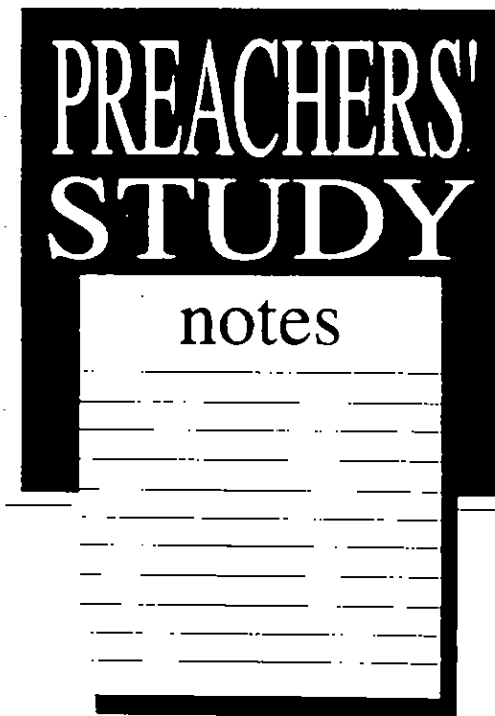


1997



1997 Preachers' Study Notes

A Survey of the Old Testament

Creation to the Babylonian Exile

**held at the Green Oaks Boulevard congregation
of the church of Christ
Arlington, Texas**

**Moderators:
Wm. Mark Bailey
Joe Norton**

The views expressed in the Preachers' Study Notes are the views of the particular and individual authors, and are not necessarily the views of the editors of the Notes, moderators, host congregation, other participants of the Study, or other authors in this volume. Each article has the address of the author appended if you desire to respond or seek more information. The editors of the Notes encourage every reader to test all things by the Word of God (1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11). Examine all that this volume contains in that unerring Light and you cannot go wrong.

—The editors of the Preachers' Study Notes

Published by
Christian's Expositor Publications
P. O. Box 1308
Ozark, MO 65721

Printed in the U.S.A.

A Survey of the Old Testament

Table of Contents

Topic	Author	Page
The Old Testament World	James D. Orten	3
Critical Theories in Old Testament Literature	Raymond Fox	21
The Creation, The Temptation, and The Fall	Smith Bibens	33
The Genesis Flood	Johnny Elmore	65
The Hebrew Patriarchs	Mike Criswell	79
"Let My People Go!" (A Survey of Exodus)	Doug Edwards	95
A Survey of Leviticus	Alan Bonifay	113
A Survey of Numbers	Alan Bonifay	123
A Survey of Deuteronomy	Duane Permenter	129
Joshua	J. Wayne McKamie	137
The Work of the Judges	Michael Fox	149
Ruth	Wayne Fussell	161
Social Life in Israel	Richard Bunner	171
The Reign of Saul	Bennie Cryer	179
The Reign of David	Ron Courter	199
The Reign of Solomon	Carl Johnson	225
An Introduction to the Divided Kingdom	Jim Crouch	243
The Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam to Jehoram	Jim Crouch	249
The Northern Kingdom, Jehu to the Exile	Bill Davis	273
The Southern Kingdom, Rehoboam to Hezekiah	Taylor Joyce	285
The Southern Kingdom, Manasseh to the Exile	Jim Crouch	301
Israel and Judah in Captivity	Ronny F. Wade	313

Foreword

The 1997 Preachers' Study was organized and directed by the Green Oaks Church of Christ in Arlington, TX. The theme for the study was "A Survey of the Old Testament." The studies began with two introductory topics, proceeded to the Genesis creation, and then moved forward in time to the captivities of Israel and Judah. Each presentation was instructional and inspiring as the history of Israel was laid open for the audience and put in the context of God's great plan of redemption.

In this book we have preserved the manuscripts of all the presentations in twenty-two articles. While most of this material was presented orally, for time's sake, some had to be omitted and reserved for the printed page. For those who were there, this book serves as a reminder of the great truths that were presented. For all who possess it, this book will be a valuable resource for properly understanding the content and context of the Old Testament.

This book represents the first of a two-year project undertaken by the Green Oaks congregation. In December 1999, Lord willing, the congregation will host the second part of the survey—the post-exilic histories, the poetic writings, the prophets, and the period between the testaments.

Our prayer is that these books will serve as valuable sources of instruction for our readers. Those who take the time read each article with an open Bible will be richly rewarded with a better understanding of Old Testament history and a deeper appreciation for God's scheme of redemption. We further pray that our readers will continue to use these volumes as reference tools for future Old Testament studies.

This is the tenth consecutive year the *Christian's Expositor* has published the manuscripts from the annual Preachers' Study. It is a project requiring considerable effort and expense, but one that we believe is of great value to the church. We would like to publicly acknowledge Dr. Joe L. Norton for his tireless work in organizing the topics and Martha J. Morris for contributing many hours of editing expertise. Special consideration goes to L. Melvin Crouch, whose fiscal generosity and love for the truth has made this volume a viable project.

Jim Crouch, editor

The Old Testament World

by James D. Orten

My task, as I perceive it, is to discuss features of life in Old Testament times that may be relevant to understanding the Old Testament Scriptures. As is true of human books, the books of the Bible have geographical and cultural settings. A knowledge of the times and people to whom a book is written helps in understanding its contents. A small example of what I mean is the mourners for Jairus' daughter described in Mark 5. The record says that when Jesus came into the house they "wept and wailed greatly" (5:38). But when Jesus told them "the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," the Bible says they "laughed him to scorn."

When I read this passage as a child, I wondered how bereaved persons could be weeping so intensely one moment and laughing so heartily the next. The answer lies in the custom of the time to hire professional mourners. So these people were not the closest relatives of the little girl. They were persons who had been paid to do a job. As you know, some people weep better than others. Apparently the families in those days thought their deceased ones deserved the best lamentations available.

There are, to be sure, more important examples of how a knowledge of culture helps in understanding Scripture. A few of the main ones will be discussed at length later in the presentation.

Three sources of information are available for our study. The first is the Bible. The Bible is not primarily a book of culture, but it does make statements about it. This information is often imbedded in stories of the lives of important people in the Scriptures. As is true in other areas of life, the Bible is the only infallible source of information we have. The second source is archeology. Archeology is the recovery and study of artifacts (tools, utensils, weapons, dwellings and so forth) from earlier civilizations. Conclusions are drawn about the people and how they lived from these artifacts. These conclusions are just as good as the people who draw them, and must never be used to question God's Word. Archeology can provide additional or supporting evidence. The final source of information is secular history. For early periods of the Old Testament, secular history is sparse and unreliable. We will make limited use of it in this study.

The Geography of the Old Testament

The events of the Old Testament took place within a small area compared to the world we travel in today. We do not know where the creation took place

nor the location of the Garden of Eden. Most writers believe that human life originated in what is known as the Fertile Crescent, an area bounded by the Tigris River on the east, the Taurus Mountains on the north, the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and the Negev Desert on the south. This assumption is probably true. All the places named in the travels of the Hebrews are within that area, except for the 400 year period they spent in Goshen, which is in the northeastern part of Egypt, and for a brief sojourn in the same area by Abraham, described in Genesis 12. Even these journeys took them only about 100 miles out of the area just described.

Abraham, his father Terah, and his grandfather Nahor lived in Ur of Chaldees when we first hear of them in Genesis 11:27-32. Ur was located on the Euphrates River, about 150 miles up from where it empties into the Persian Gulf. This geographical area, now in the country of Iraq, has been known by many names through the centuries. In earliest days it was called Sumer, or Shinar, or Elam. Later, the southern part of it was called Babylon, the northeastern part Assyria, and the northwestern part Mesopotamia, which means land between the rivers. While Abraham lived there, the lower part was called Chaldea. The changes in names seem related, as is usually the case, to changes in rulership. Three well-known archeologists have excavated large areas of Ur, so we know much about the city.

One of the early excavations, begun in 1854, uncovered a huge temple tower, or ziggurat, that is seventy feet high. It rises in three levels, and the corners have stones inscribed with the name of the city, its founders, and the builders and repairers of the temple which was dedicated to the moon god. In a room of another nearby temple, a library of stone tablets was discovered. One tablet records a prayer of King Nabonidus (who reigned from 556-536 B.C.) for his son, Belshazzar. The prayer besought Nannar, the moon god, for the king and his son, especially that Belshazzar would be "kept from sin" and "be satisfied with the abundance of life." Written in cuneiform script, some of these tablets are dated as far back as the time of Abraham. Together these tablets confirm biblical accounts of many events, including the biblical account of Belshazzar. They also show that this society was highly developed by the time of Abraham.

One of the most interesting findings at Ur is an eight-foot layer of clean clay and sand with clear signs of human occupation above and below it. This indicates a sudden break in human occupation of the area. No ordinary flood could have deposited this bank of clay. There is a story in Sumerian folklore that describes a flood of these proportions. Probably the people of Ur were trying to explain the flood of Genesis, but without the knowledge of Jehovah they attributed it to the only gods they knew: their idols

For reasons not fully known to us, Abraham's family journeyed north-westward through the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to Haran and settled there. Abraham lived in Ur when God first called him (Acts 7:2-4), but apparently the call was repeated in Genesis 12:1. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Critics have often argued that the people and places of patriarchal times were largely imaginary. But we now know where the city of Haran was located. It was about seven hundred miles northwest of the head of the Persian Gulf, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers where they are at the greatest distance from each other, and about forty miles east of the city of Carchemesh, which is mentioned often in the Bible. On the major trade route from Babylon to Egypt, Haran flourished about 2000 B.C. The records of this city, which will be discussed in more detail later, frequently mentioned the names of Terah, Abraham, Nahor, and other persons known in the Scriptures. Aside from proving that the city existed, they prove that the family of Abraham was composed of real people who lived there. Abraham's mention in the records of the city shows that he was a person of wealth and influence before God's call. Genesis 13:2 says, "Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."

After God's call, Abraham journeyed about four hundred miles southwest into the land of Canaan. In his travels, he was outlining the area that was later known as the Fertile Crescent. He settled first at a place called Sichem (also spelled Shechem), which is about thirty-five miles north of what became Jerusalem. Later, he moved farther south to a site between Bethel and Hai. The moves were probably prompted by fear of the Canaanites, who already inhabited the land (Gen. 12:6), or perhaps because of drought which forced him to hunt for pasture. The latter reason caused Abraham to make the journey into Egypt. The part of Egypt to which he went was probably the same area that Jacob and his sons inhabited many years later, and from which Moses delivered them. My judgment that it was the same area is based on the fact that Abraham was a herdsman, as were his great grandsons, and this part of Egypt was best suited to raising cattle (see Gen. 47:1-6).

Abraham probably stayed in Egypt only a year or two before returning to the same place in Canaan from which he left (Gen. 13:3). Sometime later he moved to the plain of Mamre in Hebron (Gen. 13:18). Still later, according to Genesis 20:1, Abraham moved farther south to Gerar, in the country of the Philistines. It was in this place that Isaac was born, fulfilling a promise God made to Abraham many years earlier. Here, Abraham was tested by God's command to sacrifice Isaac. In Gerar, Abraham told Abimelech, king of the Philistines, that Sarah, his beautiful wife, was his sister, as he had done to

Pharaoh during his brief sojourn in Egypt. She was his half-sister, but that was not the most significant relationship he sustained with her. Hebron, about thirty miles south of present day Jerusalem, seems to have been Abraham's real home in Canaan. There Sarah died at the age of 127 and was buried in a cave in a field that Abraham purchased from Ephron, a Hittite, for four hundred shekels of silver. This cave at Machpelah was the burial place for several of the patriarchs. According to Genesis 50:13, Jacob was taken up from Egypt and buried there because of a vow he had taken from his sons when he knew his death approached.

On this walk with Abraham, we have covered three sides of the boundaries of the Old Testament lands. There remains only to connect the southern boundary. The children of Israel did part of this in their exodus from Egypt. They came out of Goshen in northeastern Egypt and went as far south as Mt. Sinai, which is only sixty miles from the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Mt. Sinai is where God gave Moses the Law under which the Israelites lived till the coming of Christ. The Israelites then journeyed northward and entered the land of Canaan from the east, crossing the Jordan River near Jericho at the northern end of the Dead Sea. Some of the Israelites settled on the east side of Jordan in the area from which they entered Canaan. Later, David extended the kingdom eastward to the Euphrates River (1 Chron. 18:3), which closes the boundaries of the Old Testament world.

