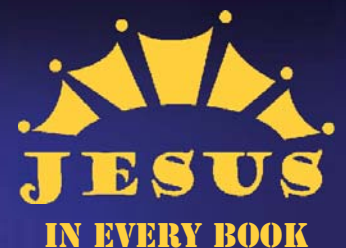
*In Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's armies (5:13-15).*

*In Judges He is the Angel of the LORD or the messenger of Jehovah (Chapter 13).*

*In Ruth He is our Kinsman-Redeemer (Chapter 3).*

*In Samuel, Kings and Chronicles He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Sam. 8:1-9).*

*In Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther He is the sovereign Lord over all the kingdoms of the earth*



# The Value

# of the KEYS

We have included a one-page KEY for each Bible Book that you will study.

## WHAT IS A “KEY”?

Look at it this way. The Old Testament is a library of 39 inspired books. They are divinely given to be a source of wisdom and instruction. Together they form a mosaic of GOD’s revelation *to the particular age of which they are a part*. Along with the New Testament these books form a complete and perfect message to the entire family of humanity for all time.

All 39 books are necessary. Not one can be omitted, or revealed truth would suffer. Together they form themselves into a composite whole; they produce a picture of GOD’s perfect will and purpose. You may think of them, for instance, as a picture puzzle with all the pieces interlocking one with another. Omit one and the picture is incomplete.

And yet, for all their individual importance they are also beautifully interdependent. Genesis depends upon Exodus; Joshua quite naturally introduces Judges. Ezra and Nehemiah must be read and understood together. The Psalms shed brilliant understanding on the entire period.

You see, each book has its own separate character.

Genesis is the book of beginnings; Joshua the book of conquest. Esther tells of GOD’s providence in a strange land. The book of Proverbs gives easy-to-remember wisdom for life. No two books treat the same subject. Individually they add their part to the whole of truth.

Therefore, no book can lightly be omitted from earnest study, or the student will fail to appreciate the complete message of GOD. This includes the books which, being little known and understood, are often passed over. To know the heart of the book will stimulate interest.

When you know that Haggai was a post-exilic prophet and, more than likely, that the city of Jerusalem would never have been completely restored after the exile without the ministry of this energetic prophet, there is vital interest created in knowing the message of Haggai.

This then is the value of the “Keys”: To present the heart of the book, the reason for its writing, and the essential message of the chapters as you begin the study. Of course the key merely opens the door. As you enter in, you will find treasure, blessing immeasurable and instruction inexhaustible.

—William W. Orr



# Genesis

## The Book of Beginnings

### **The First Book in the Bible**

The word Genesis comes from a Greek verb which means “to be born” or “to give birth.” Thus this word refers to the origin, the coming into being of, or the beginning of something. (Note: The word GENESIS also is related to the word “generations” which we find throughout the book of Genesis--see Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; etc.)

How did everything come into being? How did everything get started? How did everything originate? How did everything begin? The book of Genesis answers these questions. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings.

### **The First and the Last**

A good story must have a beginning and an ending. Suppose you find a story book with the first ten pages missing. It would be hard to understand this story without knowing how it all started! Without the book of Genesis the Bible would be very incomplete and would have no beginning. The book of Genesis provides the foundation for every other book in the Bible, and without Genesis it would be very difficult to understand all the other books.

The Bible starts with Genesis and it ends with Revelation. That which begins in Genesis is finished in Revelation. Genesis tells us how everything began; Revelation tells us how everything will end. Genesis is the foundation upon which the other books stand; Revelation is the roof which finishes the building. It's easy to see why Satan attacks both of these Books. Note some distinctives:

<b>GENESIS</b>	<b>REVELATION</b>
First Book	Last Book
Answers the question, <b>WHERE DID I COME FROM?</b> (man's origin)	Answers the question, <b>WHERE AM I GOING?</b> (man's destiny)
Paradise lost (Genesis 3)	Paradise Regained (Rev. 21-22)
The original heaven and earth (UNIVERSE) (Genesis 1:1)	The new heaven and new earth (UNIVERSE) (Revelation 21:1)
Curse pronounced (Genesis 3:14,17)	No more curse (Revelation 22:3)
Death entered (Genesis 2:17; 3:19)	No more death (Revelation 21:4)
Man kept from the tree of life (Genesis 3:24)	Man given a right to the tree of life (Revelation 22:14)
Sorrow (Genesis 3:17)	No more sorrow (Revelation 21:4)
"In the beginning" (Genesis 1:1)	"Finished" (Revelation 10:7)

### **The Seed Plot of the Bible**

The book of Genesis is like the seed plot of the Bible. The seeds are planted in the book of Genesis and then in the other books of the Bible these “seeds” grow into big plants and trees. In the other books we can learn about these plants and trees (such as sin, Satan, the nation Israel, the promise of the Saviour), but we should never forget that the seeds of those plants and trees are found in the book of Genesis. In the other books we watch them grow, but in Genesis we see them planted!

### **The Families of the Earth**

The book of Genesis tells us about the families of the earth. First we learn about Adam's family and how wicked they became. God finally sent the great flood. Then we learn about Noah's family. Noah had three sons and out of these three sons came all the nations of the world (Genesis 9:19; 10:32). Finally in chapter 12 and in the following chapters we learn about the family of Abraham. The great nation of Israel came out of Abraham (Genesis 12:2).

### **The Promised Savior**

The first promise of a Saviour is found in Genesis 3:15. This verse is saying that the Saviour (Messiah) will come from the seed of the woman (Eve) and He will defeat the serpent who is Satan. In the book of Genesis we can begin to see the line of the Saviour, that is, those people who were the ancestors of Christ the Messiah. In Luke 3:33-38 we see that Christ's ancestors were Seth, Noah, Shem (Sem), Terah (Thara), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. We read about these people in the book of Genesis.

### **Who is This God?**

*The Bible begins with GOD and the first book of the Bible tells us who this God is! Consider:*

- He is the GOD OF CREATION (Genesis 1-2)
- He is the GOD OF SALVATION (Genesis 3:15,21)
- He is the GOD OF JUDGMENT (Genesis 6-8)
- He is the GOD OF THE NATIONS (Genesis 9-11)
- He is the GOD OF ISRAEL (Genesis 12-50)

# Key to Genesis

## 1. STATISTICS:

Name means “beginnings” or “originations.” The writer is law-giver Moses (Exodus 17:14, Deuteronomy 31:24); time of writing approximately 1500 B.C.; Genesis is first of Pentateuch (meaning five books); place of writing, undoubtedly in the wilderness. It is the fourth largest book in the Bible and covers more than 2,500 years of human history.

## 2. THEME:

Genesis depicts the first chapter of life. Here is the true story of how all things began. Here is the stately portal to the grand structure of the Holy Scriptures. Here is man’s introduction to the magnificence of GOD Almighty. Here is the sad story of the introduction of sin.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Creation (1, 2)	Deluge (6-9)
Fall (3, 4)	Nations (10, 11)
Patriarchs (5)	Abraham (12-25)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Here is a book of simple, direct honesty. There is no hesitation, no supposition, no apology. These are GOD’s facts. The opening verse is a masterpiece of all literature. Countless volumes have been written about these ten words. Where is another such statement? Genesis is unique for its portrayal of beginnings. Everything we know had its start here.

The book is eclectic choosing to tell mainly of the history of one family, Abraham, and one nation, Israel, as it passes by the story of many nations. Isaac (21-27) Jacob (25-36) Joseph (37-50)

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

- GOD had no beginning. He pre-existed in all creation.  
The fact of sin is a solemn reality. The entire human race is included in the Fall.
- GOD is greatly concerned with man’s redemption. His first act after the Fall was to provide coats of skins.  
A horrible example of the depravity of man is the cold-blooded murder of Abel.
- Mankind, left to himself for several thousand years, became so depraved there was no remedy left except death for all (Flood) and a new start with Noah.
- The judgment of the Tower of Babel is a logical answer to the problem of where the nations of the world began.
- The GOD of eternity found pleasure in the fellowship of a man made of earthy clay. Abraham became the “friend of GOD” on the basis of his faith (chapter 15).
- Joseph is the Bible’s greatest type of the coming SAVIOUR in more than 100 different analogies.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

Genesis 1:1 thoroughly refutes: atheism, pantheism, polytheism, materialism and agnosticism.

It is possible that 25 million people perished in the Flood. Genesis does not tell the date of creation.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

- Genesis is a cold, sober fact. Read it and believe it at face value.
- Recognize that all truth found later in the Bible has its roots here.

# *The 50 Chapters of Genesis*

- 1 **I**nception of the world
- 2 **N**ewlyweds placed in Eden
- 3 **T**emptation and man's fall
- 4 **H**atred and the first murder
- 5 **E**ntire genealogy of Adam
- 6 **B**uilding of the ark
- 7 **E**ruption of the flood
- 8 **G**oing from the ark
- 9 **I**nitiation of rainbow promise
- 10 **N**oah's sons and grandsons
- 11 **N**ations scattered from Babel
- 12 **I**mmigration of Adam's family
- 13 **N**ephew Lot leaves Abram
- 14 **G**ifts for Priest Melchizedek
- 15 **G**od counts Abram righteous
- 16 **O**ffspring Ishmael from Hagar
- 17 **D**esignation changed to Abraham
- 18 **C**ompassion for Sodom's righteous
- 19 **R**emoval of Sodom and Gomorrah
- 20 **E**gyptian escapade of Abraham
- 21 **A**rrival of promised Isaac
- 22 **T**est of Abraham's faith
- 23 **E**nd of Sarah's life
- 24 **D**enoting Rebekah as bride
- 25 **T**wins Esau and Jacob born
- 26 **H**ostility between Isaac & Philistines
- 27 **E**sau robbed of birthright
- 28 **H**eavenly ladder at Bethel
- 29 **E**arning Leah and Rachel
- 30 **A**dditions to Jacob's family
- 31 **V**enture away from Laban
- 32 **E**ndeavoring to wrestle God
- 33 **N**ew friendship with Esau
- 34 **A**venge for Dinah's defilement
- 35 **N**ame changed to Israel
- 36 **D**escendents of Esau listed
- 37 **T**reachery of Joseph's brothers
- 38 **H**arlot Tamar deceives Judah
- 39 **E**nraged Potiphar jails Joseph
- 40 **E**xplanation of two dreams
- 41 **A**ppointing Joseph as ruler
- 42 **R**euben held in Egypt
- 43 **T**rek to Egypt again
- 44 **H**olding Benjamin for cup
- 45 **A**nnouncement of Joseph's identity
- 46 **N**ew home in Egypt
- 47 **D**esign to save Egypt
- 48 **M**anasseh and Ephraim adopted
- 49 **A**nnouncement of Jacob's blessing
- 50 **N**ew relationship among brothers



# Exodus

## The Book of Israel's Departure From Egypt

### The Second Book of Moses

When you are in a public building, you will see signs which say EXIT. What do these signs mean? They mean the same thing as the word "Exodus" does: *the way out, a going out, departure*. When we think of the word "Exodus" we should think of the time when God brought His people Israel out of slavery. In the days of Joseph the children of Israel were in Egypt, but Joseph knew that someday God would bring them out and they would depart from that land of slavery. This is what the book of Exodus is all about. God delivered His people from slavery and brought them out of Egypt. This happened in the days of Moses and we read about this in the Book of Exodus.

*In the Book of Exodus we learn about five great events:*

### 1. The Nation Grows.

When the children of Israel first came down to Egypt in the days of Joseph, it was *not* a very large nation. But many years before God had promised Abraham that He would multiply this nation and make the people like the sand of the seashore and the stars of the heaven (Genesis 22:17). God keeps His promises! Now the children of Israel were so numerous that the Egyptians became afraid (see Exodus 1:9-10). The king of Egypt tried everything he could think of to stop this nation from growing and multiplying, but he did not succeed (Exodus 1:12, 16-17).

### 2. God Sends Plagues.

Finally in the days of Moses it was time for the children of Israel to leave the land of Egypt, but Pharaoh the king would not let them go. At this time God sent plague after plague upon the land of Egypt (frogs, water turned to blood, lice, flies, boils, hail, etc.). We read about these plagues in Chapters 7-12 of Exodus.