All of the events of the Old Testament took place within this area, which is probably less than a third the size of the United States, and most of the action occurred within the land of Canaan, which is about one third the size of the state of South Carolina. What a tremendous impact on the world this small country has had, and is still having! What a testimony to the fact that God used this tiny area of His creation to work out part of His great plan for humans!

Physical Geography, Climate, and Peoples

The physical geography of the land of Canaan is just as spectacular as the events that have taken place there. It is called a world in miniature because of the great variety of landscapes. It has wide and fertile plains like the Plain of Sharon, which Solomon praised for its fruits and flowers (Sg. Sol. 2:1-15), and the Plain of Gennesaret which lies west of the Sea of Galilee. During Jesus' time this plain, where He grew up, was like a luxuriant garden. The maritime plains along the coast of the Mediterranean were the home of the Philistines, the ancient enemies of the Jews, and descendants of Ham, the middle son of Noah. Even though the plains are important features of the landscape, the country is more mountainous than is often assumed.

The Lebanon Mountains in the north, part of the Taurus range, are the highest, and Mt. Hermon is the highest peak, which towers 9,232 feet above sea level and is snow covered most of the time. David speaks of the dews of Hermon (Ps. 133:3), which are said to be almost like rain even during the dry season. But the highlands that lay west of the Jordan marked the real home of the Jews. Jerusalem is in this area. David eulogized these hills in Psalms 65:12-13: "The hills are girded with joy, the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." When not ravaged with drought as God's response to the people's sins, it truly was a land that flowed with milk and honey.

Perhaps the most dramatic feature of Palestine geography is the Jordan river valley. The river starts in the mountains in the country's far north and runs southward 150 miles ending in the Dead Sea. In the mountains, the river is as much as three thousand feet above sea level, and in the Dead Sea, it is approximately thirteen hundred below sea level. The river gorge varies in width from one mile to fourteen miles. There is said to be nothing really like it anywhere else in the world. Some people think that God chose this place for the Jews, being a world in miniature as it is, to symbolize the worldwide mission he had for them in the salvation of men.

The climate of Palestine generally is moderate, somewhat like that of South Carolina, to which we have already compared it. There are, however, real variations related to the terrain and the seasons. The coastal plains are very hot at times, and, as is typical, the desert is hot in daytime and cold at night. The mountains and highlands are cool. Unlike most other countries of the same latitude, there is a distinct dry and wet season. Winter rains usually start in late October and end by the first of April, but even in this season, rains come only intermittently. Winter rains signal the start of preparation for planting and the Spring rains mature the crops. James used this phenomenon of waiting for the latter rain as a lesson on perseverance (5:7-8).

The winds of Palestine are mentioned often in the Bible. The north wind, as is true in parts of the U.S., is usually dry and cold (Job 37:9). The west wind, coming as it does from the sea, is cool and refreshing. Laden with moisture, it meets the cool air of the highlands and produces rain. Fortunately, the winds do not come frequently from the east and south, because their desert sources cause them to further parch a dry land. Jesus said, "When ye see the south wind blow, ye say, there will be heat; and it cometh to pass" (Lk. 12:55). Pharaoh even dreamed of the east wind in his famous nocturnal vision in Genesis 41. The seven ears of corn that represented famine were described as "withered, thin, and blasted by the east wind" (see also Hos. 13:15; Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 27:26).

Let us now look briefly at the peoples who populated the land of Israel. When God brought the Jews into Canaan, He arranged a meeting of representatives of several descendants of Noah that fulfilled ancient promises. You will recall that the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, founded races from which all following inhabitants of the earth descended. Shem was the father of the Semitic people to whom Abraham's descendants belonged (Gen. 11:10-32). One of Ham's sons, Canaan, fathered the Canaanites (Gen. 10:6-20). And the Philistines, known as the people of the isles and Gentiles, who inhabited the coastal plains of Palestine, were descendants of Mizraim, another son of Ham. The cities of Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath were Philistine capitals.

You will also recall that after the flood, Ham was cursed for entering his father's tent and viewing his father's nakedness. Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:25-26). The seven nations that God told Israel (Deut. 7:1) He would drive out before them are the nations named in Genesis 10 as descendants of Ham. All of these nations were destroyed or taken as slaves by the Hebrews. Noah's prophecy about Ham came true. But there was more to the prophecy. He said, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 10:27). Japheth's descendants generally inhabited what is now Europe and northern Asia. They have certainly been "enlarged" in number and influence in the world.

The Study of Biblical Cultures

Instead of discussing the culture of each nation featured in the Old Testament, which seems a daunting task in this setting, I prefer to discuss a few important matters that cut across all cultures and that relate directly to believing and understanding the Scriptures. The reason for this approach is that for many years critics have attacked the Old Testament through a series of interlocking assumptions which, if accepted, can "prove" the early books of the Bible to be little more than a collection of myths. I will describe the assumptions briefly at first so that you can see how they fit together; afterward we shall discuss each in more detail.

The first assumption is that civilization developed slowly, requiring thousands or even millions of years to arrive at anything like the state that, say, the Pilgrims brought to this country. The way this fits into their plan is easy to see. Man, they think, evolved from animals. At first he was little more than an ape who walked upright. He foraged for food because he knew nothing of planting and harvesting. His oral language consisted of a few grunts or squeals

to express anger or elation. He knew nothing of the use of tools, written language, and so forth. A principal purpose for calling upon this assumption is to support the assertion that Genesis could not have been written in the lifetimes of the people who are described in it.

Second, written language did not develop until late in civilization. This assumption is a principal support for criticism of the Bible. If one accepts that there was no written language until late in the Old Testament period, then the history of Genesis (and other early books of the Bible) more easily can be classified as tradition, passed down by word of mouth through succeeding generations and contaminated by each one in the process. Thus, biblical history of the creation of the world, the flood, and so forth is largely a collection of myths, no better than other myths about these great events.

The third assumption is that monotheism developed from polytheism, or in simpler language, the belief in one God developed out of belief in many gods. This conclusion is necessary because stories somewhat similar to those in the Bible, of the flood, for example, exist in many ancient cultures, and they are often attributed to the gods of those lands. Critics would have us believe that the revelations in Genesis are just like those, perhaps even adapted from them. As we shall see, all of these assumptions are false.

The Development of Civilization

Christians know that man did not appear on the earth through a single cell that developed into more complex life. He did not develop through the series of animals and primitive men that one sees on charts of evolution. Instead, he was made in the image of God, fully developed, intelligent, and able to converse with the God of his creation and his universe from the first day of his existence. Adam did not have to learn agriculture for God taught him about tilling the ground (Gen. 2:5) and "dressing" and "keeping" the garden (Gen. 2:15). He knew about metals, such as gold, and about precious stones (Gen. 2:12). Life was simple for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but it was not crude, and they were not primitive beings who grunted and squealed at each other. They conversed with God; they understood cause and effect relationships; and they reasoned abstractly about moral qualities. All of these characteristics show maturity of mind even by today's standards.

When Adam and Eve sinned and were put out of the Garden of Eden, they did not suddenly forget everything they knew or regress to subhuman creatures. Instead, the Bible indicates that they did what any intelligent couple would—they began to make the most of their new and more difficult lives. They and their sons tilled the ground and raised cattle (Gen. 4:2). Their sons built cities (Gen. 4:17), learned and taught metal working (Gen. 4:22), and

even developed art forms, such as music (Gen. 4:21). This is not the picture of a civilization that developed over thousands, even millions, of years.

Critics do not accept this biblical account, of course, but fortunately there is ample proof of the things which have been described from extra-biblical sources, such as archeology. To quote one author, "No more surprising fact has been discovered by recent excavation than the suddenness with which civilization appeared in the world. This discovery is the very opposite to that anticipated" (Wiseman, p. 28).

Here are examples of proof for the foregoing statement and for the biblical record of early civilizations. The oldest stone building known in Egypt is the Sakkara pyramid. Yet, from the time of that building to the construction of the great pyramid of Cheops, less than 150 years elapsed. The building at Sakkara showed clear signs of architectural development with columns and decorations that are almost modern, but at the same time it also showed more primitive forms. The measurements in Sakkara are as precise as those in most buildings of today. For example, measurement errors in the whole mass are no more than could be incurred by expansion and contraction of a metal tape measure between cold and hot days.

If the pyramid at Sakkara is interesting, the great one at Cheops is a modern wonder. Dating from about 2900 B.C., this massive building is 480 feet high and covers 12.5 acres at its base. It took 300,000 men thirty years to build it—ten years to quarry the stone, ten to move them onto the site, and another ten to construct the building. The sheer size is not the only impressive thing about Cheops. Its construction shows a greater knowledge of astronomy than was used in Europe 3500 years later. The fact that a king could build himself such a magnificent final resting place is testimony to the richness and luxury of the society.

Although not the oldest, Egypt was one of the great civilizations of the ancient world. Examples such as the foregoing do not support the idea of a painfully slow development. Instead, as the Bible indicates, cities and nations rose rapidly; and sometimes they fell just as rapidly. This was true of Egypt. Later temple tombs show a distinct decline in building skills. It is interesting to think that within two generations of Cheops' construction, Egypt could not have built another similar pyramid. One might question whether they could do it even now.

The oldest known human civilization was in the area described earlier as the Fertile Crescent, and more specifically within the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This is one of the facts upon which critics and believers seem to agree. Kish is one of the oldest cities known. This city was

located and excavated around the turn of the century under the direction of Oxford University of England and the Field Museum of Chicago. Excavators worked systematically through several layers of occupation down to virgin soil. Some of these layers date back to between 5000-4000 B.C. Here, as in other places in the region, there is a layer of clean sand and clay with layers of occupation above and below it. There were no traces of marine life or shells, another indication of a great flood, which like others dates to about 3000 B.C.

Excavators found unmistakable signs of a well-developed society. For example, a pearl and lapis lazuli adorned palace from the time of King Sargon I dating to about 2400 B.C., a well-preserved temple, and a four-wheeled chariot that was built of wood and put together with copper nails were unearthed. In front of the chariot were the skeletal remains of the horses that pulled it. Two bronze goats' heads from this general area were analyzed and found to contain 82.9 percent copper, 1.33 percent nickel, 0.88 percent iron, 0.23 percent antimony, and 14.66 percent other substances. These findings describe men who used knowledge and intelligence as we do, men who built houses, temples, and chariots, and who understood the art of metal working as Genesis 4:22 suggests. This is not a picture of Cro-Magnon men who lived in caves and foraged for food.

What the evidence from archeology and the Bible shows is that civilizations could develop very rapidly and deteriorate just as rapidly. We have a number of examples of that in the Bible. The Babylonian kingdom rose rapidly and dominated that part of the world for many years. At its height, about 1800 B.C., it was one of the most magnificent cities in the world. The wall around the city was 136 feet thick. One gate, called the Ishtar Gate, was decorated with over five hundred enameled dragons, bulls, and lions. A gorgeous "processional street" led from the Ishtar Gate, past the royal palace, through the main part of the city to the great temple of Marduk, called the creator and king of the universe. The throne room alone in Nebuchadnezzar's palace was 56 feet wide and 168 feet long. In Babylon, the foundation of a tower was unearthed that was called in their tongue, "The House of the Foundation Platform of Heaven and Earth" which is believed to be the ill-fated Tower of Babel from Genesis 11.

But as great and advanced as the Kingdom of Babylon was, it fell more rapidly than it rose. Jeremiah prophesies its destruction (50-51). Jeremiah 51:11 reads, "The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple." Babylon was not to be captured and forced to pay tribute; it was to be beaten back to the mythical Stone Age. "And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment,

and an hissing, without an inhabitant" (51:37). It happened exactly as Jeremiah said. The city was captured by Cyrus, king of the Medes, in 539 B.C. When visitors first went there in relatively modern times, they found a people in utter poverty, living on the most primitive level. God uses the rise and sudden fall of Babylon to portray the growth and sudden destruction of spiritual Babylon in Revelation 18.

Babylon's case should not surprise us. The Jews who were left behind after Nebuchadnezzar ravaged Jerusalem were in the same condition. This once-proud City of David that had dominated that part of the world, which under Solomon was the envy of kingdoms far and near, became little more than a dung heap. This was the report that Nehemiah heard while he was a captive in Babylon that made him want to go and rebuild the wall of the city (Neh. 1:3).

The inescapable conclusion about the rise and fall of cultures is this: there is no evidence in the Bible or archeology for the idea of a long, slow development of civilized man. Instead, there is solid evidence of the rapid rise of civilizations, and equally good evidence of their rapid fall when they faced the vengeance of God. Therefore, we should expect to see, exactly what we do see, now and in the distant past—highly developed societies coexisting with very primitive ones. Why should we anticipate a gradual and general rise in civilization when we see such uneven development now? I have spent many nights in the African bush where there was not a stone building within miles and where people lived like their ancestors of a thousand years ago. Yet, when I drove the few hours into the city where I lived, I had most of the conveniences of the modern world.

Development of Written Language

We now come to what I consider the single most important question of this presentation: Was Genesis, and other early books of the Bible, written at the time events described in them took place? A related and more basic question is: Was written language even possible at the time of Genesis?

Evidence for Early Writing

Oddly, some Bible commentators throw in with the critics, admitting that there was no written language at the time, and accepting the idea that the records of Genesis were passed down by oral tradition. In the Preface to his commentary on this book, Adam Clarke asks, how could small historical details "have been preserved when there was no writing of any kind, and when the earth, whose history is here given, had already existed for more than 2,000 years" (pp. 25-26). He goes on to accept that Genesis is oral tradition, but argues it is good history that passed through only a few reliable persons. Of

course, Clarke, writing as he did in the early 1800s, did not have the advantage of discoveries we shall discuss later, which prove that written language developed thousands of years earlier than he imagines. But he did have a better alternative, and that is God's inspiration of persons of later periods to write about the past. Let us keep clearly in mind that inspiration of the Bible does not depend on man's understanding of how God accomplished it. He could have enabled prophets in later periods to write accurately about past events as easily as He inspired them precisely to predict the future.

In discussing this matter, I will first explain the evidence that makes clear that written language existed during the time of Genesis. Then I will discuss what I consider proof within Genesis itself that indicates it was written by people at the time.

One of the most important discoveries regarding early written communication took place in 1887 when a Bedouin woman near Armarna, Egypt dug into a mound while looking for rich soil for her garden. She found some stone tablets inscribed in a language then unknown in Egypt and sold her interest in them for fifty cents. Hundreds of tablets were later discovered in what turned out to be the capital city of Pharaoh Akhenaton, who reigned about 1400 B.C. The tablets were the official records of what might be described as the Egyptian Foreign Office. At that time Egypt controlled most of the Old Testament world, including Babylon. These tablet-letters, about three inches wide and six to nine inches long, were mostly written in Babylonian cuneiform, even though they came from many countries. One letter from the governor of Urusalem (later Jerusalem) nervously describes how the Habiru (Hebrews) were taking the land and begs for Pharaoh's help. This correlates well the early dates given for the beginning of the Hebrew conquest of Canaan. It also shows that Babylonian cuneiform was a language generally understood and written during the time; thus, it explains how Abraham and the patriarchs could travel about the Old Testament world and freely converse with the people of the lands, as the Bible says they did.

These tablets show how writing was done in ancient times. Some writing tablets were made of stone, as were the ones in Exodus 32 upon which God wrote the law. The word here in some translations is "tables" which might make one think they were very large. But the meaning in our language is tablets, as is shown by verse 15 where it says, "And Moses turned, and went down the mountain, and the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand." Since Moses carried two tablets in one hand, they must have been about the size described in the preceding paragraph. When the tablets were made of stone, the wedge-shaped characters of the cuneiform script were engraved with tools. This was the picture from which Jeremiah drew his allegory in chapter

17:1, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart."

In Babylon, the tablets were often made of clay that had been softened with water and formed in a mold. The tablets were inscribed with a stylus while the clay was still soft and then dried in the sun or baked in a special kiln. Clay tablets were some of the most durable writing materials known to man. There were even clay envelopes made for these tablet letters. Papyrus scrolls were used later, especially in Egypt where papyrus was a native plant, but this material does not seem to have been used much in Babylon. The Jews were familiar with scroll writing and probably used this type most when they got to the land of Canaan. Many materials have been utilized for written messages, such as wood, leather, copper, gold, and so forth, but in early days the majority seems to have been on stone and clay tablets. The writers of these documents, or the scribe who wrote for them, usually signed them with a seal or signet by the method described by God in Job 38:14.

Let us go still farther back in history. Genesis 10:7-11 tells us that Asshur, a grandson of Ham, built several cities, one of which was Calah, in the land of Shinar (an old name for Babylon). Archaeologists located Calah in the mid-19th century and began excavations. Among the more interesting things found there were three palaces belonging to Kings Ashur-nasir-pal, Shalmaneser III, and Esarhaddon, all of whom reigned between about 900 to 670 B.C. The palaces contained wall sculptures, one of which depicted the victories of Tiglath-pileser III, who is Pul of II Kings 15:19. A black marble statue gives similar tribute to Shalmaneser III. It pictures five different kings, one of whom is Jehu of Israel, paying homage to Shalmaneser and in 210 lines of cuneiform script describes the stories of these events.

To me, however, the most interesting object discovered at Calah is a statue of Nebo, the "god of wisdom and writing." Inscribed on the statue is: "Trust Nebo; Do not trust any other god." The city had a long history, so the statue of Nebo probably was not put there at the city's beginning. But it shows the value the people placed on learning and writing.

The city of Erech, mentioned in the same verse with Calah and founded by Nimrod, has also been located and excavated. Work on uncovering this city began in 1852 and has continued almost to the present. Later excavations reached a level of occupation that dates to 4000 B.C. Silver seals for documents were retrieved along with over five hundred tablets, many of which were in "pictograph writing," the earliest form known. These documents described much religious history and indicated that the inhabitants of Erech believed in only two deities, one of which predated the other. If our best dating of Genesis is correct, these tablets were written while Adam was alive.

Adam lived for eight hundred years after his son Seth was born, which means well over eight hundred years after he and Eve were put out of Eden. Keep this in mind for later reference.

At Babylon, which reached its heyday about 2000 B.C., hundreds of tablets were recovered, many of which dealt with the distribution of foodstuffs, slaves, and skilled workmen within the city. Among persons mentioned is "Yow-Keen, King of the land of Yehud," which is Joiachin, King of Judah (2 Kgs. 24: 10-15).

In 1974 at Ebla, near the city of Carchemesh, Italian excavators discovered an architecturally advanced palace that dates to at least 2400 years B.C. The palace is of small interest, however, compared to what was found in two of its tower rooms. There researchers discovered approximately 17,000 inscribed tablets, some scattered in disarray on the floors (perhaps during the destruction of the city), but thousands of others stored neatly on shelves. These are the official records of a great kingdom, the memory of which had been lost until this discovery. They describe places and people mentioned in the Bible that critics claimed to be fictitious because they knew of no other written record of them.

We could continue this line of investigation because hundreds of ancient cities have been excavated and probably dozens more would present similar pictures. There seems more value, however, in looking at other matters the study of Babylonian tablet writing has taught us.

Ancient Literary Form and Style

You are aware that even now different cultures have different writing styles. For example, oriental societies generally write from, what we would call, the back of the book to the front, and from right to left on the page. We do the reverse. Since documents were often too long for one tablet, some system was needed for keeping tablets in sequence, just as we require when we write a letter of several pages. Then there is the matter of introductions and closures. We generally make a rather formal introduction, work up to the main points, and do a quick close. The Babylonians often used an abrupt beginning and a formal close. You can see this difference in the first words of the Bible. There is no introduction; the first sentence states the main idea of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Some of these differences in form were understood easily by Bible commentators and researchers, but others have caused difficulty. For example, about all Bible scholars agree that the phrase, "These are the generations of . . ." which appears eleven times in Genesis, is an important key to understand-

ing the book. They have assumed that the persons whose names followed this phrase were important enough to make breaks in the genealogical record. In other words, they have taken it for an introduction to an ancestral record that was to follow. Yet, there are obvious examples where this assumption does not fit. For example, no place in Genesis can one find the statement, "These are the generations of Abraham," even though he is a central figure of the book. Again, Genesis 5:1 says, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," but we hear nothing of Adam's ancestors, for he had none; instead we hear about his descendants. In 25:19 we read, "And these are the generations of Isaac . . .," but what follows is the story of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 37:2 states, "These are the generations of Jacob . . .," but it is the story of Joseph that is told.

Many years ago, I was taught that the first instance a word or phrase appears in the Scriptures sets the precedent for its future use. The phrase in question is first used in Genesis 2:4, which says, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." Here the phrase has no connection to a genealogy for there is none before or after it. The Hebrew word *toledoth*, translated "generations" in this phrase, means history. It often meant family or ancestral history, but it could apply to other types, as it obviously does here. The NKJV reads, "This is the history of the heavens and the earth . . ." When James Moffat translated the Bible in the early part of this century, he was so troubled by this verse, which he took for an introduction, that he actually took it out of its place in chapter 2:4 and put it as the first verse of the Bible.

What does all this mean? It means that this phrase, which is an acknowledged key to understanding Genesis, is not always an introduction to a genealogy that follows. It seems often to be the conclusion to a history, sometimes ancestral sometimes not, that goes before. This is in accord with literary forms of the times, as is shown by other books of the Old Testament. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the phrase we have been discussing indicates who wrote the histories. Here are the reasons I believe this to be true.

First, I believe the book of Genesis tells us it was written at that time. Genesis 5:1 says, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." According to the preceding discussion, I take the first phrase of this verse to be the conclusion of the account of creation that goes before it. Adam is telling about the creation as he knew it from God and from his own experience. The word "book" in this phrase means "writing" or "document," and "generations" means "history" as we noted earlier. In other words, I think we are being told about the history of creation written by Adam. Commenting on this phrase, Wiseman says, "It

normally refers to the writer of the history, or the owner of the tablet containing it" (p. 53).

Second, in all instances of the use of this phrase, the persons whose names are attached could have written the histories that precede their names from their own or reliably acquired knowledge. For example, Adam could easily have written all the history of Genesis up to chapter 5:1. He lived over 800 years after the Garden of Eden, and we have already discussed the rapid development of civilization and the appearance of written language in his lifetime. The next use of this key phrase is Genesis 6:9, "These are the generations of Noah . . ." Noah could easily have written the history from the death of Adam to this period. The same is true with Noah's sons whose history (generations) is mentioned in Genesis 10:1 and on and on.

Third, in all ten cases in which the phrase, "these are the generations of . . .," concludes a history, the events in those histories end before the deaths of the persons named. And this fact is more impressive when we note that in most cases the history continues right up to the persons' deaths. For example, Jacob's history seems to end in Genesis 37:2 and includes genealogies that go close to the year of his death. But his death is described later by the one who finished up the book of Genesis.

Let me attempt to pull together all of this by a question. Who really wrote Genesis? Almost all authorities say Moses. A German Bible out of which I occasionally read entitles Genesis, "Das Erste Buch Mose," which you could probably translate as, "The First Book of Moses." Am I flying in the face of all this ancient scholarship? No, I believe Moses wrote Genesis. But I do not believe he wrote it from his memory, or other people's memories, passed down through 2500 years. I think he wrote it by the inspiration of God. In addition, I believe he had the written records of Adam, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and others available to him. He may have had the very tablets on which these patriarchs wrote because these types of writings were the most cherished in those days. This is probably the reason we find them so often preserved in the ruins of cities long since forgotten. It is also not unusual for inspired writers to refer to other written records. For example, Daniel said he "understood by books" (probably the prophecies of Jeremiah 11, 29) that the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years, and Peter referred to Paul's letters (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

The Development of Polytheism

Critics of the Old Testament have argued that belief in one God developed out of the worship of many gods. This notion helps their cause, they think, because in various parts of the world there are legends that relate to the same things discussed in the Bible. Examples here are stories about the creation of

the universe, the relationship between man and God, the flood, and so forth. Some of these legends resemble biblical accounts. Therefore, critics assume that Bible writers got ideas from these human sources, and put all such accounts in the same class.