### 3. Israel is Delivered From Slavery.

The last plague God sent was the worst of all. Every firstborn son in every Egyptian family died. After this happened Pharaoh decided to let the children of Israel go. Later Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after the children of Israel with his armies. Miraculously God brought His people through the Red Sea and God buried the Egyptians under the Red Sea. We read about this exciting deliverance in Exodus, Chapters 12-15.

### 4. The Law is Given.

After crossing the Red Sea the children of Israel found themselves in the desert wilderness. There, at Mt. Sinai, God gave the children of Israel His law and His commandments. This is recorded in Chapters 19-23.

### 5. The Tabernacle is Built.

Exodus, Chapter 25 and the chapters that follow are all about the building of the tabernacle. God wanted to dwell in the midst of His people and therefore He told Moses to build the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a large tent and in the book of Exodus we learn about this tent and about the articles of furniture which were in this tent. The children of Israel did not have a Bible like we do today. But they did have the tabernacle, and this special tent helped them to understand certain things about the Lord Jesus Christ and what He would do for them. They could not read the Bible, but they could look at the tabernacle and learn much about God and how to come to God.

# Key to EXODUS

## 1. STATISTICS:

Some 30 years elapsed between Genesis and Exodus. The Children of Israel increased exceedingly to 3,000,000 souls. A change in the reigning dynasty sentenced them to cruel slavery. Exodus tells the story of their “going out”. The writer is Moses (24:4), and time covered is about 80 years from his birth.

## 2. THEME:

The theme is threefold: the faithfulness, the power, and the wisdom of GOD. First, GOD was faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So, by His power, He opened the iron gates of Egypt. When Sinai was reached, GOD provided an infinitely wise law by which the Children of Israel were to live.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Preparation for deliverance (1-13)	Priesthood (28-29)
Journey to Sinai (14-19)	Idolatry (32-33)
Laws given (20-24)	Covenant (34)
Tabernacle (25-27; 30-31)	Tabernacle erection (35-40)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- This book breathes the presence of GOD. He was aware of the plight of His people and did something about it.
- Exodus is particularly the book of a great servant of GOD, Moses. Here is a man who talked with GOD face to face.
- The Mosaic Law is GOD’s highest for His people. It is heavenly wisdom simplified for earthly living.
- The Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land has become a giant object lesson for the Christian life today.
- Here began the sad story (chapter 32) of man’s failure which was repeated continually in Israel’s history.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

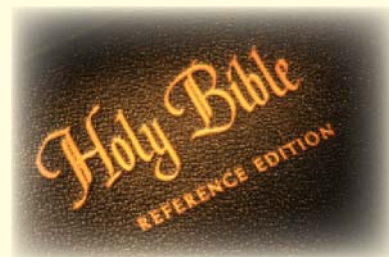
- Moses’ life was divided into three periods:
  - 40 years in schools of Egypt;
  - 40 years in school of GOD (tending sheep in the desert);
  - 40 years in service.
- At the end of his life he was still strong and able (Deuteronomy 34:7).
- The ten plagues were directed against the Egyptian government, but were also a demonstration against the gods of Egypt. For instance, the first two plagues showed JEHOVAH superior to the god of the Nile; the third against the earth god Seb and the priests who could not officiate with lice upon them.
- The Israelites could not be delivered until they came “under the blood” of the Passover. This is the central fact in GOD’s relationship and a continual reminder of sin and the need for cleansing.
- GOD immediately took up His residence among His people. They could see the sign of His presence in the pillar of fire and the cloud.
- The Ten Commandments are given as an epitome of the law, easily taught and easily remembered.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

Exodus begins the original “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

Can you imagine how much manna was required for 40 years? (16:15)

Note how meticulous GOD is about details. (Hebrews 8:5).



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

Exodus is geographically and historically accurate; believe it entirely. However, its main value today is to take the experiences, trials, and deliverances and apply them to the Christian life.

# Leviticus

## How to Worship a Holy God

### The Third Book of Moses

Leviticus is a book of worship. It tells the children of Israel how to get right with God and how to stay right with God. How can sinful people worship a holy God? This question is answered in the book of Leviticus.

When you think of the name Leviticus, think of the first four letters: LEVI. This book has much to say about the sons of Levi. Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob (see Exodus 1:1-2). The sons (descendants) of Levi are called “Levites” (Luke 10:32). Moses and Aaron were descendants of Levi. God took Aaron and did something special to him. God made him His priest (Exodus 28:1). Also, all of the sons of Aaron (all of the male descendants) became priests. No one could be a priest except those men who were from the family of Aaron.

### THE SONS OF LEVI are the Levites. THE SONS OF AARON are the Priests.

When it came to worship, the Levites and the Priests were the leaders of the people, and in this book God tells them the things they need to know.

### The Key Word

The key word in Leviticus is the word “HOLY,” which is found over 80 times in this book. We also find the words “SIN” and “UNCLEANNES” many, many times in this book of Leviticus. Man is sinful and unclean. God is holy and pure and sinless. How can sinful man come to a holy God? How can an unclean, filthy man worship a God who is spotless and pure and clean?

<b>MAN</b>	<b>BARRIER</b>	<b>GOD</b>
Unholy		Holy
Impure		Pure
Sinful		Sinless
Unclean		Clean
Filthy		Spotless

**Your iniquities have separated  
between you and your God.**

Isaiah 59:2

### The Way To God

There is only one way that sinful man can come to a holy God. He must come to God by way of sacrifice! The book of Leviticus has much to say about animal sacrifices. All of these sacrifices were pictures of what Christ would someday do on the cross for all men. We can read about these sacrifices in the first few chapters of Leviticus. These animal sacrifices carried an important message:

1. **Blood must be shed.** *Jesus Christ shed His blood for us* (Hebrews 9:22).
2. **An innocent substitute must die.** Instead of the sinner dying, an innocent animal must be killed.  
*Jesus Christ (who was not just innocent, but righteous) died as our Substitute* (1 Cor. 15:3; Romans 5:8).
3. **The death penalty for sin must be paid.** Jesus Christ died for us (Romans 5:6, 8).  
Sacrifice makes it possible for a sinful man to come to a holy God.

**The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the Cross  
makes it possible for sinful people to come to a  
holy God, and to worship Him!**



# Key to LEVITICUS

## 1. STATISTICS:

Third in a series of five (Pentateuch) by the same writer, Moses (Romans 10:5). Name means “pertaining to or concerning the Levites.” These were members of the Tribe of Levi, especially set aside for the work of GOD. Place written, at Sinai. Time involved, one month or less. Type of book, possibly an instruction manual for priests.

## 2. THEME:

In view of the infinite holiness of GOD, how can sinful man approach and walk before Him? There is an approach and it is by way of sacrifice. There is a life and it is by way of separation. All this is taught by sacrifices, feasts, tabernacle and laws.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Offerings (1-7)

Priests' consecration (8-9)

Nadab and Abihu (10)

Purity of life (11-15)

Day of Atonement (16-17)

Warnings of sin (18-22)

Feasts described (23-25)

Obedience (26)

Vows, tithes (27)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- GOD counts worship important. To fail is to sin (19:2).
- The number “seven” is emphasized: the seventh day, the seventh year, the year of Jubilee (7 x 7), etc.
- Leviticus named specific horrible sins. Frankness was necessary because these things were being practiced by iniquitous neighbors.
- Priesthood was definitely a part of Old Testament system. In the New Testament, CHRIST is High Priest for all believers (1 Peter 2:9).

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

- The priests were an integral part of GOD's plan for Israel. Provision was made for their support through portions of the offerings, and through tithes. The rest of the Levites were assistants to the priests. They became teachers, scribes, musicians, judges, and officers.
- GOD sent swift death to two sons of Aaron (10:1, 2). Their sin was that of professional presumption. They entered where they should not, and with fire not taken from the altar. GOD cannot allow carelessness in divine things.
- GOD required capital punishment for many crimes. Many offenses were punishable with death including: murder, kidnapping, negligence, cursing a parent, idolatry, etc. (see chapters 19, 20).
- In 19:18 we have one of the high points of the law. Generally considered to be a New Testament truth, the Israelite was commanded, “**Love thy neighbor as thyself.**”
- Tremendous wisdom was exhibited in the Law. Many provisions reveal that GOD desired His children to love Him and to love one another. When they did this, He would care for their temporal needs.
- The great day of the year was the Day of Atonement (chapter 16). At this time the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

The yearly feasts partook of the nature of holidays. Everyone had three vacations yearly, an entire year off every seven, and once in a lifetime the year of Jubilee was tremendous rejoicing.

Slavery was not forbidden but hedged with humane considerations.

Every 50 years all the land reverted to its original owners.



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

If GOD gave a law to US today, this would be it. All its provisions are divinely suited to human needs. Some of your greatest blessings here are to relate these earthly laws to spiritual truths, as the Day of Atonement represents Calvary.

# Numbers

## Walking, Wandering and Wayward

The book of Numbers deals with the walk and warfare of the believer as they are pilgrims going through the wilderness of life. It is a handbook for pilgrims. In Numbers, Israel is walking, wandering, and wayward. It is a book about an unfortunate pilgrimage where a group of people who knew better did not live better lives.

Numbers is about God's direction and man's rejection of God's leading and guidance. The Septuagint or Greek Old Testament calls this book *Arithmoi* which means "arithmetic." It was given this name because of two counts taken of the people in this book. The counts were taken to determine the strength of the army and the identity of the people. Only true Israelites who were twenty or older were allowed to fight the battles of the Lord. The Hebrews called this book *Bemidbar* which means "In the Wilderness." The rebellion and stubbornness of Israel led to their wandering in the wilderness for almost 40 years. This book has been called "The book of Murmuring" because of the complaining of the people. Psalm 95:10 summarizes God's view of these years.

Because this is a book for pilgrims, the lessons we find within it are valuable for us as today's pilgrims:

### ***Lesson 1—God's People Are Not Always in God's Will.***

God's people tend to get out of place and out of bounds. God wanted His people in the Promised Land, but disobedience, rebellion, and doubt led to their wandering in the wilderness for forty years. The will of God is to be a priority in our lives. God wants us to realize that He has a plan for every person. We are to run our course and race for Christ.

### ***Lesson 2—We Are to Be Prepared to Fight the Lord's Battles.***

Scriptural warfare is part of being a soldier for Christ. This is what we are to be. We are in the Lord's army. God's people were counted except for two men who could not be counted upon to do His will. Can the Lord count upon you?

### ***Lesson 3—Life is a Wilderness. We Need To Follow God's Guidance or We Will Fail.***

We are to go forward in faith, following Christ. See John 14:6 and John 8:12.

### ***Lesson 4—Complaining is Contagious and Doubting God is Disastrous.***

It does not take long for a negative spirit to spread. Grumbling, griping, complaining, and doubting ruined Israel. It will ruin you too. See Ephesians 4:30-31.

### ***Lesson 5—The Importance of Spiritual Instruction.***

We need the instruction of God's Word because we tend to be immature and ignorant of His truth. When Israel was numbered, the Levites were not included in the count because they were to be exempt from military duty. In Numbers 4:48, we find about 8,580 priests, which was about 233 people per priest. Their job was to make sure people worshiped correctly. Worship and warfare go together. If worship is not right, then warfare is weakened. This is a key reason why many Christians are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ***Lesson 6—God Does Things Decently and Orderly. He is Not the Author of Confusion.***

In order to move this crowd, they had to be organized. The census showed that there were 603,550 men that were twenty and older. The grand total with women and children was probably about 2 1/2 to 3 million people. The number was confirmed in the ransom offering. A half-shekel was given for each person. See Exodus 38:25-26.

When God leads your life, He does not lead you into confusion. We do this when we don't follow Him. The Lord gives us focus in frustration, calm and clarity in confounding circumstances, and sensibility and stability in shaky situations. If you are confused, get on your knees and get into the Word.

### ***Lesson 7—God Will Supply All Your Needs.***

Philippians 4:19 says, "...my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The food needed to feed this many people required about fifty railroad box cars of manna per day, plus food for thousands of animals. They would need 12 million gallons of water per day. It is possible that the manna had a quantity of moisture in it to give the people the water they needed for their bodies. God miraculously supplied their needs in a barren desert. He can supply our needs too. First, He fulfills our most important need, forgiveness and cleansing of our sin. He gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ. These seven lessons are vital in maturing and growing in Christ and being what God intended us to be.