Proponents of this idea are at pains to explain how the development they propose runs opposite that in related areas. For example, man did not start out with many tribes and nations and then suddenly develop a yearning to make one. Since early days, men have divided and subdivided continually to make more and more nations and societies. Occasionally one group has willingly united with another, but the trend definitely has been in the other direction. When union came about, it usually was because one nation conquered another. Then, whether in ancient Babylonia or ancient Africa, as quickly as those subjugated nations could, they revolted and made new divisions. Still, undaunted by facts, the critics have assumed that in religion it worked the other way around.

The evidence is on the other side. I believe the Bible indicates when and where the worship of idols developed. It was not with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was not with Abel, who was a faithful worshiper of Jehovah. I think the Scriptures indicate it was with Cain. Genesis 4 tells the story of Abel's devout worship of God that was blessed. It also tells of Cain's half-hearted worship that was rejected. Reacting to God's punishment, Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth." Cain's statement, "from thy face shall I be hid," seems to indicate that he cannot, or will not, worship God in his wandering life.

Probably it was true, as Cain suggests, that there was a place where they brought their sacrifices and worshiped God. The fact that Cain "brought" his sacrifice and "Abel also brought" a sacrifice suggests this. Cain was banished from that place of worship. Whether he could have repented and served God in his vagabond life, I do not know. Cain's name is not mentioned again in the Old Testament after Genesis 4. There are three references to him in the New Testament, all of which hold him up as an example of wickedness. The reference in Jude, especially, associates him with the types of moral sins that ordinarily grew from worship of pagan gods. Without mentioning his name, Paul, by using words similar to Cain's, seems to make him a symbol of all those who shall be lost. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Thus, we know that Cain did not repent and worship the true God; and I think we are safe in assuming that, like others after him, he worshiped idols.

At first, idolatry was simple, consisting of worshiping the sun, earth, and moon. Gradually, a multitude of gods was developed with legends about how they came into existence and how to worship them. The earliest evidences of man's existence show this. At Erech, a city that dates to 4000 B.C., tablets were uncovered that show the people worshiped only two deities, and one of these was assumed to predate the other. At Kish, a city of comparable age to Erech, people recognized three gods, one each for the sky, earth, and sun. The sky god was assumed to be the original from which the other two came. After considering this evidence and that from other archeological sites, one researcher wrote: "In my opinion, the history of the oldest religion of man is a rapid decline from monotheism to extreme polytheism and wide-spread belief in evil spirits. It is in a very true sense the history of the fall of man" (Owen, p. 1767).

Conclusion

The people and places named in the Bible were real, and they existed in just the circumstances that the Bible describes them. There is no evidence of a long, slow rise of civilization. Instead, there is solid evidence of rapid rise and fall of cultures, with well-developed and primitive societies existing at the same times. The best evidence suggests that written language developed early, probably even relatively early in the lifetime of Adam. The events of the book of Geneses appear, from internal and external evidences, to have been written by the people who lived within the periods of the book. By inspiration and with these records available, Moses prepared the book for the sacred cannon. The worship of one God is historical, with worship of many gods developing later as the world became more and more wicked. 4113 N.E. 141st St., Edmond, OK 73034

Bibliography

- Clarke, Adam. *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume I*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, n.d.
- Owen, G. Frederick. *Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, "Archaeological Supplement." Indianapolis: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Company, Inc., 1988.
- Wiseman, P. J. *New Discoveries in Babylonia About Genesis*. London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1953.

Additional Readings

Hester, H. I. **The Heart of Hebrew History**. Liberty, MO: William Jewell Press, 1949, revised 1962.

Hindson, Edward E. **The Philistines and the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971.

Thompson, J. A. **Handbook of Life in Bible Times**. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986.

Critical Theories in Old Testament Literature

by Raymond Fox

In common usage the word "criticism" usually carries a negative connotation and suggests disapproval. In the academic field, the word has less to do with approval or disapproval. Rather, "criticism" (Greek, κρισις), means "to make a decision, a determination, or judgment." The work of biblical critics is to analyze the biblical documents, along with pertinent archeological and historical materials, and draw conclusions about such things as authorship, origin of the text, and the literary form of particular types of texts.

Biblical criticism divides into two fields, lower criticism and higher criticism. Lower critics concentrate on the work of confirming the actual wording of the text. They use manuscripts in the original language, ancient versions of the text in other languages than the original, and other historical occurrences of the text to determine how the text read when it was first written. Higher critics occupy themselves with questions concerning the source and authorship of the text, as well as literary questions related to the nature and value of the writing. Higher critics seek to determine who actually wrote the books of the Bible, whether its historical statements are credible, and what kinds of literature make up the Bible in order to aid the process of interpretation.

While there is a multitude of issues involved in lower and higher criticism, this present article will deal with two areas of higher criticism, namely, source criticism and literary criticism, that are particularly relevant to Old Testament studies. Source criticism attempts to trace the development of the text over time, whereas literary criticism analyzes the text in its final form. Although biblical criticism by no means leads necessarily to a negative conclusion, many theories of criticism do lead to doubt in the inspiration of the Bible because the theories begin from certain agnostic presuppositions. These presuppositions are important to understand.

When Christians talk with their neighbors about Christ, rarely, perhaps never, will they encounter someone who has questions about such things as the "documentary hypothesis" or "deconstructionism." While many dedicated Bible students may not at first see the value in discussing these themes, young people in college who take courses in the Bible, particularly courses in the Bible as literature, will understand the importance. In addition, Bible students who use resources such as commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and other scholarly works will encounter references to certain theories of biblical criticism.

Christians need to understand that, in spite of some of the theories of biblical criticism, they can defend the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Source Criticism

Passages in the Pentateuch, as well as references in other books of the Old Testament, ascribe the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses. Although there is no passage in Genesis that refers to Moses as the author, the narrative in Genesis continues in Exodus. The word "now" in Exodus 1:6 implies this continuation of the historical record. Exodus refers many times to the writing of Moses (Ex. 17:14; 24:4). Many passages in Leviticus begin with the statement, "The LORD said to Moses . . ." (Lev. 4:1). Numbers describes Moses, not only as the recipient of God's revelation, but also as historian (Num. 33:2). Deuteronomy is essentially a repetition of the law previously delivered by Moses for the purpose of instructing the children of those Israelites who originally escaped Egypt during the Exodus. In addition, other passages in the Old Testament (Josh. 8:31-32; Jgs. 3:4), as well as the statements of Jesus in the New Testament, ascribe the authorship of the law to Moses who received it directly from God. The statements of Jesus concerning Moses' authorship are particularly powerful because Jesus, proving Himself to be the Son of God, was in a position to know. Jesus implied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch (Jn. 5:45-47) and not just portions of the law. (See Moses' references to Jesus in Gen. 3:15 and Deut. 18:15.)

Traditionally, the Jews believed that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. However, beginning in the 18th century, European higher critics began to analyze the Pentateuch and devise a theory to explain that these books were not written by Moses, but in fact are a compilation of several documents originating after the time of Moses. They believed they found evidence within the books themselves to prove that several authors (none of whom was Moses) actually contributed to the Pentateuch over a period of several hundred years. They were also convinced they had evidence, both internal and external, that Moses could not have been the author. While source criticism does not restrict itself to the Pentateuch, it first developed as a method for analyzing the authorship of these five books. Although these academicians developed their theory before archeology disproved them, their theories are still popular today. What were their arguments? Why do people still accept them today?

Julius Wellhausen, a German scholar from the late 19th century, built on the research of other German critics to produce the Graf-Wellhausen theory or the "documentary hypothesis." His hypothesis forms the basis for most modern views of source criticism of the Old Testament. Wellhausen believed that

by careful analysis of the text he could identify four major literary sources for the Pentateuch, each with its characteristic style, vocabulary, and emphasis. The contributions of these four sources were not simply appended to each other, but were interwoven by later editors called "redactors." While an account of an event in the Pentateuch may appear to be coherent, in reality it consists of fragments pieced together from different sources by the redactors.

The Graf-Wellhausen theory labeled the four sources J, E, D, and P. The J source was so-called because of its use of the name "Jehovah" for the divine name of God. The J source also characteristically called the holy mountain of God "Sinai," and the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine were "Canaanites." J wrote in a vivid, colorful style, speaking of God in anthropomorphic terms. The E source takes its designation from the Hebrew word *Elohim* which corresponds to the English word "God." The E material uses *Elohim* until the divine name "Jehovah" (Yahweh) was revealed in Exodus 3:13. The E source used "Horeb" for the name of the holy mountain instead of "Sinai" and "Amorites" for the inhabitants of Palestine before Israel's occupation of the land. It is said that the E style is less vivid than J and avoids anthropomorphic language. The E material begins with Genesis 15. Wellhausen conjectured that the J source originated earlier than the E source because of its anthropomorphisms and other more primitive elements.

The D source is so named because most of its material in the Pentateuch is confined to the book of Deuteronomy. It contains little narrative and tends to be emphatic and full of warning. Some characteristic D phrases are: "be careful to do" (5:1; 6:3; 6:25; 8:1), "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (5:15; 7:19; 11:2), and "that your days may be prolonged" (5:16; 6:2; 25:15). Some proponents of the theory extend the D source into Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings to form an extended history. The force of this history is to reaffirm the law and principles of nationhood delivered by Moses.

The P source presents a priestly perspective, revealing a preoccupation with worship and the details of rites and ceremonies. Its material is precise and labored in style. The documentarians imagine a priest or someone with priestly inclinations editing the previous sources and adding what would be important to a priest. According to the source critics, P preferred the name *Elohim* until Exodus 6:3 when the majority of P text uses "Yahweh." However, this equivocal analysis of the critics reveals their utter subjectivity.

Source critics believe that these four sources represent four streams of oral and written traditions that progressively interpreted the traditions and history of Israel. Editors or "redactors" combined the sources, providing transitions and harmonizing material when necessary to make the literature flow smoothly. To place a date on the writings, documentarians begin first with D,

speculating that D was written during the reforms of Josiah's day (ca. 621 B.C.). Then they reason that J and E must have been written before D because D presupposed the other two. J, being the earlier source, is given the date 850 B.C., and E is dated about 750 B.C. P, which supposedly contains laws and points of view different than J, E, or D, was written around 450 B.C. These sources came together when first one redactor combined J and E around 650 B.C., then another editor added D to J and E around 550 B.C. Much later, another editor added the P source around the year 450 B.C. to complete the Pentateuch. One can easily see that these dates are highly subjective and speculative, depending on the validity of the theory that must be proven first.

The result of the documentary theory is to fragment what might otherwise appear to be a continuous, harmonious narrative in the Pentateuch. To illustrate this fragmentation, note how the theory breaks up the story of the Nile turned into blood into three interwoven sources: the J source (Ex. 7:14-15a, 16-17a, 18, 21a, 22-23), the E source (Ex. 7:15b, 17b, 20b), and the P source (Ex. 7:19-20a, 21b-22). Scholars following in Wellhausen's path have claimed to identify even more sources, further shredding the biblical stories beyond recognition. Some have divided the four principle sources into further subdivisions. Other theorists have added L, S, K, and G sources.

Alleged Proof for the Documentary Hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis rests on three forms of proof that are speculative at best, and in no sense of the word conclusive. The first piece of evidence offered is apparent contradiction within the narrative of a particular event. For instance, in the Garden of Eden God warns Adam about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling him, "In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." Nevertheless, when Adam and Eve ate of the tree, they did not die (that is, drop dead) in the moment they ate of it. About such contradictions, Gerald Larue, professor of religion at the University of Southern California, said in his book, *Old Testament Life and Literature*, "Would a single author make statements so contradictory?" Larue also cites the fact that God commanded Noah to take two of every kind of animal into the ark, male and female, in Genesis 6:19; whereas in Genesis 7:2, the Lord tells Noah to take seven of every kind of clean animal and seven of every kind of bird. He takes another example from the division of the land of Canaan after the conquest. Numbers 35:6-7 specifies that the Levites were to receive certain towns and accompanying lands from the inheritances of the other tribes. But Deuteronomy 18:1 states that the Levites would not receive an inheritance.

What the documentary proponents do not understand is that they see contradictions only because they are reading the Scriptures from a cultural

perspective far removed from the actual moment of the event. They were not present to understand these statements in their original context, and as long as they enclose themselves in modern presuppositions, they will never understand them. None of these apparent contradictions involves logical contradiction, such as saying that two plus two equals four and at the same time saying that two plus two equals three. None of these contradictions are of the type that is independent of perspective. Recently, I heard on the news of a horrible accident on a highway in California. The reporter on the radio said that, according to the highway patrol, several cars and five big rig trucks collided together. Then the reporter interviewed on the phone a caller who had just passed the scene in his car and called on his cell phone to report the accident. This caller said that he saw one big rig on fire. Were these reports contradictory? Certainly there was no real contradiction because fog shrouded the other big rigs and altered the perspective of the cell phone caller.

From a different perspective, Adam and Eve really did die. They began to die the very day when they ate the forbidden fruit. They were forced from the garden, from the presence of God, and they began to live mortal lives, separated from the tree of life. From another viewpoint, the instruction to take seven clean animals into the ark only formed an exception to the rule of taking one pair of each kind of animal. Furthermore, the Levites did not receive an inheritance of their own; they only received towns and lands that belonged to the inheritance of the other tribes.

But if there are different perspectives and presuppositions for reading the same passage, whose perspective is correct? The original author's perspective is correct. Documentary proponents claim that one author would not contradict himself in such "obvious" ways. However, grant for the moment that the biblical narratives were composed and added to by several authors over a long period. Would an editor add to such a brief account, such as the scene in the Garden of Eden, details that would present glaring contradictions? Would he fail to read carefully the account before adding to it? Would the same editor allow such glaring contradictions to stand? In fact, textual critics tell us that a scribe who is composing a text from two different versions will naturally try to smooth over or eliminate wording that contradicts. This is natural. Therefore, if the supposed editor leaves in the text what appears to us today to be contradictory material, he must have thought, from his original perspective in that moment, in Hebrew culture and language, that there was no contradiction.

Another piece of circumstantial evidence that makes up the flimsy foundation of the documentary hypothesis is the usage of the names of God in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The Hebrew word for God is *Elohim* (the plural of *El*), the word that suggests the power and divine nature that distin-

guishes Him from man. Like the English word "God," **Elohim** can refer to the One God of Israel or to the gods of the idol worshipers. But the word that distinguishes the One True and Living God from the idols is the proper name **Jehovah**. The name "Jehovah" is actually an English hybridization of the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. All the gods of Egypt had names, so Moses wanted to know God's name so that he could announce to Israel who had sent him to deliver the Israelites. God told Moses, "This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am' has sent me to you" (Ex. 3:14). "I am" suggests the independent, self-existent nature of the One True God who had no beginning or ending, and relies on no one for His cause and creative power. In Hebrew, this word is represented by the consonants **YHWH** (unlike English, Hebrew has no vowels), which is sometimes called the "tetragrammaton" (four letters). Most scholars believe that the proper pronunciation of the name is "Yahweh." The pronunciation "Jehovah" historically comes from a mistaken German translation of **YHWH**, supplying the word with the vowels from **adonai**, which means "Lord" in Hebrew. To further complicate the matter, most English versions substitute "LORD" (with all capitals) for **YHWH** in accord with the Jewish tradition of considering the name of God too sacred to pronounce.

The documentary hypothesis cites the usage of these two names as evidence of multiple authorship in the Pentateuch. One source favored **Elohim** and used it exclusively, while the other source used **Yahweh**. For instance, Genesis 1:1-34 use **Elohim**. The next 45 verses use **Yahweh-Elohim** twenty times. The following 25 verses use **Yahweh** exclusively. To the documentary theorist, this pattern of usage represents different sources that contributed to the Genesis account. One source (the "J" source) preferred **Yahweh**, while the "P" source favored **Elohim**. Of course, the theorists cannot explain why a certain source would favor only one name. In fact, the theory assumes what really needs to be proven—that these sources existed in the first place.

Understanding the different meanings of **Elohim** and **Yahweh** leads us to conclude that the usage of these names depended on the context and subject matter of the specific passage. The name **Elohim** brings to mind the all-powerful, creative action of God. By the name **Elohim**, the world in general acknowledges God's existence as a Supreme Being. When the text is describing the creation of the world, it is **Elohim** who is at work. But God's people knew Him as **Yahweh**. **Yahweh** was the name He gave them to distinguish Himself from the gods of man's imagination. When passages speak of God in relationship to His people and His unique character and action in the lives of people, He is known as **Yahweh**. When He is pictured in contrast to the false **Elohim** of the Canaanites, He is **Yahweh**. In the name **Yahweh**, what is obscure and vague becomes personal and clear. Thus, in His dealings with Adam

and Eve, He is Yahweh. Interestingly, Satan refers to God as Elohîm because Satan has no covenant relationship with Yahweh (Gen. 3:2).

The documentarians do great travesty to the Old Testament by fragmenting it into so many small pieces based merely on the occurrences of Elohîm and Yahweh. Who would ever conceive that such a unique literary work could consist of pieces cut and pasted together? It would take a genius with a word processor to make all the necessary changes in a consistent manner. In Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, there are some one hundred verses that documentarians divide up into two sources. Even the documentary theorists cannot be consistent with their own theory. Some passages ascribed to one source actually bear the supposed characteristics of another source. For instance, Yahweh occurs in Genesis 22:4, 11; 28:21 and Exodus 18:1, 8-11 which are credited to the E source who supposedly favored the name Elohîm.

Still the documentarians offer more "proof" to support their claims by referring to the repetition or supposed repetition of some narratives. This repetition is an indication to them that more than one author contributed to accounts of events in the Old Testament. One of the most well known examples is the two accounts of the creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Documentarians believe they see theological differences, stylistic variation, and differences in the usage of the divine names among these two accounts. They ascribe chapter one to the P source and chapter two to the J source. As we have seen, the context and the subject matter of a passage can sufficiently explain the differences in the usage of Elohîm and Yahweh. Concerning these passages in particular, Genesis 1 pictures God impersonally as the creative force declaring the world into existence. Genesis 2 reintroduces the creation scene to focus on Yahweh's relationship to the first man in the Garden of Eden. Yahweh, the personal God, is with Adam and speaks to him. Documentarians also claim that Genesis 1 presents God as transcendent and supreme whereas Genesis 2 presents Yahweh in anthropomorphic terms. In Genesis 1, God is commanding into existence the world and everything in it. In Genesis 2, Yahweh "breathes," "plants," "takes," "puts," and "forms." But this argument of theological differences is not really consistent because even in chapter one God "calls," "sees," "blesses," and deliberates ("Let us make"). Furthermore, stylistic variation is a highly subjective judgment. The same author can certainly change styles and even vocabulary in the same context depending on the specific subject matter.

Do these passages form separate and contradictory narratives of the same event? Certainly not. Genesis 1 focuses on the creation of the world and Genesis 2 on the creation of man. The two passages represent the literary device of presenting an outline of some event and then focusing in on some aspect of that event in greater detail. Some accounts of certain stories in the Pentateuch

appear to be repetitions called "doublets," but in reality they are separate events with similar circumstances. Source critics argue that the two accounts of Abraham passing off his wife as his sister must necessarily be describing the same event but with different details supplied by different authors. The critics assign the story in Genesis 12 to the J source and the account in Genesis 20 to the E source. However, there is no reason not to think that a person could succumb to the same temptation twice. Furthermore, Isaac commits a similar mistake by allowing Abimelech, king of the Philistines in Gerar, to think that Rebecca was his sister (Gen. 26:6-11). Documentarians assign this instance to the J source, even though it is very similar to the story of Abraham in Genesis 20 assigned to E. We would have to conclude that these stories were versions of the same event only if we assume that sons never make the same mistakes as their fathers and that the names of kings were never handed down in succeeding generations. Furthermore, one must remember that documentarians theorize that redactors interwove the sources into the form of a continuous narrative. However, would not the redactor realize that he is combining contradictory accounts? Would he not edit the accounts by eliminating some and changing the details to avoid contradiction? In reality, the nature of the historical narratives argues against the work of an imaginary editor.

The heart of the documentary theory rests upon certain presuppositions that reflect the philosophy of history in vogue at the time of Wellhausen and his fellow scholars in the late 19th century. During this period, the evolutionary view of origins dominated the physical sciences. At the beginning of the 19th century, the German philosopher Hegel applied the concept of evolution to history. Hegel postulated that human history is a continual process of progressive development in every aspect of human existence, including philosophy, politics, morality, and religion. Mankind is always "becoming" according to Hegel. According to Hegel's view of religion, man begins with primitive animism, attributing conscious life and power to inanimate objects. The evolution of religion passes from worshiping trees, mountains, and stones to other stages of ancestor worship, the control of supernatural phenomenon, polytheism (the worship of many gods), tribal deities, henotheism (elevating one god over the others), and finally to monotheism (the belief in and worship of One God).

Proponents of the Graf-Wellhausen theory began with the presupposition that any supernatural explanation for the Hebrew religion was impossible. They assumed there could not have been any intrinsic distinction between the development of the Hebrew religion and the evolution of other religions, since all religions are of human origin. Therefore, any qualitative difference that seemed to elevate the Hebrew religion over others was due to the addition of later material to the text. They believed the patriarchs were really animists,

and that later redactors covered over the evidence of animism and other primitive forms of religion through the interweaving and layering of later source material. According to this view, Moses was not a monotheist. Monotheism did not develop in Israel until the time of Amos (8th century B.C.).

It is important to understand the glaring logical error of the documentarians in assuming what really needs to be proven. Documentarians date a passage or a phrase in the Pentateuch based on the level of moral or religious development that it presents. Presuming the evolutionary model to be true, if a passage demonstrates a level of religious development incongruous with the time period in which the passage appears, then the passage must be from a later redaction. For example, documentarians question how Moses could have conceived of a command against idolatry at such an early period in Hebrew history. The second of the ten commandments, which prohibits images, must, therefore, originate from a later source, from a time when the Hebrew religion had evolved beyond polytheism. But the documentarians assume in the first place that the Hebrew religion fits the model. This assumption is the very point they need to prove. Therefore, the dating of J, E, D, and P rests on an unsubstantiated concept of the evolution of religious history.

The fact is, many world religions that are polytheistic have been around for centuries without evolving into monotheism. Some religions have added to the number of their gods instead of tending towards monotheism. Interestingly, those religions that are genuinely monotheistic owe their origins to the Hebrews. Part of the insufficiency of the documentary hypothesis is due to the fact that Wellhausen developed his views before archeology disproved them. Now some archeologists are so wed to the idea of Hegel's evolution of history that they interpret the evidence in view of their presuppositions instead of allowing the evidence to speak for itself. (This presuppositional bias is precisely what happens in the area of evolutionary thought in the physical sciences when evolutionists attempt to interpret archeological data.)

Just as archeology has failed to produce evidence of a myriad of transitional creatures that would support evolution in the development of life, archeology has failed to help the documentarians. If the Hebrew religion was at one time polytheistic, where are the many figurines of Yahweh that archeologists would find if the hypothesis were true? What archeology has proven is that many assumptions of the original source critics such as Wellhausen were wrong. In recent years, archeology in the biblical lands has shown that writing existed in the time of the patriarchs, religious beliefs and ceremonies were complex fifteen hundred years before Christ, and civil law codes were highly developed among other cultures in the time of Moses. In order to give a

late date to the Pentateuch, Wellhausen and his contemporaries denied all of these facts because of the limited archeological data of their day.

Literary Criticism

While source critics are interested in questions of historic development, literary critics represent a different approach to biblical studies, analyzing the literary content as a whole instead of fragmenting the narrative. Literary critics are less interested in how the text came to have its present form and are more interested in how to understand the meaning of the text in its present form. An understanding of the role of literary criticism in biblical interpretation is important because of its impact on liberal denominational views of the Scriptures and its impact in the classroom. Commonly, courses in college or even in some high schools that are entitled, "The Bible as Literature," approach biblical material from a less than religious or sacred viewpoint. Such classes treat the Bible on the same level as the classics, as an example of the art of expression. Of course, the Bible does have literary elements and some of its authors are conscious of their form of expression. Take for instance the Psalms, Ezekiel, or the Revelation as examples of poetry and high imagery. But to analyze the Bible just as a piece of literature is to miss the whole point of its incredible moral and spiritual revelation. It is not just literature, but a proclamation of God's will for man and a call for the reconciliation of man to God.