# Key to NUMBERS

## 1. STATISTICS:

Moses is the writer; Numbers is fourth in his series of five books written about 1500 B.C.; covers approximately 40 years; key verse 33:1; takes its name from two numberings of the people; tells of progress from Sinai to borders of the Promised Land.

## 2. THEME:

Numbers is a book of instructions and action. Its instruction is like Leviticus, and its action like Exodus. Essentially, it tells the story of the journeyings of the Israelites from Sinai to Kadesh after 38 years of useless wanderings on to the plains of Moab by the borders of the land.

## 3. OUTLINE:

*Three main divisions:*

- (1) Laws given while at Sinai (1-10);      (2) Journey to Kadesh (11-21);      (3) Camping at Moab (22-36).

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Numbers tells of a 11-day journey which took 40 years.
- It is a book of “numberings” but also “murmurings” (7 times). Our admiration of the man Moses rises to great heights. Here is truly a spiritual giant (14:11-20).
- This was a case where the majority were dead wrong (13:26-33).
- Two census counts were taken, one at the beginning of the 38 years of wandering and the other at the close. Result: no gain whatsoever. 1200 men died monthly in the wandering years.
- Balaam’s doctrine (Revelation 2:14; Numbers 25:1-8) of fraternization with the world is exceedingly dangerous to the people of GOD. Here GOD slew 24,000.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

- The 38 years of shame GOD counts a blank. There is no record, no progress, no increase. GOD passes them by.
- GOD was grieved at the unreasoning unbelief of the people (Psalm 95:10), but nevertheless turned the years into preparation for the future. Boys grew to men, ready and trained for the rigors of war.
- One of the greatest teachings (object lessons) of the Bible is in 21:5-9. Our LORD used this as an illustration in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14).
- The command to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan was a divine one (33:51-56). GOD’s love has teeth in it. It would have been impossible for Israel to be pure in the midst of such wickedness.
- Balaam was an example of a servant of GOD among the Gentiles. His life was a warning to others of GOD’s servants. For the love of earthly gain, he sold out. Our book records his untimely death (31:8).
- It pays to serve GOD faithfully. Consider Caleb and Joshua who were allowed to live while 600,000 others died.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- A beautiful intercessory prayer (14:11-20).
- One of the loveliest benedictions in the Bible (6:24-26).
- GOD keeps books (14:22).
- Word “number” used 125 times in this book.
- Israel wins a battle with Midian without a single casualty.
- A lot of quail in 11:31.
- A miracle in the botanical realm (17:8).



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You could change the whole miserable character of this disappointing book if you could substitute “trust” for unbelief. Let this be a lesson to all of us.



# Deuteronomy

## God's Commentary on the Law of Moses

Finally after 38 years in the wilderness desert, the last unbelieving person of the older generation died. Of this older generation, only Joshua and Caleb and Moses were still alive. All of the other men living were younger, because they were under 20 years old when the first counting was made. They were the younger generation. Some of them were teens when the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. Others were only children when this happened. Others were not even born yet. As the book of Deuteronomy begins, it is about 40 years after crossing the Red Sea. The new generation has grown up and the older generation has died off.

### ***The Name of the Book***

The name Deuteronomy means “the second law.” This means that God’s law was given a second time to the new generation. Moses, who was now a very old man, carefully repeated and explained the law to this new generation. These people would go into the promised land. The older generation was not allowed to go into the promised land.

Even today laws need to be explained and re-taught to the new generation. This is true when it comes to the laws of our own country. The supreme laws of our country were first set forth over 200 years ago, and are found in a great document known as The Constitution of the United States. Those of us living today were not around in the days of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. If we had lived back then with these great leaders we would probably understand the Constitution very well! The same thing is true with the law that God gave to His people at Mt. Sinai. The new generation had not been present when God gave His law to Moses (or if they were present they were only teens or children who were probably too young to remember). They needed Moses to teach them God’s law in a new and fresh way. This is just what Moses did! The book of Deuteronomy is filled with laws: “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not”.

The Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy, Chapter 5. When you think of the book of Deuteronomy you should think of the word obedience. To love God is to obey God!

Deuteronomy is also the final book of Moses. In this book we find Moses’ last words to the children of Israel before his death.

### **The Personal Message of the First Five Books**

1. GENESIS—I’m born again! I’m a new creature (new creation) in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)! I have a new heart and a new beginning!
2. EXODUS—God has delivered me out of the terrible slavery of sin (John 8:32-36)!
3. LEVITICUS—I can worship a holy God because of Christ’s sacrifice (1 Peter 3:18).
4. NUMBERS—I must believe God’s promises. Faith is the key (Hebrews chapters 3 and 4).
5. DEUTERONOMY—I must obey God’s commands. Obedience is the key (John 14:15, 21, 23)!

# Key to DEUTERONOMY

## 1. STATISTICS:

Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Pentateuch. The writer is Moses who did not complete it until just before his death. It was written 1500 B.C. Actual time covered is one month, but review is made of past 40 years. Place of writing was at the southeast entrance into Promised Land. Key verses, 11:26-28. Name means “second” or “reiterated” Law, i.e., stating the Law with a view of its usage in the land.

## 2. THEME:

Deuteronomy was Moses’ magnificent valedictory. It looked back over the important events of the past 40 years, and forward to the glorious victories of the future. The underlying strain concerned GOD’s faithfulness, and the challenge was to trust Him and go forward.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Review and warnings (1-4)

Reminders of the Covenant (5-11)

Warnings about future (12-26)

Possible blessings and curses (27-30)

Moses’ farewell (31-34)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- The entire book is composed of Moses’ words. Speeches were made eloquent by the Spirit of GOD for Moses had admitted he could not speak (Exodus 4:10-13).
- As literature, the book is magnificent, classed with Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah.
- The writer’s poetic nature is demonstrated in his “national anthem” of chapter 32. See Exodus 15 and Psalm 90.
- There are two great prophetic sections: 18:15-19; 28-30.
- Emphasis of the book is a stern review of moral laws.
- Temptations were just ahead. A new generation had grown up.
- Nowhere in the Pentateuch until here do we read of the love of GOD. Note here the emphasis: 4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15.
- The word “remember” is prominent, occurring 18 times.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

- The central chapter is 27 and is condensed for public recitation as an epitome of the LORD’s requirements.
- The Decalogue (10 commandments) is repeated in chapter 5.
- Most of the present host would dimly remember the “thunderings and lightnings” of Sinai 40 years before.
- The importance of daily, ceaseless training of children is emphasized in chapter 6.
- The necessity of complete extermination of the wicked people of the land of Canaan is detailed in chapter 7. The reason was so that GOD’s people might not be corrupted.
- Moses was not allowed to enter the land because of his sin (32:51); yet fourteen centuries later we do find him in the land at the scene of the transfiguration of CHRIST (Matthew 17:3).
- Provisions were made for the continual reading of the Law (31:9-13) after Moses’ death, also, for the recording of the Law in plaster, on Mt. Ebal “very plainly” (27:2-4; Joshua 8:30-32). When the nation heeded the Law they prospered. When they neglected it, they suffered.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- Specific military rules in chapter 20.
- GOD believes in punishment, but not in bitter cruelty (25:1-3).
- A good test for false prophets (18:20-22).
- Chapter 33 is similar to Genesis 49.
- Read and note the spiritual foresight of Moses as he described the centuries of wandering of the Jews in 28:63-68.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You will best understand Deuteronomy after you have read the first four books. Then, in your imagination stand with Moses and look back, and forward. This book lives!

# Joshua

## Entering and Possessing the Land

Joshua was a great man of faith who believed that God could bring the nation Israel into the promised land and give them victory. Moses knew that he would die and that Joshua was the man that God wanted to lead the children of Israel into the promised land (Deuteronomy 31:7). As we read the book of Joshua we learn about Joshua leading the nation of Israel into the land and conquering Israel's enemies on the fields of battle. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible and Joshua wrote the sixth, the book of Joshua.

The name Joshua means "*The LORD is salvation*" and it reminds us that God is our great Deliverer and Saviour. In the days of Joshua God delivered Israel from all her enemies and brought the nation safely to the promised land. In the New Testament the word "Joshua" (Hebrew) is the same word as "Jesus" (Greek). In the New Testament the name "Jesus" usually refers to Jesus Christ, but in Hebrews 4:8 the name "Jesus" refers to the Jesus or Joshua that we read about in the book of Joshua.

In the book of Exodus we learned that God brought them out of Egypt. But God had an important reason for bringing His people out of Egypt! God BROUGHT THEM OUT so that He might BRING THEM IN. There was something terrible that God wanted to get them away from (slavery); there was something wonderful that God wanted to give them (the promised land)! In Exodus we learn about God bringing them out. In Joshua we learn part two of the story: God bringing them in.

The children of Israel should have gone right into the land which God promised to give them. But instead they spent approximately forty years wandering in the desert because of their unbelief (as we learn from the book of Numbers).

God gave the children of Israel a wonderful land and He wanted them to enjoy the land and take full advantage of it! Even though the children of Israel won many victories under Joshua, they failed to possess the land completely. The children of Israel failed to drive out some of the enemies and these enemies possessed some of the land that Israel should have possessed (see Joshua 17:12-13). They missed out on all that they could have had and should have had!

Warren W. Wiersbe says this: The Book of Joshua is the book of new beginnings for the people of God, and many believers today need a new beginning. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel claimed their inheritance and enjoyed the blessings of the land that God had prepared for them, "as the days of heaven upon the earth" (see Deuteronomy 11:21). That's the kind of life God wants us to experience today. Jesus Christ, our Joshua, wants to lead us in conquest now and share with us all the treasures of His wonderful inheritance. He has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings" (see Ephesians 1:3), but too often we live like defeated paupers.

## Joshua and Ephesians

The New Testament book of Ephesians is very similar to the book of Joshua. The book of Joshua commands us to "*Be strong*" (Joshua 1:6, 9, 18)! So does Ephesians 6:10.

The book of Joshua is about soldiers who had to win battles. Ephesians 6:11-18 is about soldiers.

The book of Joshua is about Israel possessing the land. The book of Ephesians is about Christians possessing the riches and the blessings which they have in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).

Every Christian is a spiritual billionaire! But not every Christian realizes how rich he really is, and very few possess and enjoy these spiritual riches that are more valuable than gold.

God's victory on the cross gives us who believe His promised possessions. But the promised possessions require my desire for them, my determination to possess them, and my dependence upon God in the necessary conflict and conquest. Only then can I experience and enjoy my God-given possessions.

# Key to JOSHUA

## 1. STATISTICS:

The writer is Joshua (24:26) and was written about 1425 B.C. This historical book covered about 25 years. Joshua lived to be 110. The key verse is 1:8; the key thought, possession.

## 2. THEME:

Joshua is a book of progress, conquest, possession, and systematic division of the land. With a new leader, there were new experiences, new victories, new attainments and new problems. But GOD's guidance, GOD's power, and GOD's encouragement were the same. Joshua is the chief personage.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Conquest (1-12)

Settlement of the land (13-22)

Joshua's farewell (23-24)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Joshua is a book of action and corresponds to the challenges, victories and thrills of the Christian life.
- These events in Joshua demonstrate great principles: the rite of circumcision at Gilgal (chapter 5); the necessity for separation; the memorials (chapter 4), a sign of remembrance of GOD's miracles.
- Joshua's dependence upon the books of Moses was demonstrated:
- Compare Joshua 14:1-4 with Numbers 34:13-14; Joshua 13:11 with Numbers 32:37; Joshua 21 with Numbers 35.
- GOD's man, Moses, was gone, but GOD's work went on under GOD's new leader, Joshua.
- Here is a commander, Joshua, who was evidently reared in the brick factories, or iron foundries of Egypt.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

The fact that GOD goes before His people is demonstrated in the fear He had put into the hearts of the Canaanites preparatory to the conquest (2:10-11).

The unbelievable grace of GOD is shown in the inclusion of Rahab, a harlot, into the Messianic line of CHRIST (Matt. 1:5).