Nevertheless, much has been written with respect to applying the theories of literary analysis to the biblical texts. The approaches that different schools of literary criticism take divide into three groups: author-centered, text-centered, and reader-centered.

An author-centered approach to the interpretation of literature attempts to reconstruct the author's intended meaning when he or she originally penned the work. The reader must have sufficient understanding of the author's cultural, social, and personal circumstances in order to see the subject of the writing from the author's point of view. Not every piece of literature requires the same amount of knowledge about the author in order to see what he was seeing. A poem full of imagery and other literary devices may require more knowledge of the author than a straight forward narrative with a clear moral teaching attached to it. (In the latter case, the story itself leads to the correct interpretation of the moral principle.) However, there is always the fear that the reader is too far removed in time from the author and is too prejudiced by his own personal presuppositions to be able to understand what the author really intended to say. For this reason, methods of interpretation that focus on the author's intent must develop adequate means for describing the original setting of the text and the personal circumstances of the author.

In the 1940s and 1950s, skepticism about discovering the author's intent next led to text-centered theories of interpretation. An example of this school of thought was known as New Criticism. New Criticism held that a literary text is self-sufficient and stands on its own without depending on the author for insight into its expression. The author's intent has no value whatsoever and thus there is no need to explore the historical milieu surrounding the text. The focus of New Criticism was to carefully read and analyze the text, studying its literary forms and devices. The problem with this approach is that it tends to view ancient texts in view of modern understanding of literary forms. Another text-oriented method of literary analysis impacting the study of the Old Testament is structuralism. As an attempt to raise literary criticism to a scientific level, structuralism sought to define the rules and conventions to which a particular piece of literature conforms. All literature must necessarily conform to publicly understood rules and conventions in order to be read. Just like an understanding of the rules of football is necessary to observing a game in action, a reader must respect the rules that govern a particular piece of literature to understand its message. There is a sense in which a piece of literature is not particular or distinct because it reflects other literature previously written. Although understanding grammatical structure, literary forms, and genre is of value to interpretation, structuralism became so complex and esoteric in its analysis that the message of the text was easily lost amid the cold, lifeless analysis of form. Further, structuralists cannot agree on the rules used to analyze literature, and consequently they interpret the same literature in different ways. Their attempt to escape subjectivity through scientific analysis only led to a deeper, more rigid, rule-governed subjectivity.

In recent years, literary critics have turned to the reader as the source of meaning for the text. Reader-centered interpretation argues that the text, once written by the author, is free from any constraints of the author's intention. The reader responds to the text from his standpoint (pre-understanding) and creates meaning for the text. Every interpretation of a text is valid, as it holds meaning for the individual reader. Some critics of this persuasion do believe that the text limits the reader in some ways; however, they are unable to tell us how the text limits the reader's understanding without resorting to the original setting of the author or the grammatical and literary forms of the work. A reader-response approach to biblical interpretation is common among those who would like to use the Old Testament to support a particular agenda. Liberation theologians, interested in supporting their Marxist political views with biblical references, are famous for allowing their presuppositions to influence their understandings of biblical narrative. For instance, they often point to the Exodus as an example of violent liberation from oppression. Reader-centered interpretation leads to absolute skepticism in interpretation. A text that can

mean anything means nothing. Deconstruction, one of the most recent philosophical trends, rejects the possibility of defining the meaning in any concrete way because, once an author pens a work, the meaning is constantly moving away from the author's intention, never to return.

New theories of literary criticism usually influence biblical criticism some time after first being applied in other areas of literary analysis. These theories originate, not in schools of theology, but in the departments of philosophy, linguistics, and literature. This fact presents two problems for biblical criticism. First, by the time biblical scholars begin to employ the theories of literary criticism, the same theories are being challenged and disputed in other academic circles. There is no agreement in academia concerning what might be the correct philosophical approach to understanding literature, and theories are embraced and then laid aside as something new comes along. Second, methods of literary analysis that may be useful for modern Western literature may have little value for ancient literature. For instance, in the language of biblical Hebrew there is no word for poetry. Furthermore, one of the supposed characteristics usually identified with Hebrew poetry is parallelism; but passages in the Old Testament labeled as prose also contain examples of parallelism (e.g. the first three days and the last three days of the creation account in Genesis 1). The categorization of literature depends on culture.

Interpretation of biblical texts can never ignore the author's intent, because the text's power to address, to teach, to command, and to motivate rests upon the author's authority. One of the benefits of literary criticism has been to focus on the problem of the reader's pre-understanding when he comes to read a text. But whereas some literary theories leave the reader forever blinded from understanding the text by his presuppositions, biblical studies must pay closer attention to methods and tools for allowing the author to speak clearly and the reader to listen more carefully. *753 Saucito Ave., Salinas, CA 93906*

Bibliography

- Allis, Oswald. **The Five Books of Moses**. Nutley, New Jersey: the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977.
- Larue, Gerald. **Old Testament Life and Literature**. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968.
- Longman III, Tremper. **Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.
- McDowell, Josh. **More Evidence that Demands a Verdict**. San Bernadino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1975.

The Creation and The Temptation and Fall of Man

by Smith Bibens

Genesis begins with creation and ends with a coffin; it begins with glory and ends with a grave; it begins with the vastness of eternity and ends with the shortness of time; it begins with a living God and ends with a dead man; it begins with a blaze of brightness in the heavens and ends with a box of bones in Egypt. It is a book of facts, a book of firsts, a book of faith, a book of forecasts, a book of funerals. It is "the seedplot of the Bible," because all the vast forests of Scripture start there as seedlings. In Genesis we have the beginning of everything except God (Phillips, p. 9).

The Jews named the book **B'reshith** ("In the beginning"). The title "Genesis" is from the Septuagint rendering of 2:4a, "This is the book of the **geneseos** of heaven and earth," (subsequently: 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). The word means "origin, source, generation."

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It relates the beginnings of time, life, marriage, family, worship, human government, and civilization; also sin, sacrifice, sorrow, death, and redemption from sin. The age-old struggle of good and evil, and the story of how God set in motion His redemptive scheme for humanity, also begin here.

Genesis naturally divides into two parts, each of which may be further divided into four parts. The whole book is summed up in eight words: Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel (or Nations), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

Outline

- I. God's Dealings with Mankind in General (chapters 1-11)**
 - A. The Creation (chapters 1-2)
 - B. The Fall of Man (chapters 3-5)
 - C. The Flood (chapters 6-9)
 - D. The Nations (chapters 10-11)
- II. God's Dealings with the Patriarchs of Israel (chapters 12-50)**
 - A. Abraham (chapters 12-23)
 - B. Isaac (chapters 24-26)
 - C. Jacob (chapters 27-36)
 - D. Joseph (chapters 37-50)

To Whom

The book of Genesis was written first for Israel during the wilderness sojourn in the fifteenth century B.C. This book is God's account of the origin of humanity and the nation of Israel. Doubtless, the Israelites. Adam lived until well over two hundred years after Methuselah was born, who in turn lived until Noah was about six hundred years old. Noah lived to talk with Terah, and the latter lived well into Abraham's days. Abraham lived to talk with Joseph, who also lived until Amram was a young man, and Amram lived to see Moses in his youth. So, there is an unbroken line of seven men from Adam to Moses.

Ancient people were conscious of those who had gone before, and they wanted to know about them and pass on their stories to their children. It would be no surprise if the descendants of Noah's sons passed on the stories about the remote past—of the world before the Flood, of Noah coming through the Great Flood on an ark, of the events at Babel. These human accounts, however, passed on through an increasing number of families and tribes and nations, and suffered the usual ravages of human frailty—forgetfulness, embellishment, and revision to reflect the new attitudes and philosophies of future generations. Some vestiges of these ancient human accounts remain. For example, virtually every human culture preserves traditional accounts of a global flood. While differing in many details, these accounts have some common traits—a great flood, a man and his family saved by the gods. These legends reflect the gross polytheism of the people who passed them on. One creation account from Babylonia is called the *Enuma Elish*. In typical human fashion, these accounts were all corrupted and the true facts of the events were lost.

Genesis corrects this situation and restores to man the facts of his origin. Genesis is the product of a unique partnership between heaven and earth, God and man. This partnership is the pattern for all future revelation (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Genesis, written hundreds of years after the events it relates, is nonetheless an accurate account of the history of humanity and of the family of Abraham down to the sojourn in Egypt. While mere human writers might preserve snippets of the truth, dimly recollected and with much forgotten, Genesis preserves a faithful and accurate record, for Moses was aided by Divine help in its production.

Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come (Is. 41:22, NKJV)

God furnished Israel with an accurate and instructive history of their origin—as humans and as children of Abraham. These Israelites were faced with daunting challenges—the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and, the greatest challenge of all, to keep Jehovah's Law faithfully. They were fortified, encouraged, and admonished as they learned about God's past dealings with the human race and their own ancestors. God had a purpose for them, and His purpose would not fail. They were sustained by the fact that He had already worked in the lives of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and His brethren. In Genesis, they must have found great encouragement for their future tasks.

Genesis is not just for Israel, any more than 1 Corinthians is only for the Corinthians. Genesis is universal in its appeal and utility. Its message is for all people of all time. It is the foundation book of the Bible.

Purpose

Genesis serves two main purposes. First, it provides the correct historical background for Israel. It helped Israel to understand its important place as God's chosen nation, a nation destined to be the channel through whom God's blessings would be poured out upon all nations through the Messiah.

Second, Genesis provides humanity with the correct worldview by its account of creation, by explaining the origin of sin and evil in the world, and by revealing the origin of God's scheme of redemption. This book makes it clear that God is our Creator and that He is vitally interested in the welfare of mankind. Furthermore, Genesis clearly reveals that God is not indifferent to the moral and ethical behavior of mankind. The great judgments of Genesis—against the world before the Flood, against Sodom and Gomorrah—prove that man, though a free moral agent, is not free to do as he pleases. These are important lessons for men today and serve to make this book relevant.

Genesis has been called the "seedbed" of every important doctrine taught in the Bible. However, while Genesis is a book of beginnings, nothing is resolved here. Genesis may be compared to an establishing shot in film: a large angle view takes in several buildings in a large city, the camera focuses in on one building, then on one window, next the camera is in the room and focusing on the main character as the film begins. The establishing shot gives context to a film. Likewise, Genesis provides the context, the background information to get the most out of all that follows in the Bible.

It is important to realize that while Genesis informs about the origin of the world, of man, and of the nations, it is not intended to be a history of the human race. Also, Genesis is not intended to inform man about all the acts of

God, but only those that relate to His relationship with man and man's redemption from sin.

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deut. 29:29).

Authorship

The Jewish people have always held that Moses is the inspired author of the Pentateuch. In several Old Testament passages, portions of the Pentateuch are ascribed to him.

The most important evidence for Moses' authorship, however, is that Christ Himself referred to Moses as the writer of these books, as did the New Testament writers (Mt. 19:7-9; Lk. 2:27; Jn. 7:19). Anyone who accepts the Lordship of Jesus must acquiesce to His authority on the authorship of the Pentateuch.

From the human standpoint, Moses was well prepared for writing Genesis. He was trained "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). This would include the skill of writing. At one time, some critics suggested that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing had not been invented by the fifteenth century B.C. The archaeologist's spade has come to the rescue and has provided ample evidence that writing predates the time of Moses by many centuries.

Davis treats the external and internal evidence for Mosaic authorship.

I. External evidence. This consists primarily of the testimony of the Bible to the authorship of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch itself contains a number of references to Mosaic authorship of large portions (cf. Exod. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Num. 33:1-2; Deut. 31:9). But other Old Testament books also ascribe the Pentateuch to Moses. The most important reference is Joshua 1:7, 8, in which the law is associated with Moses and the phrase "the book of the law" appears. This phrase indicates that the Torah had already appeared in literary form and was accepted as the Word of God revealed. For that reason Joshua was commanded to meditate on it and obey it, and was promised that this would insure success. From this passage and many others like it, one can conclude that shortly after Moses' death the Torah appeared in written form and was recognized as a message from God and therefore fully authoritative. This gives some clue to the process by which biblical revelation received canonical status, a process superintended by the Holy Spirit.

Numerous references in the New Testament also allude to Mosaic authorship, and many are direct quotes from Christ Himself. For example, Jesus asked the Sadducees, "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" (Mark 12:26). The assertion implicit in the question is of utmost importance. The Lord is either clearly affirming Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch or He is merely accommodating Himself to a historical error current in His day; these are the only alternatives. If one concedes that Christ practiced accommodation to error, how does one distinguish between what is truth and what is accommodation? And how can the Lord ever accommodate Himself to error, anyway? Jesus' words must have been historically true, and therefore, Moses must have written the Pentateuch.

The Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora were unanimous on the matter, as is reflected in the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, the Apocrypha (cf. Eccles. 45:5; 2 Macc. 7:30), and the writings of both Philo (*Life of Moses*, 3:39) and Josephus (*Antiquities*, 4:8:45). Early writers of the Christian era concurred, with the exception of Jerome.

2. Internal evidence. This consists primarily in evidence within the Pentateuch concerning the author; second millennium BC customs, literary forms, and language expressed or used in the Pentateuch; and the obvious unity of Genesis.

The author must have been thoroughly familiar with the desert and must, in fact, have written while in that environment (cf. Lev. 18:3; Deut. 12:9; 15 4, 7; 17:14; Num. 2:1ff.; Lev. 14:8; 16:21; 17:3, 9). He must have been an eyewitness since innumerable details in the Pentateuch would have been lost to any but an eyewitness; they are incidental to the main story and reflect careful observation (cf. Exod. 15:27; 25:5). And the author knew Egypt well. He was familiar with Egyptian names such as *On*, a designation for the city of Heliopolis; *Pithom*, meaning "the house of Atum"; *Potiphara* meaning "the gift of Ra"; *Asenath*; and *Moses*, possibly a shortened form of Thutmose or Ahmose. He used Egyptian words freely (cf. Gen. 41:43 where the expression *abrek* apparently refers to the Egyptian form 'b rk—"O heart bow down!"). He referred to flora and fauna that are typically Egyptian or Sinaitic. For example, the Shittim, or Acacia tree, is indigenous to Egypt and the Sinai peninsula but not to Palestine. He also alluded to a number of animals that are typically Egyptian or Sinaitic (cf. Deut. 14:5; Lev. 11:16). The geographic references of the author are extensive, detailed, and extremely accurate.

Since "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22), it is not unreasonable to

assume that he had the intellectual capacity and training to be the primary author of Genesis. Archaeological light on Egyptian education indicates that as Moses grew in the royal court, he would have received much formal training in reading and writing the hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts, in copying texts, and in writing letters and other formal documents. He probably had opportunity to learn something of the languages of Canaan, for some Egyptian officials knew both the geography and languages of that land. Therefore, while it may be conceded that small portions were written later, we must conclude that Genesis was essentially written by Moses himself or a scribe under his immediate control. Whatever was added, was added by a scribe fully inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16) (Davis, pp. 23-26).

Kline adds:

For those who accept the claims to Mosaic authorship common to the other four books, particular importance attaches to two types of evidence for the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, a book in which explicit claims to such authorship are lacking.

First, there is the interpenetration of Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch through numerous themes continued from the former into the latter, thus making the last four books dependent upon the first. Random illustrations of some of the varieties of such interrelationship are: the resumption of the genealogical table of Gn. 46 in Ex. 1:1ff. and 6:14; the recalling of the narrative of the twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, and the blessing of Esau (Gn. 25ff.) as the justification of the instructions given to Israel concerning their encounter with Edom (Dt. 2:4ff.; cf. Nu. 20:14ff.); and the similarity of the end of Deuteronomy to that of Genesis. The supposition is hardly plausible that the second layer (Ex.-Dt.) was produced independently of and even by an earlier author than the foundational layer (Gn.).

Of special significance, secondly, is the NT's witness to the writing of the whole Law by Moses (see especially Jn. 1:45; 5:46f.). Quotations made by Jesus and His disciples from here and there in the Pentateuch and attributed to Moses indicate that our Lord accepted the then prevalent Jewish view that Moses wrote all five books of the Law. To argue that the inspired authors claim Mosaic authorship only for the particular passages they cite as Mosaic (judging also perhaps that no Genesis passages are thus cited) is to assume that they had deliberately engaged in higher critical investigation leading them to a rejection of the current tradition of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis. . . . The NT endorses the Jewish tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, not excluding Genesis (Kline, pp. 79).

For reasons we have already explored (the overlapping generations from Adam to Moses), at least a portion of the patriarchs' history could have been

known to Moses apart from divine help. However, it is far more important to remember that Moses was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this account. There are many details he could never have known except by divine revelation (cf. Is. 41:22). Whatever he may or may not have acquired from other sources, the final writing was inspired, superintended, and guided by the Holy Spirit. (For more on the internal and external evidence for Mosaic authorship see Archer).

Importance of Genesis

The quickest way to demolish a building is to attack its foundation. If the foundation can be destroyed, the whole superstructure will fall. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the heaviest attacks against the Bible have been leveled against its opening chapters. Genesis is foundational to the entire Bible. If you treat the opening book of the Bible, and particularly the opening chapters, as myth and fable, then the entire Scripture record will be undermined for you. When you believe the assertions of materialistic, evolutionary dogma, then it follows that your confidence in the reliability of the Bible will be undermined.

Consider the extent to which the rest of the Bible relies upon the foundation laid in Genesis 1-11. Some fifty-four passages from Genesis chapters 1-11 are quoted and requoted a total of eighty-seven times in eighteen different New Testament books. In every instance, they are quoted as the authoritative Word of God.

The doctrine of creation introduced in these chapters is present in virtually every book of the Bible. There are many more references to the creative power of God than just those found in Genesis 1-2. There are sixty-eight explicit references to the creation of the world by God scattered throughout the books of the Old and New Testaments (cf. Ps. 19; Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 17:24ff).

If one is deceived into thinking the Genesis record is myth, then one's confidence in Jesus will be undermined. Jesus acknowledged the genuineness of the Genesis account in His dialogue with the Pharisees on divorce in Matthew 19. Jesus said, "He which made them in the beginning made them male and female" (Mt. 19:4).

If the Bible's history of life's origin is false, as some claim, how can the remainder of the biblical revelation be embraced as spiritual truth? What you believe about the whole Bible as the authoritative revelation of God is conditioned by your belief or disbelief of the first few chapters of Genesis.

If one is deceived into thinking Genesis chapters 1-3 are not to be trusted, then one will be duped into accepting false answers to life's most important questions:

- Where did I come from?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?

The answers to the last two depend upon your answer to the first one. The answer God wants you accept on the first one is found in Genesis 1-2.

It is said, "The Bible is not a textbook of science." These words often preface some modernist accommodation with evolutionary, materialistic philosophy. These words are used to introduce the idea held by theistic evolutionists that the Bible tells us the "who" and "why" of creation, but modern science (meaning evolution) tells us the "how" and "when." What people often mean when they say, "The Bible is not a textbook of science," is that you should not take Genesis 1-2 at face value. However, failing to take the Bible at face value is a very serious error.

In one sense, the Bible was not written as a textbook of science. It does not give a full scientific account of the "how" of creation. No chemist or physicist can go to Genesis 1-2 and find how to duplicate creation. The author of Genesis simply wrote to impress upon man the truth that the cosmos and everything in it is the handiwork of the Will and Word of the living God (cf. Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 24, 26; Ps. 33:6, 9; 148:1-6; Heb. 11:3).

God's purpose was to give us a true account of man's origin, purpose, and destiny. This understood, we see that the Creation account is history. As history it is true, genuine, and factual. The Bible points out our dependence upon God, a dependence that extends beyond the material aspect of life to embrace the spiritual. The Bible reveals to us our need of a Savior, due to sin, and how salvation has been promised, prophesied, prepared, and finally provided through Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity.

When Moses wrote Genesis by the inspiration of God, he was teaching mankind how our world and our race originated. His purpose was to make it clear that we have a relation to God that cannot be ignored. We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:7).

Genesis 1: Creation of the Heavens and Earth

Is Genesis poetry, myth or narrative history? Some say that the early chapters of Genesis are poetry or myth, by which they mean that they are not to be taken as a straightforward account. Denying the literal, narrative history

of Genesis is believed by some to remove all the difficulties that are perceived to exist between the Bible and science.

The eminent Old Testament commentators, Keil & Delitzsch, write:

The account of the creation, its commencement, progress, and completion, bears the marks, both in form and substance, of a historical document in which it is intended that we should accept as actual truth, not only the assertion that God created the heavens, and the earth, and all that lives and moves in the world, but also the description of creation itself in all its several stages (p. 37).

Genesis 1-11 are written as historical narrative, and as such are absolutely historical. The Bible insists that we regard Genesis as historical. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Ps. 103:7). Genesis' early chapters read like a straightforward historical narrative. Note the repetition of "And," "Then," or "So" (or other connectives) as the account unfolds.

There are poetic accounts of creation in the Bible—Psalm 104 and certain chapters in Job. In form and literary style, they differ completely from Genesis 1-2. Hebrew poetry has certain identifying characteristics (e.g., parallelism) which are not found in Genesis 1-2.

Ancient peoples had various cosmogonies (accounts of how the world came to be). The Babylonians had one, so did the Assyrians, Egyptians, and other nations. Modernist, liberal scholars claim that the account in Genesis 1-2 is nothing more than such a document—a legendary, mythical account of how the world began. Some have been so bold as to suggest that the Hebrews borrowed from the other nations, cleaned up the gross polytheism that characterizes these cosmogonies, and the result is Genesis 1-2. One creation epic in particular that has received the attention of critics is the *Enuma Elish*. They allege that certain similarities between the *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1-2 show their relation.

How do we account for the similarities between the two documents? Genesis 9-11 teaches that mankind has a common spiritual and historical heritage. As the descendants of Noah overspread the earth, however, they became forgetful of God. Romans 1:18-23 gives us some idea of the progress of corruption that must have marked the descent of the ancient nations into idolatry and gross polytheism. The unproven assertion of modernists, that religion has evolved "upward," will not stand the historical test. Professor Kitchen writes:

In the Ancient Near East the rule is that simple accounts and traditions may give rise (by accretion and embellishment) to elaborate

legends but not vice versa. In the Ancient Orient, legends were not simplified and turned into pseudo-history (historized) as has been assumed [by liberal scholars—sb] for early Genesis (p. 89).

If the contention of the liberals is true, and Genesis is nothing but a reworking of old Summerian and Akkadian myths, then that throws Yahweh into the same category as other national deities of ancient times. It makes Genesis no more reliable than any other myth, and throws doubt upon the historical reliability and veracity of the Bible, both Old and New. If one, however, will compare the *Enuma Elish* with the Genesis account, one will come to the same conclusion that E. J. Young, scholar of the Hebrew language and conservative Bible scholar, came to—"The first chapter of Genesis stands out like a fair flower in a barren wilderness" (Young, *In the Beginning*, p. 13). Or as another scholar has said, "there is no better measure of the inspiration of the Biblical account than to put it side by side with the Babylonian" (George Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* [Phila.: American Sunday School Union, 1917], p. 250; quoted in Brantley). Here is just a small sample from the *Enuma Elish*.

Then the lord paused to view her dead body
That he might divide the monster and do artful works
He split her like a shellfish into two parts
Half of her set up and called it sky.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The Absolute Beginning. Genesis 1 makes no attempt to prove that God exists. This fact is taken as self-evident. (Of course, that does not mean that we should not bother to defend against atheism.) Thirty-two times in the thirty-one verses of Genesis 1 (eleven times by use of personal pronouns), God is mentioned by Moses in what is the most God-centered chapter in the Bible.