While the land had been already "given" to Israel (Genesis 15:18-21), it was still necessary that they go in and possess it. As they did GOD gave the victory.

The slaughter of the Canaanites (6:21; 10:28) was by GOD's direct command. This was absolutely necessary to cleanse the land for the occupation of GOD's chosen people, and entirely justifiable, for GOD had given 400 extra years for their repentance. (Genesis 15:16).

Victory at Jericho was by complete observance of GOD's directions, defeat at Ai due to disobedience of one man.

The Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh for the gathering place of the Tribes to worship the LORD. Later, David made Jerusalem the religious center of the people.

The vindication of the minority report of the spies (Numbers 14:6-10) was amply demonstrated in the complete conquest of the land.

The distribution "by lot" (Numbers 33:54) evidently allowed GOD's hand to be present and recognized in the tribal divisions.

The miracle of the sun standing still, and of the great hailstones in the battle of Gibeon was entirely in keeping with the events which had been happening since Israel left Egypt.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- Three campaigns result in seven nations with 31 kings defeated by Israel and Joshua (chapter 12).
- Joshua's name appears in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets found in Egypt.
- JESUS was baptized 1400 years later, probably near where Joshua crossed the Jordan.



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

GOD's people made great advances under the leadership of a man named Joshua. GOD's people today may do the same under our Joshua (Jesus). Take this book literally, but do not fail to apply its spiritual lessons to your own life.

# Judges

## A Sad Chapter of History

If there was ever a book in the Bible more relevant and more appropriate to study in this decade, it would be the book of Judges. The events describing the downfall of Israel can be compared to the same mistakes the United States and other countries of the world are committing now... apathy, apostasy, and anarchy.

The book of Judges speaks to our time. It presents us with living illustrations of individuals who served the Lord in difficult times. The book presents the consequences of spiritual compromise and it reveals what happens to God's people when they conform to the mold of this world. Judges

reveals that partial defense is no defense at all. There is no room for neutrality in the Christian life. We either submit and serve Christ or we will be swallowed up by the wicked influence of this world.

After Joshua died we have the next period of history which is called the period of the Judges. It was during this time that the children of Israel turned away from the Lord and sinned against Him:

They had no king, no control, no one responsible, no authority. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. What we find in Judges is the same cycle we find in America and other nations of the world today. We live in the "Me Generation". Our nation's motto is "Do your own thing! Live For Now! If it feels good do it!" These were the same attitudes in the times of the Judges. These attitudes have caused our nation to become increasingly secular, socialistic, pagan, and anti-Christ. The sins of the closet are now open and condoned. Homosexuality, adultery, abortion, pornography are rampant. We have cut ourselves off from our Biblical roots and the petals of our country are beginning to droop, wither, and fall like roses out of water. The glory of our nation is turning to gloom! We are warned in Proverbs 14:3—*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

Judges reveals the progression of sinful living. Seven times Israel does evil in the sight of the Lord. You will find the common cycle of the book is **Rebellion>Retribution>Repentance>Restoration**. Yes, Judges is a book about sin and its consequences. Like an untreated wound that becomes infected, sin poisons and infects our life

spiritually. The book begins with compromise and it ends with confusion. This is exactly what happens to an unsundered life! When we are disobedient to the Lord we make little progress in our life. In Israel's case, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience

As we continue to scan the horizons of Judges we also find it is a book about heroes. The people God used in this book were not perfect. Some of them had terrible faults and weaknesses, but when they were submissive to the Lord and yielded to Him, He used them and He will use you too if you are surrendered to Him. God demonstrates in this book that He uses weak things and makes them strong!

<i>The Book of Joshua</i>	<i>The Book of Judges</i>
Victory	Defeat
Freedom	Slavery
Faith	Unbelief
Faithfulness to the Lord	Apostasy from the Lord
Joy	Sorrow

### Judges and the Israelite Oppressors

Judge	Yrs. as Judge	Oppressor	Ref. in Judges
Othniel	40	Mesopotamia	3:7-11
Ehud	80	Moab	3:12-30
Shamgar	unknown	Philistia	3:31
Deborah/Barak	40	Canaan	4:1-5:31
Gideon	40	Midian	6:1-8:28
Tola	23	unknown	10:1-2
Jair	22	unknown	10:3-5
Jephthah	6	Ammon	10:6-12:7
Ibzan	7	unknown	12:8-10
Elon	10	unknown	12:11-12
Abdon	8	unknown	12:13-15
Samson	20	Philistia	13:1-16:31

# Key to JUDGES

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer possibly the prophet, Samuel. Time covered approximately 305 years. Key verse, 17:6. Key thought, disorganization and misgovernment. Key characteristics, unbelief and fickleness on the part of the people. Type of book, history.

## 2. THEME:

Judges is a tersely written account of repeated spiritual failures on the part of Israel. The period may be comprehended as: apostasy, punishment, repentance, deliverance. The root of the problem is countenanced idolatry, introduced by pagan neighbors. The judges were really deliverers, raised up by GOD for the emergency, who stayed to “judge.”

## 3. OUTLINE:

Reason for judges (1:1-3:4)

Story of 12 judges (3:5-16:31)

Resultant instances of anarchy (17-21)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Joshua is a book of victory; Judges a book of defeats.
- There were seven apostasies, seven oppressions by seven nations, seven deliverances.
- While faith and obedience pulled down the walls of Jericho, unbelief and disobedience enslaved Israel for 300 years.
- The divine estimation of the cause is given in 2:11-19. Read in connection 21:25.
- Much is learned from the omissions of the book. There is no mention of the Tabernacle; only once is the High Priest named (20:28); no reference to reading the Law of GOD; no expressions of praise to GOD for His continued goodness.
- Emphasis is on the tribes, not the united nation.
- In Judges, GOD seems to stand and wait as the Israelites demonstrate their inability to independently care for themselves.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

The sin of Israel in Judges was rooted in the failure to carry out completely the instructions of GOD (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). So the pagans in their midst became a snare and temptation for them to forsake the true GOD and to serve idolatrous gods.

The Judges who GOD raised up were not men of exceptional ability as Moses and Joshua. They performed their part and died. Evidently, there was no line of succession. Nor was there any expressed desire on Israel's part for a great leader for the nation. Both men and tribes seemed intent only on personal success or possessions.

The greatest of the judges was Gideon. He was called at a time of national emergency. His recruited army of 32,000 was whittled down to a pitiful 300 and then given no weapons. But never in all history was there a greater victory. Gideon's exploits are referred to in Psalm 83:9-10; Isaiah 9:4; 10:26; Hebrews 11:32. His “fleece” episode is an encouragement to all GOD's children.

Samson's victories were all personal. By himself he injected terror into Philistia and courage into Israel. But he lacked the statesmanship of Samuel or the spiritual apperception of David. His great problem was to conquer himself, his appetites and passions. Yet he had faith in GOD and is immortalized in Hebrews 11:32.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- We might call Judges the “dark ages” of the Israelite people.
- A sad recital of “neither did's” is in 1:27-36.
- Jephthah's vow led to his daughter remaining a virgin throughout her life.
- Deborah's song (chapter 5) is a beautiful song of victory.
- Two great women, Deborah and Jael, inspire men for victory.



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

Here is overwhelming proof (seven times) that children of GOD just cannot live successfully by “doing what is right in their own eyes.” We must look to GOD, and rely upon the instruments of grace He has given: Bible, prayer, worship, leadership.

# Ruth

## A Romance of Redemption

The book of Ruth is one of two books in the Bible named after women. It is a book that gleams like a beautiful pearl against silk of ebony. It takes place during the times of the Judges when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. The events of the book possibly indicate it occurred near the time of Gideon (1300 B.C.). The famine referred to in Ruth may have been the one caused by Midianites when they plundered the land for seven years.

In San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge spans its arms across the bay joining land to land. The book of Ruth serves the same purpose only it serves as a bridge from the book of Judges to 1 & 2 Samuel. This book provides us background insights of how people lived in this time period.

There was apostasy in the nation of Israel at this time, yet, there were people of conviction, consistency, and commitment to the Lord. Their godly lives were like lilies, perfuming their environment with their fragrant life and displaying the purity of their character as a lily displays its petals of ivory. The contrast of Israel with Ruth and Boaz is obvious.

Israel	Ruth & Boaz
A life of rebellion.	Lives of righteousness.
Immorality	Integrity
Ignorance of the Lord	Insights into God's Ways.
Period of Irresponsibility	Demonstrated Responsibility
Idolatry	Idolized the Lord

The book of Ruth reminds us that God NEVER leaves Himself without a witness. He always has a flame for the darkness, whether it is Moses in Egypt, Elijah in Israel, or John the Baptist who prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ. God has His witness!

Ruth was the great-grandmother of David. This book establishes the lineage of David, the ancestor of Christ. It tells of the beginning of the Messianic family within the Messianic nation into which, over a thousand years later, the Messiah was to be born.

There are some interesting things to notice in this book. Ruth was a Moabitess. These people were descendants of Lot. They were pagans, worshiping many gods and goddesses. God, in establishing the family that was to produce the world's Savior, chose a beautiful pagan girl, led her to Bethlehem where she met Boaz, her "kinsman redeemer," a relative of Naomi who first made her a family member and then made her his bride. This is God's grace. He adopts the Gentiles into Christ's family. Of course we know that although Ruth was born a pagan, through her first husband, or through Naomi, she learned of the true God.

Boaz was the son of Rahab, the harlot found in Jericho. See Matthew 1:5. So we see that David's great-grandmother was a Moabitess and his great-grandfather was half Canaanite. This is found in the bloodline of the Messiah.



# Key to RUTH

## 1. STATISTICS:

Ruth, a pastoral idyll taking place in the time of the judges (approx. 1325 B.C.); time covered, about ten years; writer, Samuel, the prophet; key thought, "Redemption;" key verse 4:14.

## 2. THEME:

While the nation disobeyed GOD and was punished, still GOD was wonderfully faithful to individuals who called upon Him in their need. An "outsider" Ruth, who sought the LORD with her whole heart, illustrates the grace of GOD which not only made up the deficit caused by sin, but exalted her to an unbelievably high place of privilege and honor.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Ruth deciding (1)

Ruth serving (2)

Ruth resting (3)

Ruth rewarded (4)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Highly typical: Boaz typifies Christ, Ruth the Church, Moab the world, Bethlehem the fellowship of GOD, etc.
- Moab, an idolatrous nation, worshiped Chemosh, sacrificing children.
- Moab and Israel had slight physical relationship. Moabites were descendants of the incestuous union of Lot (Abraham's nephew) and his own daughter (Genesis 19:33-37).
- The fields of Boaz were immediately adjacent to the shepherds' fields (Luke 2:8) of Bethlehem.
- This little book was oft times read at the Feast of Pentecost as a picture of domestic life and love in a time of anarchy and trouble.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

The central lesson is that only trouble results from leaving the LORD's land (Bethlehem) and that blessing will not come again until there is repentance and return.

The Law completely shut out the Moabite from a participation in the blessing of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3). Here, however, is the operation of the grace of GOD which transcends the curse, and lifts Ruth to immeasurable heights of privilege, placing her in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5).

Boaz was the son of Rahab, the Jericho harlot (Joshua 2:1; Matthew 1:5). Thus David, the great-grandson of a Moabite and great great-grandson of a Canaanite, further demonstrated the grace of GOD.

Ruth's lovely confession to Naomi (1:16-17) is one of the grandest examples of literary jewels the world possesses. This fell from the lips of a heathen maiden who evidently saw in the family of her deceased husband the real goal of living.

The Levitical law known as the Kinsman-Redeemer, finds its most outstanding example here. The law had provided that when a man died, and there were no children, the brother should take the wife and raise up children for his deceased brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

Also, if the property of the dead brother must be sold for any reason, it was to be redeemed by a near kinsman so as to preserve the inheritance. The redeemer must, of course, be a kinsman, and must be able to redeem, which meant paying the just demands in full. Boaz fulfilled this perfectly and became a type of Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, who rescued us from our lost condition by fully paying the price of our sin (I Peter 1:18-19; Galatians 3:13).

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

Note excellent labor relations between Boaz and his workmen (2:4). The incident (3:1-11) is not indelicate, but merely a custom of presenting the claims inherent in the kinsman problem.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You will understand this book more perfectly as you put yourself in the place of Ruth; see Boaz as CHRIST your Redeemer, and the marriage as your salvation.

# Samuel, Kings, Chronicles

The next six history books tell us about the Jewish kings who ruled in the land of Palestine from the first king (Saul) to the very last king who ruled before the Babylonians conquered the land. There are a series of three double books: the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, and the two books of Chronicles.

## *What Do Each of These Books Tell Us About?*

<b>1 SAMUEL</b>	This book begins with Samuel and ends with the death of King Saul. It is also about the life of David before he became king.
<b>2 SAMUEL</b>	This book is about the reign of David.
<b>1 KINGS</b>	This book begins with King David's death and ends with the death of wicked King Ahab.
<b>2 KINGS</b>	This book tells about all the rest of the kings until the fall of Israel in 722 B.C. and the fall of Judah in 586 B.C.
<b>1 CHRONICLES</b>	This book is about the reign of David.
<b>2 CHRONICLES</b>	This book begins with Solomon and ends with the Babylonian Captivity.

## The Books of Samuel

### King Saul and King David

Let's start with the first set of double books--the two books of Samuel. The book of 1 Samuel tells us about Samuel and about Israel's first king—King Saul. The book of 2 Samuel tells us about Israel's second king – King David.

### *Why Are These Books Called by the Name of Samuel?*

Samuel was a godly man—a great Priest and a great Prophet. Samuel was like a bridge between the period of the judges and the period of the kings. These two books are called by the name Samuel for two reasons:

1. Samuel is the main character at the beginning of the book of 1 Samuel. Everything we know about the birth, life, ministry, and death of Samuel is found in the book of 1 Samuel.
2. Samuel anointed Saul and David, and the books of Samuel are all about these two men. Samuel anointed Saul in 1 Samuel 10:1 and the book of 1 Samuel is all about King Saul. Samuel anointed David in 1 Samuel 16:13 and the book of 2 Samuel is all about King David and his reign. These men were the first two kings of Israel and the books of Samuel tell us the stories of these two men.

## *The Beginning of the Kingdom*

Israel did not have a human king during the time of the judges (Judges 21:25). God Himself was to be their King! But the children of Israel did not want God to rule over them; they wanted to be their own king! Then later in the days of Samuel, the children of Israel wanted a King (1 Samuel 8:5) just like all the other nations. 1 Samuel 8:7 makes it clear that by asking for a human King they were rejecting the LORD as their King to rule and reign over them. Sometimes God gives people what they ask for in order to teach them a lesson and make them learn the hard way. God did give the people a king. He gave them the king of their choice! His name was Saul! Saul seemed like the perfect king in the people's eyes. But he turned out to be a complete failure as king. The people were wrong but God was right!

*Let's briefly compare the first two kings of Israel:*

SAUL	DAVID
A man after the people's heart (1 Samuel 8:5)	A man after God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14)
He was the people's choice.	He was God's choice.
He disobeyed God's Word (1 Samuel 15:11).	He obeyed God's Word (Acts 13:22).

In much of the book of 1 Samuel Saul is seen chasing after David trying to kill him. This is the kind of a man he was. In the last chapter of 1 Samuel we see Saul, defeated and dead, on the field of battle.

## *The Key Verse*

The key verse in the books of Samuel is found in 1 Samuel 2:30. In the last part of the verse, the LORD promises to honor those who honor Him, and that those who despise Him shall be lightly esteemed. This verse gives both good news and bad news. It's very clear:

**THE GOOD NEWS:** "If you honor God, then God will honor you!" The person who honors God considers God as Someone who is very valuable and important. This person says, "God is so great and so important to me that I must believe what He says and do what He says all the days of my life!"

**THE BAD NEWS:** "If a person fails to honor God and despises God, then God will consider that person of little importance and God's blessing will not be on that person's life. This person says, "God is not very important to me at all. I really do not care what God says. What God says means very little to me!"

In the books of Samuel we see how this truth was carried out in the lives of men. We can see how God honored those who honored Him. We can also see how God cursed those who despised Him.

THOSE WHO HONORED GOD	THOSE WHO DESPISED GOD
Samuel	Eli, the priest
Jonathan, Saul's son	King Saul
David ( <i>read 2 Samuel, Chapter 7</i> )	Absalom, David's son

Which column would you fit in? Are you a person who honors God or are you a person who despises God? Is God very important to you? Is God's Word very important to you? Do you really care about what God has said? Do you really care about obeying God and doing what He says? What kind of a person do you want to be: a person like David or a person like Saul? Most people choose to be like Saul. They do *not* choose to honor God. Will you be one of those who chooses to honor God?

# Key to I SAMUEL

**1. STATISTICS:** Writers, Samuel (10:25), possibly Nathan and Gad (I Chronicles 29:29).  
Time involved, about 120 years; key thought, “kingdom”; key verse, 12:13; principal character, Saul.

**2. THEME:** This is mainly the story of the rise and fall of King Saul, introduced by the prophet Samuel, and followed on the throne by David.

**3. OUTLINE:**

Samuel as judge (1-7)	David persecuted (16-30)
Saul begins to reign (8-15)	Saul’s defeat, death (28, 31)

## **4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- This book begins the line of writing prophets. From this time the prophet rather than the priest is conspicuous in Israel.
- Samuel was a child of faith and prayer. His father was a Levite (I Chronicles 6:27-28), and before his birth he was dedicated to the LORD.
- Hannah’s lovely prayer of thanksgiving seems somewhat similar to that of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).
- Moses had foreseen and predicted the coming of the kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14-15).
- Samuel was a “circuit rider” as a judge (7:15-17).
- The “schools of the prophets” were evidently introduced under Samuel (10:5, 10; 19:20; II Kings 2:3-5).
- Samuel’s ministry included that of being a “kingmaker.”

## **5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:**

- Eli and Samuel were both men of godly integrity. However, evidently being busy in the service of GOD, they neglected their own sons with tragic results (2:12-17; 8:3-5).
- The ark of the covenant was a blessing to GOD’s people, but a curse to the enemies of the LORD (chapter 5).
- Saul was the people’s choice for king. In the natural, he possessed many qualifications. He started well, and had he continued, his story would have been entirely different. His great deficiency was a lack of spiritual appreciation.
- Saul’s errors were those common to rulers:
  - (1) impatience as he waited for Samuel (13:8-14);
  - (2) impetuosity in the flush of victory where he made a rash vow (chapter 14);
  - (3) disobedience to the clear command of GOD and acting in his own self-will (chapter 15).

Along with these was a resultant insane jealousy he had for David. All of these human frailties might have been counterbalanced by simple and sincere dependence upon GOD, who gives to rulers their special abilities.

David is introduced here. Undoubtedly he is the most colorful figure in the whole Bible. He was a rich combination of soldier, statesman, shepherd, musician, singer, poet. His magnificent victory over Goliath was a demonstration of the courage that may accompany simple faith in GOD. Two of David’s inner qualities stand out boldly. His deep and sincere love for his friend, Jonathan, and his patience in waiting for GOD’s time to ascend the throne for which he had already been anointed.

Apparently the appearance of Samuel in the home of the witch of Endor was genuine for it greatly frightened even the witch. Witchcraft, of course, had been strictly forbidden by the Law and this was a sad commentary on the spiritual status of Saul’s heart (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

**6. INTERESTING FEATURES:** First and Second Samuel were originally one book. Goliath’s armor weighed more than 150 pounds; his spearhead alone was 20 pounds. It is questionable if David at this time weighed 150 pounds. Many of the psalms of David were written at this time.

**7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:** The key is the contrast of the inner qualities of Saul and David, and the results that came. The inner life will ultimately determine our outcome. Apply this truth to your own heart.

# Key to II SAMUEL

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writers, Nathan, a prophet, and Gad, a seer (I Chronicles 27:24; 29:29); time covered, about 40 years; type of book, history; key thought, full establishment of kingdom; key verse, 7:16; key character, David.

## 2. THEME:

The story of David as king: his reign in Hebron, his coronation over the entire nation, his military exploits and victories, his grievous sin and the sad train of consequential punishments.

## 3. OUTLINE:

David at Hebron (1-4)

David king over all Israel (5-24)

Ark restored (6-7)

Many conquests (8-10)

David's sin and repentance (11-12)

Absalom's rebellion (13-19)

David's last days (20-24)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- The frankness in describing David's sin is proof of Divine authorship of the book.
- Here is the height of the kingdom (see Genesis 15:18-21).
- One of David's psalms is chapter 22.
- A great military leader inspired talented followers (23).
- Psalms written from his experiences: his flight from Jerusalem (Psalms 3 and 4), his song of military victory (Psalms 30 and 60), his sin (Psalm 51).

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

David's greatest commendation was to be called a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:14). How could this be, in view of his great sin? The answer is his whole-souled repentance. Whatever else, he had a heart for GOD. His many psalms reveal this.

Not only was David gracious and forgiving, but he utterly discouraged vindictiveness, and went out of his way to be kind to Saul's kin (chapter 9).

GOD's covenant with David regarding a perpetual throne (chapter 7) is one of the Bible's greatest chapters. (See also: Psalm 89:27-29; Jeremiah 33:20, 21, 25; Luke 1:30-33).

David's great capacity for worship evidenced in his bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and establishing ritual and order of the temple service as soon as the land was quiet from war.

GOD forgave David's sin, but its consequences followed him all his life. Murder and adultery occurred again and again in his family. Sin is truly a damnable thing.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- Watercourse ("gutter" 5:8) is still seen in Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem was one of the most easily defended capital cities of the ancient world.
- Some amazing records are marked by David's mighty men (chapter 23).
- Absalom's vanity (luxurious head of hair) became his downfall.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

How can one today be a man after God's own heart? It was surely not in his sin, but in his wholesouled sorrow and repentance that David could be thus named.

# The Books of Kings

## From Solomon to the Babylonian Captivity

The next group of double books is First and Second Kings. These two books cover about 400 years of history (four centuries). As the book of 1 Kings begins we read about the death of King David. David's son Solomon became the next king. Solomon was the wealthiest and most powerful king Israel ever had. After Solomon the kingdom was divided into two parts:

1. **THE NORTHERN KINGDOM** under King Jeroboam. Its capital came to be located in Samaria. This kingdom is called the kingdom of ISRAEL.
2. **THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM** under King Rehoboam (Solomon's son). Its capital was located in Jerusalem. This kingdom is called the kingdom of JUDAH. All the kings of Judah descended from King David.

Now we are ready to take a look at all the kings of Israel and Judah. "Good" means that the king did that which was right in God's eyes; "Bad" means that the king did evil in God's sight. (However, keep in mind that sometimes a good king would do evil things and sometimes an evil king would do good things).

### The United Kingdom

**David** (Good)

**Saul** (Bad)

**Solomon** (Good, *but later his heart turned away from the Lord - 1 Kings 11*)

#### THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

*(The Northern Kingdom)*

Jeroboam I (Bad)  
 Nadab (Bad)  
 Baasha (Bad)  
 Elah (Bad)  
 Zimri (Bad)  
 Omri (Bad)  
 Ahab (Bad)  
 Ahaziah (Bad)  
 Jehoram (Bad)  
 Jehu (Bad)  
 Jehoahaz (Bad)  
 Jehoash (Bad)  
 Jeroboam II (Bad)  
 Zachariah (Bad)  
 Shallum (Bad)  
 Menahem (Bad)  
 Pekahiah (Bad)  
 Pekah (Bad)  
 Hoshea (Bad)

**ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY**  
 (722 B.C.)

#### THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

*(The Southern Kingdom)*

Rehoboam (Bad)  
 Abijah (Bad)  
 Asa (Good)  
 Jehoshaphat (Good)  
 Jehoram (Bad)  
 Ahaziah (Bad)  
 Athaliah (Bad)  
 Joash (Good)  
 Amaziah (Good)  
 Azariah or Uzziah (Good)  
 Jotham (Good)  
 Ahaz (Bad)  
 Hezekiah (Good)  
 Manasseh (Bad)  
 Amon (Bad)  
 Josiah (Good)  
 Jehoahaz (Bad)  
 Jehoiakim (Bad)  
 Jehoiachin (Bad)  
 Zedekiah (Bad)

**BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY**  
 (586 B.C.)

## The Divided Kingdom

## The Rise of the Prophets

As we read the books of Kings, we see that the prophets become more important as men who spoke for God. We also see that the priests become less significant. The priests were the ones who were supposed to teach God's Word to the people. But most of the priests failed to do this, so God raised up prophets to give His message to the nation and to kings. In the books of Kings we learn about the lives of two great prophets: In 1 Kings we learn about Elijah. In 2 Kings we learn about Elisha. (Note: "J" comes before "S" in the alphabet, so this helps us to remember that ELIJAH came before ELISHA. Both men were contemporaries. That is, they lived on earth at the same time. Elisha lived on after Elijah was taken up from earth in a chariot of fire).

## The Two Books Compared

1 KINGS	2 KINGS
Begins with King David	Ends with the king of Babylon
Opens with Solomon's glory	Closes with Jehoiachin's shame
Begins with the blessings of obedience	Ends with the curse of disobedience
Opens with the building of the temple	Closes with the burning of the temple
Shows the division of the kingdom	Shows the collapse and fall of each kingdom
Shows that God is very long-suffering. Even though there were many wicked kings, God held back His judgment on the nation.	Shows that God's long-suffering does not last forever. God must punish sin and He must punish His sinful people.
Tells about Elijah	Tells about Elisha

## The Key Verse

The key verse in these two books of Kings is found in 1 Kings 18:21. *"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him..."*

Elijah was saying this to the Jews of his day: If God is really God and you fail to serve Him and follow Him, then you are in trouble! In the book of 2 Kings we learn that the Jews did fail to follow God and they ended up in trouble! The northern kingdom became enslaved in what is known as the *Assyrian Captivity*. For the southern kingdom it became the *Babylonian Captivity*.

Every person must decide whether the God of the Bible is really God or not! If He is God, then follow Him and serve Him with all your heart! Many people serve and follow gods that are not really gods at all (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Following false gods was the problem of many of the kings. All of the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah served idols (false gods). Even many of the good kings failed to follow the Lord fully. Many of them failed to remove the "high places" (see 2 Kings 15:3-4, for example). These "high places" were centers of idol worship located on the tops of hills. These idol worship centers should have been totally destroyed. Not many kings were willing to do this. But we must remove some bad things if we are to follow the good.

Is God really God? Is He really the King of this universe? Is He your Savior and your Lord? If God be God then follow Him! Most of the kings refused to let God be King. Will you let the Lord be the King of your life?

# Key to I KINGS

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, Jeremiah, according to tradition. Note similarity of II Kings 25 and Jeremiah 39, 52. Extent of time, 120 years. Key thought, kingdom glory and decline; key verse, 2:12; key characters, Solomon, Elijah. Type of book, history.

## 2. THEME:

Following David's death, Solomon became king, ruled well, and built the temple but eventually made some serious mistakes. At his death the kingdom was divided and a great prophet, Elijah, came on the scene.

## 3. OUTLINE:

David's counsel and death (1-2)

Solomon's magnificence and temple (3-11)

Division and early Kings (12-16)

Elijah emerges (17-19)

King Ahab's story (20-22)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Books of Kings present political aspect of the time while Chronicles present the priestly aspect of same period.
- Other existing books referred to by sacred writer: book of Acts of Solomon; History of Nathan; History of Gad; Visions of Iddo.
- Solomon was colorful figure to describe. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, and besides was an authority on botany and zoology.
- The second half of the book deals mainly with the prophet Elijah.

## 5. OUTSTANDING FEATURES:

Solomon's reign began in splendor as in deep humility he asked for wisdom. Received wisdom, wealth and honor. The downfall of the world's wisest man came in his failure to follow God's admonitions.

His reign prefigures the millennial kingdom when **“the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”**

His unique wisdom did not save him from the idolatry introduced by his heathen wives. Unlike David, he did not show penitence and confess his sin. At his death, his kingdom was seething with unrest.

Rehoboam's foolish decision split the Tribes into two nations which remained through the period of the captivity. There were a few of the kings of Judah who followed the LORD, but for the most part the picture of both kingdoms was a sad one. The strongest impression is the longsuffering patience of GOD.

Elijah, one of two remarkable prophets in the Northern Kingdom, first appeared as a grown man, facing King Ahab with flaming reproof. A strange supernatural atmosphere surrounded him. He was like a lion, strong, stern. He performed miracles and lived as an ascetic. He was GOD's man for the hour.

To keep Israel from religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Jeroboam erected two golden calves to worship in Bethel and Dan. He became a synonym for sin in Israel's history. Again and again following his name is the phrase **“who made Israel to sin.”**

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- There were 19 kings (9 dynasties) in Israel; 20 kings (1 dynasty) in Judah.
- Solomon had extensive stables (9:15-16; 10:26, 28) at Megiddo.
- A three-word description of the kings following Solomon would be: Idolatry, immorality and bloodshed.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

Study the life of Solomon and ask, “Why did this king fail when he had started so magnificently?” Make a list of the kings of Judah and Israel and you will see the size of the grace of GOD.

# Key to II KINGS

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, probably Jeremiah. Time of writing, 600 B.C. Key thought, decline of kingdom. Key verse, 17:9. Time covered, about 300 years. Type of book, history.

## 2. THEME:

A continuation of the decline of the kingdom period, including the inevitable captivity of the northern tribes, later the southern. Miracle-ministry of the prophet, Elisha, is prominent.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Decline and final captivity of Israel (1-17)

Decline and final captivity of Judah (18-25)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- History of man's inexcusable failures and GOD's immeasurable love.
- This was one of three periods of miracles; others were during the life of Moses and during Christ's earthly ministry.
- One figure is predominant - Elisha the prophet, successor to Elijah. The former was opposite of the latter in every respect, yet was GOD's man for the hour.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2:9). There are just twelve miracles recorded for him, six for Elijah. These affected nations and individuals, with whom GOD is concerned: The Syrian siege (chapters 6-7), the Shunammite's son (4:8-37).

Two great lessons in Naaman's healing: the connecting link provided by the captive girl and the fact that GOD allowed His truth to be known to pagan nations as well as to His chosen people.

The fulfillment awaited GOD's time, but frightful judgment inexorably came to the wicked Jezebel (9:10, 30-37), perhaps the most wicked woman pictured in the Bible.

The Messianic line hangs on a thread, the life of a six-year-old, Joash (11:1-3).

Prayers reveal inner character. The inner heart of King Hezekiah is seen from his earnest prayers (19:14-19; 20:1-3).

A complete account of GOD's reasons for allowing Israel to go into captivity is given (17:7-23).

GOD answers Hezekiah's prayer for extended life, but in this time Manasseh, the most frightfully wicked king of all, was born to him (chapters 20-21). How much better is GOD's way.

The reading of GOD's Word brings results (22:11-14; 23:1-27).

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- Elijah a "fire" prophet, miracles during his life and his homegoing.
- Solomon's temple completely destroyed (25:8-10).
- The captivity of Judah in four installments.
- Reappearance of Elijah in Matthew 17:1-3, at Transfiguration.



## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

GOD forestalled judgment upon His people for many years, but it finally had to fall. Had there been a genuine repentance and revival they would have been spared. That same long-suffering patience is seen in GOD's dealing with the unsaved today.

# The Books of Chronicles

## A Careful History of Judah

The books of Chronicles cover the same period of history as the books of 2 Samuel and Kings. God repeated that which had already been covered (in Samuel and Kings) in order to add new details and to emphasize what He considered important.

The word “chronicle” means “*a continuous and detailed account of historical events arranged in order of time.*” God has given us accurate history books so we can know all that He wants us to know about the period of the kings.

The books of Chronicles were likely written by Ezra the scribe. (We will learn about Ezra in the next lesson). The last two verses of 2 Chronicles are almost identical to the first three verses of Ezra.

**FIRST CHRONICLES** covers the same period of time as 2 SAMUEL. They both tell about the reign of David.

**SECOND CHRONICLES** covers the same period of time as 1 and 2 KINGS. They both cover the time from Solomon to the Babylonian Captivity.

But Chronicles looks at the kings from a different point of view. Chronicles only tells us about the kings of Judah (the southern kingdom). These are the kings who were in the line of David. In Chronicles the kings of Israel are not mentioned unless they are doing something that relates to the kings of Judah.

So it is through such books as the Chronicles that we get the history of the Jewish nation. Through this nation our Lord came to earth. God chose this people for the fulfillment of His great promises and purposes. He is still their God (Romans 11:1) and He has His purposes yet to be fulfilled in them. In the light of this truth, books such as the Chronicles take on new meaning and power.

<b>Contrasts Between Chronicles and Samuel–Kings</b>	
<b>Samuel–Kings</b>	<b>Chronicles</b>
<b>Prophetic Perspective</b>	<b>Priestly Perspective</b>
<b>Political History</b>	<b>Religious History</b>
<b>Wars Prominent</b>	<b>Temple Prominent</b>
<b>Record of Both Nations</b>	<b>Record of Judah</b>
<b>Continuing History of Nation</b>	<b>Continuity of David’s Line</b>
<b>Man’s Failure</b>	<b>God’s Faithfulness</b>

J. Vernon McGee says that 2 Chronicles has two major themes. The first is the building of the temple. The second theme is revival. The first nine chapters are given over to the reign of Solomon. Six of those chapters concern the building of the temple. That is where God is putting the emphasis. The building of the temple was Solomon’s greatest accomplishment. (People often think of Solomon in regard to all the wives that he had—but that is not where God puts the emphasis. His having many wives was contrary to the will of God, and was a factor that brought about the division of the kingdom. Sin—regardless of who commits it—always brings judgment.

The spotlight of this book is on the kings who followed in the line of David. Special prominence is given to the five kings in whose reigns were periods of revival, renewal and reformation. The book concludes with the decree of Cyrus after the seventy years of captivity. No record is given of the period of the captivity. That was “time out” in God’s program. Remember that this is the record from God’s point of view.

*In a sense it is a “miniature Old Testament,”  
tracing in capsule form the flow of Old Testament history.*

Second Chronicles is a Book of Revivals! It tells about great revivals under:

Asa (Chapter 15)                      Hezekiah (Chapters 29-31)  
Jehoshaphat (Chapter 20)      Josiah (Chapter 35)  
Joash (Chapters 23-24)

The *Thompson Chain Reference Bible* points out these spiritual lessons in 2 Chronicles:

1. The preeminence of wisdom—2 Chronicles 1:7-12.
2. The glory of the Lord fills the prepared temple—2 Chronicles 5:13-14.
3. The spirit of praise renders God’s people invincible—2 Chronicles 20:20-25.

*Jesus Christ is portrayed as King in the books of Kings and Chronicles.*



### *Lessons for Today*

**C**hronicles reminds us of God’s holy and gracious work among His people. God can use Chronicles to give new identity to modern Christians as He gave identity to the Jews in transition from Exile.

God calls us to understand His true nature. We must not confine God to our limited concepts or attempt to confine His power to our limited goals. We should look for His continued working in human affairs and cooperate with Him as He continues to carry out His plan of redemption. Seeing Him in His holiness, we can repent of our sins to receive His mercy. God still wants to bring revival to His people. He calls us to covenant commitment so we can see the continued fulfillment of His covenant promises.

The Temple as a building is gone. The need for worship is not. The physical bodies of Christians are now the temples of the Holy Spirit. We need to commit ourselves to moral purity and holy worship. We need to regain the sense of praise and thanksgiving in all elements of life. We need to revitalize those special occasions of worship in God’s house. His miracles are not just past history. He is still working in His people. Believing prayer brings victory and true success in life.

God uniquely uses available and surrendered leaders to model His holiness and to call His people to covenant commitment. Leaders should know the history of God’s people, as did the Chronicler and teach its lessons to His people. God is working through His people continually. All of His saints are important to His plan. Every believer is called to pass on from generation to generation the good news of God’s redemption.

—*Disciples Study Bible*

# Key to I CHRONICLES

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, presumably Ezra, scribe and priest (II Chronicles 36:22 and Ezra 1:1-2). Time of writing 500 B.C. Key thought, kingdom history from sacred standpoint. Key verse, 29:26. Type of book, history and genealogical records. Chronicles means “word of days” or “journal” or “record.”

## 2. THEME:

A condensed history, beginning with Adam and ending with captivity of Jewish nation (including II Chronicles), with emphasis on the reign of David, Israel’s greatest king.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Genealogical records (1-10)                      Reign of David (11-29).

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Book is part of a recapitulation of II Samuel but with a different purpose in mind. Writer was concerned with an accurate statistical record for the time in which he was writing and for the future.
- Books of Samuel and Kings (102 chapters) cover 585 years of pure history. Prophets are important; kings of both nations are named, special emphasis on prominent ones. Two books of Chronicles (65 chapters) cover 460 years of religious history. Priests are important; they tell only of the good kings of Judah.
- Whatever has to do with the temple, purity of its worship, regularity of its services, its preservation or restoration is emphasized. The attitude of the kings to the King of kings is shown to be the key to national success.
- The ministry of music is fully set forth; the duties of the Levites were designated and the priesthood was organized into 24 courses. Doorkeepers and treasurers were authorized as well as David’s civil servants.
- Public worship was given special attention. GOD was seen to be greatly interested in regular assembling of the people to honor Him. It was necessary that there be instruction as to how to make such worship acceptable.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

While in the books of Samuel and Kings we found wars, idolatries, and offenses; in this book are deliverances, repentances, and reformations. In the former, idolatry appears as treason against the king; in the latter, the apostasy was against GOD.

Four great deliverances in (I & II) Chronicles and in each case victory was by GOD’s hand.

David had many valuable friends (chapters 11-12). They were described as “**expert in war, with all instruments of war**”; with “**faces... like the faces of lions**.” They were “**as swift as the roes (deer) upon the mountains**” and they could “**use both the right hand and the left**.”

David was given the honor of preparing materials for the temple which was to be built by Solomon (chapter 22). He collected vast stores of gold, silver, and building materials. The estimate of the value is from two to five billions of dollars. David said concerning the temple, it “**must be exceeding magnificent**” (v. 5).

The great Davidic covenant (II Samuel 7) was reiterated in I Chronicles 17:7-15. This is one of GOD’s unconditional agreements with Israel. (See also Psalm 89:20-37)

The ark of His covenant had been in Kirjath-jearim for 20 years (I Samuel 7:2); then in the house of Obed-edom for three months. Now in grand triumphal procession, David brought it to a tent prepared for it in Jerusalem (chapter 15).

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- Uzza’s death came as a result of doing the right thing, in the wrong way (13:9-10).
- David refused to give an offering to the LORD which had cost him nothing (21:22-26).

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

Repetition means emphasis. What GOD has restated in Chronicles should be noted carefully.



# Key to II CHRONICLES

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, probably Ezra, scribe-priest; time of writing about 500 B.C. Covers period of about 400 years; type of book, history. Key thought, kingdom of Judah (emphasis on good kings); key verse, 15:2; key character, Solomon.

## 2. THEME:

Solomon, his temple and his glory, and the kings which followed him. Emphasis on miracles GOD accomplished through kings of Judah.

## 3. OUTLINE:

Solomon's reign, temple, fame (1-9)  
Judah's kings, wars, victories (10-36)  
Babylonian captivity, restoration (36)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Building, splendor and dedication of the temple most important.
- Little mentioned of sin and failure. Righteous kings and their acts are emphasized. Religious side is uppermost.
- Ezra, a Levite, writes from that standpoint. When the split came between the tribes at the time of Rehoboam, practically all the Levites moved to the Southern Kingdom where they ministered.
- Undoubtedly written late, possibly one of the latest, since other books are mentioned (I Chronicles 29:29).
- As pure history this book is of less value than Samuel and Kings. Most valuable as religious interpretation of history by an eyewitness of much of it.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

It was the added blessings of GOD that Solomon abused, which led to his downfall.

Temple was built after the general pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness, with parts just twice the dimensions. Some 30,000 Jews and 150,000 Canaanites labored 7 1/2 years without the sound of a hammer during its assembling.

The altar of burnt offering is thought to have stood on the rock now enclosed in the Mohammedan "Dome of the Rock" which was the traditional spot of Abraham's offering of Isaac (Genesis 22).

Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years and "sought the LORD with all his heart." He began a system of public instruction in the homes of the people as priests and Levites taught the law of GOD. His courts of justice throughout the land, with a court of appeals at Jerusalem, greatly strengthened righteous living (chapters 17-20).

Hezekiah inherited a badly disorganized kingdom but started out with a great reformation. He cleansed and restored the temple, kept the passover, and trusted in God. He also leaned heavily on Isaiah.

The last kings were tragic in their wickedness, until there was no remedy. Zedekiah was taken in chains to Babylon where he died. Jerusalem and the great temple were utterly demolished.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- GOD Himself was the architect of the temple (I Chronicles 28:19).
- Shishak's sarcophagus of pure gold has been found, possibly made of some of Solomon's gold (12:9).
- Josiah had one of the most remarkable reigns in Judah's history. When only 8 years of age he sought the LORD. In his eighteenth year of reign he found the Book which brought a great reformation.
- Note similarity in 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-3.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

The key to national success is a complete and continual recognition of GOD's place. Only when He is revered, worshiped, and His commandments observed, can there be true prosperity. You will want to take GOD's position as

# Ezra and Nehemiah

Again we find that Ezra and Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible, as were the two books of Samuel and Kings. These books tell the story of the return of God’s chosen people after the exile. They give the record of one of the most important events in Jewish history—the return from exile in Babylon. These two books cover about 100 years.

Both books begin at Persia and end at Jerusalem.	Both center around the man of God who wrote them.
Both stories begin with a Persian king’s decree.	Both tell of building as their chief theme.
Both books contain a long prayer of humiliation and confession in the ninth chapter.	Both end with the purification of the people.
Ezra 7: 10—Ezra’s keynote	Nehemiah 6: 3—Nehemiah’s keynote

The purposes of God may sometimes seem delayed, but they are never abandoned. “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses,” prayed Nehemiah (Neh. 1:8). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of how God remembered and how He brought back His people from exile. Jeremiah 29:10-13 tells us of this remembrance.

During the captivity, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel told the Jews of their restoration and predicted that they would return to their own land and rebuild Jerusalem. Jeremiah, the prophet, told them this would happen at the end of seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). Remember that the books of Kings ended with the story of the captivity of first the Northern Kingdom of Israel and then the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Rebuilding the national life of the Jewish people covered 100 years. Two periods of time are very important:

1. Twenty years (537-517 B.C.) from the first year of Cyrus to the sixth year of Darius when the people under Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the priest, rebuilt the Temple. For this period, read Ezra 1-6; Zechariah and Haggai; the genealogies of 1 Chron. 1:1-9:44; the last two verses of 2 Chron.; Psalms 126, 137; and the reference to Cyrus in Isaiah 44:23 to Isaiah 45:8.

2. Twenty-five years (458-433 B.C.) when Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem and restored the city. Malachi was the prophet of this day.

Ezra gives the record of both of these periods. Nehemiah tells of the second period, building the walls.

The book of Ezra has both a backward and a forward look.

**The backward look:** We find a second exodus for captive Israel. The first exodus was out of Egypt. This second exodus was from Babylon. This time Ezra is leader in the place of Moses. He, like Moses, is an inspired writer and leader. Both men were great organizers, lawgivers and teachers raised up to fulfill God’s gracious purpose and bring captive Israel out of bondage. Both of these great leaders dealt with Israel in a strong and merciful way.

**The forward look:** In history, it is like the landing of our pilgrim fathers on a bleak and hostile shore. They came in timid, struggling relays back to Jerusalem. But God gave them a foothold. It was His city and it is His city still. He will again bring back His own; He will raise up Zion out of ruins.

Return from Babylon			
Chronology of the return		World events during the return	
605-536 B.C.	General period of captivity	ca. 563-ca. 483	Buddha (in India)
605, 597	Leading Judean citizens	551-478 B.C.	Confucius (in China) Cyrus
586 B.C.	deported including Daniel and Ezekiel	549 B.C.	united Persia and Media
538 B.C.	Edict of Cyrus permitting the return	546 B.C.	Cyrus conquered Lydia
536 B.C.	Return of 49,897 from Babylon to Jerusalem	539 B.C.	Cyrus conquered Babylon
536 B.C.	Altar rebuilt, sacrifice offered in seventh month	530 B.C.	Cyrus died
535 B.C.	Temple rebuilding begun, but stopped	539-331 B.C.	Persian Empire
535-520 B.C.	Economic and political struggle	530-522 B.C.	Cambyzes
520 B.C.	Ministry of Haggai	522-486 B.C.	Darius I
520-515 B.C.	Ministry of Zechariah	490 B.C.	Darius defeated at Marathon
515 B.C.	Temple completed	486-465 B.C.	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)
458 B.C.	Return of Ezra	485-425 B.C.	Herodotus
445 B.C.	Nehemiah rebuilt the walls	480 B.C.	Persians defeated at Thermopylae and Salamis
		470-399 B.C.	Socrates
		460-429 B.C.	Golden Age of Pericles
		428-322 B.C.	Plato and Aristotle

# Nehemiah

The book of Nehemiah was penned about 2400 years ago. Yet the practical insights recorded from Nehemiah's life are still up-to-date and applicable for us today as it deals with subjects such as:

1. What does God want me to do and what steps do I need to take in order to fulfill His will?
2. Recognizing problems and responding to them by prayer and action.
3. Leadership: It shows us that in order to lead others, you need to get direction from God in your own life.
4. It shows how to overcome these obstacles and properly handle them when dealing with problems such as criticism, ridicule, slander, discouragement, fear, and conflict with people.
5. Nehemiah reveals how to have revival in your own life.
6. How do we properly relate to a touchy boss.

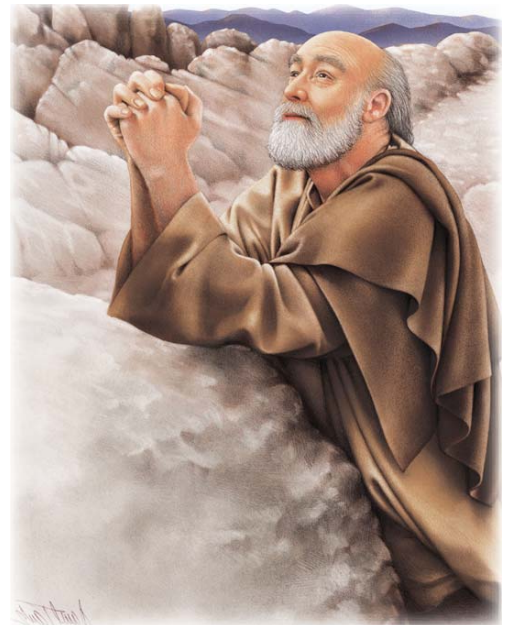
As you read this book, you will see how Nehemiah was a man of action. He took problems that he was encountering in his own life, faced them, and did not run away from them.

Remember, Nehemiah left a life of ease and luxury and security for a life of toil and danger and heartbreaks. He was a reformer! And no one appreciates the man who tries to reform him.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer. We do not find a blot on his character. He was fearless and courageous.

The important thing in the study of the Bible is to find how Jesus Christ is portrayed in each book.

- THE BIBLE portrays Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World.
- GENESIS portrays Jesus Christ as our Creator-God.
- EXODUS portrays Jesus Christ as our Passover Lamb.
- LEVITICUS portrays Jesus Christ as our Sacrifice for Sin.
- NUMBERS portrays Jesus Christ as our "Lifted-Up One."
- DEUTERONOMY portrays Jesus Christ as our true Prophet.
- JOSHUA portrays Jesus Christ as Captain of our salvation.
- JUDGES portrays Jesus Christ as our Deliverer-Judge.
- RUTH portrays Jesus Christ as our Kinsman-Redeemer.
- FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL portray Jesus Christ as our King.
- KINGS AND CHRONICLES portray Jesus Christ as our King.
- EZRA AND NEHEMIAH portray Jesus Christ as our Restorer.



Nehemiah the Servant	
A Servant...	Because God...
Prays for his people (1:4)	Preserves His covenant (1:5)
Plans for his people (2:6-8)	Places ideas in his mind (2:12)
Perseveres against enemies for his people (4:9, 23)	Perverts their plans (4:15, 20)
Pleads for unity among his people (5:10, 11)	Is pleased with unity (5:9, 13)
Perceives falsehood and remains faithful (6:2, 8, 12)	Proclaims His name among the nations (6:16)

# Key to EZRA

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer is Ezra, great-grandson of Hilkiah, an Aaronic priest-scribe (7:1; II Kings 22:8); time of writing about 450 B.C.; time covered, 93 years; key thought, restoration; key verse, 7:10; type of book, history; Josephus and Jerome and others have considered Ezra and Nehemiah as one work.

## 2. THEME:

The return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon as led first by Zerubbabel, and second by Ezra constituting, along with Nehemiah, the closing section of Old Testament history. Activities include the restoration of the temple, and the reorganization of national life.

**3. OUTLINE:**           Cyrus' decree (1)           Zerubbabel's expedition (2-6)           Ezra's expedition (7-10)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Important genealogical lists constituted legal records.
- Record of two returns: Zerubbabel, 536 B.C.; Ezra, 457 B.C. This period of restoration is direct result of Daniel 9:1-19. Between chapters 6 and 7 is a period of 60 silent years. Possibly the events of the book of Esther took place then.
- Cyrus fulfilled prophecy spoken 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).
- Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah fit into this period.
- In world history this was Greece's golden age; the lifetime of Buddha, 563-483; the lifetime of Confucius, 551-479.
- The term "Jews" for all the 12 tribes began here.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

In contrast to Assyrian and Babylonian kings, the Persians had a national policy (no doubt GOD's direction) to repatriate deported people. Thus the way was opened for Israel to return to her land.

The first step in re-establishing the nation was to begin rebuilding the temple and observing national religious feasts. This was wise, and GOD gave joy in this (chapter 3).

Opposition inevitably developed when GOD's work began (4:1-22). But with the leadership of the patriots and the encouragement of the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, the work of the temple was completed.

King Artaxerxes (7:1) was the stepson of Queen Esther. Some 59 years after the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, Ezra the priest-scribe led another expedition under the King's favorable commandment (7:11-26). Thus Queen Esther may have been responsible under GOD for the impetus given to the work of the restoration. Ezra took with him 1,754 men.

The section of chapters 7-10 shows a period of reform. Ezra found a rather sad situation in Jerusalem. The very thing which GOD had forbidden was happening without restraint; intermarriage with the peoples of the land. Ezra was astounded.

Ezra's prayer is one of the Bible's great ones (9:5-15). He confessed the sins of the people and they became deeply moved, promising before GOD to rectify the abuses, especially the unlawful marriages.

The greatest accomplishments of Ezra occurred when GOD sent another great man to aid him, in the person of Nehemiah. Here are two whose gifts beautifully supplemented each other, supplying to each what the other lacked.

The key to Ezra's character is the statement, "**For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments**" (7:10).

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- From the largest deportation into exile in 606 B.C. to decree of Cyrus in 536 is just 70 years. From the destruction of the temple (586) to the rebuilding and dedication of the new temple (516) is exactly 70 years.
- Jeremiah definitely fixed the period of exile at 70 years in his prophetic words in 25:11 and 29:10.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

GOD is behind all that happens to the Jew, opening the way, encouraging hearts, giving victories. Yet this captivity was but a sample of the world-wide dispersion that was yet to come. Most of the people of GOD had not learned what GOD was trying to teach.

# Key to NEHEMIAH

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, Nehemiah, cup bearer (i.e., confidant, advisor) to Persian king, Artaxerxes (1:11); possible co-writer, Ezra. Time of writing, 450 B.C.; years covered, 40; key verse, 2:5; key thought, restoration of defenses of Jerusalem and reforms of the people.

## 2. THEME:

A partially autobiographic history of the completion of the outer and inner defenses of Jerusalem following the captivity, from the pen of a sincere, prayerful man of great faith and courage. Forming a spiritual team with Ezra the priest, Nehemiah governed righteously for GOD many years.

## 3. OUTLINE:      Prayer (1)      Work on walls (2-6)      Work on internal problems (7-13)

## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Nehemiah's expedition (about 444 B.C.) was third at Persian government's expense and with army escort.
- Parts of book are in the first person, possibly taken from the official reports which Nehemiah, as prime minister, made to the king.
- Nehemiah was a man of great prayer (1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 6:9, 14). Note that before he made request to the king he spent 4 months in prayer.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

GOD fulfills His purposes. In this case the chosen nation was reestablished by the dictum of heathen kings and by the example of men of faith and courage.

Opposition appeared, as is always the case when a real work for GOD is being done. Some came as a bulldozing giant, some as a crafty fox. Nehemiah was tested by compromise, ridicule, and by threats of assassination.

Chapter 3 is a commentary on human nature. Among the workers on the wall, some worked "earnestly" (v. 20); some did extra work (v. 4 and 21); others did not help at all (v. 5); a few did an outstanding job (v. 13). All will meet the record someday.

Building was not the only problem. Evil practices within were equally serious. Nehemiah was able to right this grievous wrong because of his own unselfishness (chapter 5).

As the wall was completed the very next matter was the deepening of the spiritual life. The law of GOD was read at a public meeting (8:8); then confession was followed by expressions of trust in GOD and praise. With firm hand Nehemiah corrected abuses of unholy marriages and violating the Sabbath (chapter 13).

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- How to really preach is explained in 8:8.
- Some able-bodied daughters helped on the wall (3:12) and even the high priest was not afraid to soil his hands on the wall (3:1).
- Prominent in the book are the words "so" and "we."

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You will understand and enjoy the book more when you put yourself in Nehemiah's place. Against tremendous odds he proved himself to be first a man, then GOD's man.

# Esther

One of the most interesting things about the book of Esther is an amazing omission. The Name of God is nowhere mentioned in this book! All of the other books of the Bible make mention of God's Name, except for Esther and the Song of Solomon. Why is the book of Esther silent when it comes to the Divine Name?

Although God's Name is nowhere seen in this book, God's hand is seen moving and directing throughout! He is always working behind the scenes.

Satan's name is nowhere to be found in the book of Esther either. Yet throughout the book we see Satan's evil hand at work, where he is actively working through his man Haman, in a diabolical attempt to exterminate the people of God.

## **Bad News for the Jews**

Haman devised a wicked plot to destroy all the Jewish people in the entire kingdom. He was even able to get the king to sign a decree saying that all the Jews would be destroyed and killed on a certain day (see Esther 3:13)...and the king's decree could not be changed! It looked like the Jews were doomed to destruction, and the nation would come to an end!

In this terrible situation God began to do His wonderful work. One event changed the entire course of history and made it possible for the Jewish nation to be saved. What was this event? One night the king had trouble sleeping (6:1), and because he could not sleep certain things happened in a way that wicked Haman was defeated and the Jewish nation was saved. God is so great that He can even take a king's sleepless night and use this to work out His perfect plan!

We should not say that the Jews were just "lucky." No, God was doing His work and carrying out His plan in a strange and mysterious way. And this same God is working out His plan and program today!

## **The Key Verse**

Esther 4:14 is the key verse. In the last part of the verse it says: "*and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" Mordecai the Jew was talking to Esther. He was hoping that as queen she would go in and talk to the king and try to save the Jewish nation. In this verse Mordecai seemed to realize that God's hand was involved in the situation. He knew that God would deliver His people. And Mordecai knew deep down in his heart that it was no accident that Esther became queen (we learn about how she became queen in Esther chapters 1-2). It was God's purpose that she should be queen "*for such a time as this.*" Mordecai

was sure that it was part of God's wonderful plan for His people that Esther should be queen at this time.

And as we read the book of Esther we find out that Mordecai was right! God made sure that Esther was the right person in the right place at the right time and saying the right thing.

The same thing is true for each one of us. It was no accident that you were born into this world and that you live where you do. All of these things did not just happen by chance. God has a wonderful plan that He is working out and we need to realize that He is in complete control. God is working things out so that you can be the right person in the right place at the right time!

Most people are too blind to see God's hand at work in their lives, but every believer needs to be aware of this. The God of the Bible is not only Someone who once lived thousands of years ago and helped people like Esther and Ezra. The God of the Bible is also the King of the universe who is working out His perfect plan today! Are you letting Him control your life? Are you letting Him rule from the throne of your heart? Don't try to fight against God's plan! Haman tried this and he ended up dead!

### **Chapter by Chapter**

Rejection of Vashti (Esther 1)

Crowning of Esther (Esther 2)

Plotting of Haman (Esther 3-4)

Venture of Esther (Esther 5)

Mordecai Exalted (Esther 6)

Esther's Feast (Esther 7-8)

Deliverance of the Jews (Esther 9-10)

### **Esther's Character**

#### **Beautiful and modest**

Esther 2:15

#### **Winsome**

Esther 2:9-17; 5:1-3

#### **Obedient**

Esther 2:10

#### **Humble**

Esther 4:16

#### **Courageous**

Esther 7:6

#### **Loyal and constant**

Esther 2:22; 8:1-2; 7:3-4

# Key to ESTHER

## 1. STATISTICS:

Writer, possibly Mordecai; time of writing about 525 B.C.; events of Esther occur before Nehemiah, possibly between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra; key thought, GOD's providential care of His own; key verse, 4:14; purpose, to explain the origin of the Feast of Purim; key characters, Mordecai and Esther.

## 2. THEME:

Even while in exile, because of their sin and GOD's judgment, still the overruling hand of GOD covered Israel in protecting, providing care. The eventual purpose of GOD is not to be frustrated by satanically inspired plots.

## 3. OUTLINE:

- Vashti, the queen, deposed; Esther crowned (1-2)
- Haman's plot; Esther's intervention (3-8)
- The Jews defend themselves and win (9-10)



## 4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Name of GOD is not mentioned but the power of GOD is clearly seen.
- Ahasuerus was King Xerxes of history whose ill-fated expedition against the Greeks in 480 B.C. is well known.
- The feast in chapter 1 was in preparation for this military venture.
- Shushan (Susa), 200 miles east of Babylon, was the winter residence of the Persian kings.
- Actually, Esther's marriage made possible the granting of Nehemiah's request and through this, the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:6).
- The Feast of Purim (meaning "lot") is still celebrated by the Jewish nation in remembrance of this deliverance from death.

## 5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

- The great truth of GOD's providence finds here an illustration from history. GOD maintains a secret control over the affairs of His people, His hidden hand shifts the scenes as necessary. The eye of faith sees the divine factor in all these happenings.
- The battle between good and evil is pointed up, with swift judgment for the wicked and overwhelming vindication for the just in the end of the matter.
- Grace is beautifully illustrated as Esther voluntarily endangers her life and position for her people.
- Satan's smouldering hatred for GOD and His people finds expression in the conflict between Haman and Mordecai.

## 6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

- The longest verse in the Bible is 8:9.
- Persia seems to have had a well organized postal system (1:22).
- Mordecai takes his place along with other talented Jews who were high in governmental position in a foreign land (Daniel and Joseph). Ahasuerus was known to have an army of over a million men.

## 7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You will grasp the message of Esther only as you consider the background. Read the last chapters of II Kings and II Chronicles, also books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Through it all remember the unseen hand of GOD as He directs kings and nations.

### *Course Acknowledgements*

Sources consulted in the preparation of this course included: *39 Keys to Understanding the Old Testament* by William Orr, *What the Bible is All About* by Henrietta Mears, *Mattoon's Treasury of the Bible*, *The Believer's Study Bible*, *Wilmington's Guide to the Bible*, *Ryrie Study Bible*, *Disciples Study Bible*, *The Panorama of the Bible*, *Thru the Bible* by J. Vernon McGee, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines*, *Exploring the Old Testament*, *The QuickSource Guide to Understanding the Bible*, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, *Holman Bible Commentary* and *Old Testament Books (a study by Middletown Bible Church)*.