The Creation of Everything. "Heaven(s)" (Heb. *Shamayim*, plural), refers to the universe of space, what we might call "outer space." Regarding the creation of the "earth," Henry Morris says, "The earth itself originally had no form to it (Gen. 1:2); so this verse must speak essentially of the creation of the basic elements of matter, which thereafter were to be organized into the structured earth and later into other material bodies" (p. 41). Young takes these words to simply mean that "God created everything." Morris paraphrases the first verse thus: "The transcendent, omnipotent Godhead called into existence the space-mass-time universe" (p. 41).

Genesis 1:2

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

The detailed account of creation begins in verse 2 and concludes with verse 31. There is a contrast between these two verses. Verse 31 reads, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

Verse two refers to the unorganized and unformed state of the earth. The Gap Theory, of which we have more to say directly, says verse 2 describes a condition arising from evil. But that is not the case at all. The Hebrew phrase translated "without form and void" simply means that the earth was unorganized and empty. God had not done the work necessary to make the earth a fit habitation for life and humanity. That is all verse two means.

The Six Days of Creation**First Day (vv. 3-5)**

The expression "And God said" occurs several times. Here we have the first record of God speaking in the Bible and His first commandments. They are addressed to the material world and they have been perfectly kept. They stand in marked contrast to God's commandments given to the first human pair, as we shall see in Genesis 3. Here we have the essential difference between all the rest of the natural world and man.

"And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Christ, the living Word of God (Jn. 1:1, 14) is the "light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), and "in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5).

When light appeared, "God divided the light from the darkness." Darkness was not removed completely, so far as the earth was concerned, but only separated from the light. Furthermore, "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." As though in anticipation of future misunderstanding, God carefully defined His terms. The very first time He used the word "day" (Hebrew *yom*), He defined it as the "light," to distinguish it from the "darkness" called "night."

Having separated the day and night, God completed His first day's work. "The evening and the morning were the first day." This same formula is used at the conclusion of each of the six days; so it is obvious the duration of each

of the days was the same. The formula may be rendered literally: "And there was evening, then morning, day one," and so on. It is clear that, beginning with the first day and continuing thereafter, there was established a cyclical succession of days and nights—periods of light and periods of darkness.

It should be noted that in the Hebrew Old Testament *yom*, without exception, never means "period." It normally means either a day in the twenty-four hour sense or else the daylight portion of the twenty-four hours (i.e., "day" as distinct from "night"). It may occasionally be used in the sense of indefinite time (e.g., "in the time of the judges"). But *yom* never is used of a definite period of time with a specific beginning and ending other than a daylight period or a twenty-four hour day. It is not used in an indefinite sense except when the context clearly indicates that the literal meaning is not intended (cf. Young and Morris).

Returning to the significance of the created light, its primary meaning here is visible light since it is set in contrast to darkness. At the same time, however, the presence of visible light waves necessarily involves the entire electromagnetic spectrum. Beyond the visible light waves are, on the one hand, ultraviolet light and all the other shortwave-length radiations and, on the other hand, infrared light and the other longwave phenomena.

Setting the electromagnetic forces into operation completed the energizing of the physical cosmos. All the types of force and energy that interact in the universe involve only electromagnetic, gravitational, and nuclear forces; and all of these were now active.

All this was accomplished on the first day of creation. The physical universe was created, energized, and made ready for further shaping and furnishing in preparation for man, whose dominion it would be.

Second Day (vv. 6-8)

On the second day, one finds the creation of the "firmament." Liberals take pleasure in pointing to this word as an indication of the Hebrews' pre-scientific view of the universe. W. E. Vine explains:

While this English word is derived from the Latin *firmamentum* which signifies firmness or strengthening . . . the Hebrew word, *raqia*, has no such meaning, but denoted the "expanse," that which is stretched out. Certainly the sky was not regarded as a hard vault in which the heavenly orbs were fixed . . . There is therefore nothing in the language of the original to suggest that the writers [of the Old Testament] were influenced by the imaginative ideas of heathen nations (p. 67).

Moses states one of the functions of the firmament—it was intended to serve as a divider between the atmospheric and the terrestrial waters. Therefore, this proves that Moses did not have in mind solid canopy. Water vapor is an important component of the atmosphere, and there is nothing in Moses' words to suggest that he had reference to anything more than that. Creation scientists (Morris, et al.) have suggested that a canopy of water vapor enveloped the antediluvian world and caused a globally temperate climate to prevail.

Third Day (vv. 9-13)

Day three brings to view a more familiar earth, one composed of land, sea, and vegetation. At first mention, the earth was a formless, watery object; now, in addition to illumination and atmosphere, the forming planet is given the feature of dry land.

The third day gives another example of the conflict with evolution. After the dry land appears, God commands: "Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit trees . . ." (Gen. 1:11). Evolution places the origin of life in the seas, but Moses says the land was to put forth the first life forms. Derek Kidner conveys the exciting tone of the literal Hebrew rendering of this verse: "Let the earth vegetate vegetation, herb seeding seed, fruit tree making fruit after its kind" (Quoted in Kline, p. 80). There is a splash of life! Suddenly, the planet is bursting with verdure. Does this sound like a gradual process requiring untold millennia to accomplish?

According to Moses, each form of life was to bring forth (reproduce) "after its kind." This cripples the notion that all life is somehow related biologically thanks to a parental process of organic evolution. Moses says there are boundaries between the different kinds of organisms. Despite the charges of uninformed critics, Moses did not teach "fixity of species;" instead he taught "fixity of kinds." While the species barrier is sometimes crossed in breeding, the "kinds" barrier is not. A precise definition of "kinds" is uncertain; however, the Bible student need not be concerned over this uncertainty. The man-made taxonomic system is no less at a loss to strictly define the common categories with which it works (see Hardin, p. 198). As with days one and two, the creative activity is followed by an evening and a morning, thus completing day three.

Fourth Day (vv. 14-19)

The sun, moon, and stars are brought into existence on the fourth day. Some say that the Hebrew word "made" in this passage (*asab*) simply means that God "made them to appear." In the words of Hebrew scholar E. J. Young,

"It is a very intriguing theory, but it is not true to the meaning of the Hebrew word" (Young, *In the Beginning*, p. 47).

In the first verse we read, "God created the heavens and the earth," not "God created the earth." Then we read how God (Elohim) organized, energized, and fashioned the earth into the terrestrial sphere we know today. On the fourth day, other heavenly bodies were made. It does not say they were created out of nothing. The material was already there (v. 1). Thus, on the fourth day God constituted the universe as we now know it. He made it the *kosmos*,¹ the Greek word for the organized universe.

Day four is somewhat unique among the other days of creation. For the first time the earth is not the sole object of the action of God. Instead, the divine attention is directed to the creation of the heavenly bodies that surround the earth. By His omnipotence, God speaks the planets and stars into being. From man's standpoint, they are lights in space. They do not appear to the unaided eye as anything else, so there is no need (in the context) for Moses to discuss them or explain them in any other way. Earth's exalted status is portrayed in the fact that the stars and planets were brought into existence for the benefit the earth. This is far different from the view that says earth is little more than a cosmic accident, just another speck of dust among millions that might have "evolved" life.

Fifth Day (vv. 20-23)

The planet is now a fit home for animal life. On day five, God speaks into existence all manner of sea life and creatures of flight. The seas are to "swarm with swarms of living creatures" (ASV); this conveys a feeling of immediacy. No long, gradual process is here intimated; the command is urgent. The creation of birds is spoken of in like terms: "and let birds fly above the earth." The Creator brings His creatures into being capable of functioning in their determined roles. Fish are created swimming; birds are created flying.

As with the vegetation which preceded, the creatures of day five are to reproduce after their kinds. Evolution teaches that birds are the biological descendants of reptiles, which descended from amphibians, which descended from sea creatures. However, Moses says that birds and fish were created at the same time. Again, evolution and Genesis are irreconcilable.

¹ *Kosmos* is "primarily order, arrangement, ornament, adornment" often used of the earth and universe. *Aion*, "an age, a period of time, marked in the NT usage by spiritual or moral characteristics." *Oikoumene* "the inhabited earth . . . by metonymy, its inhabitants" (Vine, p. 879).

Sixth Day (vv. 24-31)

Regarding verse 27 ("Let us make man . . ."), Young comments:

I think this is intended to indicate that there is a plurality of persons in the speaker. It is not a plural of majesty. It is not God consulting his heavenly court, for in the work of salvation and in the work of creation, God does not consult the heavenly court. These are the words of God alone, and it is, I repeat, an indication or intimation that there is plurality of persons in the speaker. It is the first [indication] of the doctrine of the Trinity that is found in the Bible. This explains the use of the plural (Young, *In the Beginning*, p. 50).

God created man in a distinct way from all that had preceded. The verb *bara* is used—God created man in His own image. Man was made in the image of the Lord, not the ape. Here the uniqueness of man is set forth. Man is supreme over all that had gone before. All that preceded was prepared for man to rule. God pronounces a blessing on man: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (v. 28).

1. God intended for man to fill the earth. The old English word "replenish" simply means "to fill." Some people have said that the "re" of replenish signifies that the earth had been filled up before, destroyed, and was now reconstructed. Not so. The Hebrew word only means "to fill."

2. God ordained procreation before the Fall. Some have erroneously taught that sex was evil—a result of man's fall from grace, or even somehow connected with it. Absolutely not true. God designed the home and marriage as a part of the paradise He created for man and which He calls "very good" (v. 31). Man has corrupted this since the Fall. Hebrews 13:4 reads, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Also, Revelation 21:8 reads:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

3. The question may be raised, What if man had never fallen? God says, I am God, and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:9c-10).

God knows the future and knew that man would eventually fall to the devices of Satan. Paul explains that God's redemptive plan fulfilled in the

sacrifice and exaltation of Jesus was in the mind of God even before He created the world:

Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

4. Why did God allow Satan to tempt man and to introduce sin into the world through the Fall? The answer to this difficult question lies in considering some facts the Bible reveals about God. No person who respects the Bible as God's Word can deny the following facts.

First, God is absolutely good. "No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mk. 10:18; Lk. 18:19). God is good to all men (Ps. 145:9). God is good without partiality. "For there is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11; also Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). God will always do what is right and will always be fair in His dealings with man (cf. Gen. 18:25). Therefore, allowing Satan to tempt man was not because there was a defect in God's goodness and fairness. God is just.

Second, God is all-powerful. He is omnipotent, that is, there are no bounds or limits to His ability. He is called "Almighty" over fifty times in Scripture (cf. Gen. 35:11; Rev. 4:8). There is nothing too hard for God Almighty (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27; Mt. 19:26). Therefore, Satan's power to tempt man is not due to a defect in God's omnipotence. Satan is an adversary of God and everything good, but Satan is not able to overcome God's will. Satan is limited (cf. Job 1, 2; Lk. 10:18; Rom. 16:20). God is in charge.

Third, God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). The core of God's being is love. He loves mankind (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:11). Among many statements and definitions offered for "love," this one is certainly true: "Love always acts in the best interest of its object." In other words, in whatever God does, it is ultimately in man's best interest. Therefore, allowing Satan to tempt man was not because God did not care about man or was not concerned about man's welfare. God is love.

Fourth, God does allow Satan to tempt man. God Himself does not entice anyone to do evil. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (Jas. 1:13). However, Satan is allowed to do so (cf. Job 1, 2); it is Satan's desire to do so (Lk. 22:31).

Fifth, God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Jas. 3:9) and constituted man a free moral agent. That is, man has a choice in whether he will obey God (cf. Josh. 24:15; Deut. 30:19; Mt. 22:3). This does not mean that man has the right to disobey God, it only means that man has the ability to

disobey God. Man's autonomy is granted by God because He loves man, His creation, and wants man to choose to love Him—for only then could love be genuine! If man had no choice but to love and obey God (for the two are inseparable), then man would be a mere robot. However, God made man more than a robot. He created man in His image. When God created the sun, moon, and the immensity of stellar space, He appointed them to their courses (Gen. 1:15-16). These great celestial bodies do exactly what God set them to do (Job 9:7-9). The ocean has its bounds set by God—"You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them" (Ps. 89:9; cf. Mk. 4:39). But God has not chosen to deal so with man. He has allowed man the option of obeying or disobeying; of loving God his Maker or spurning His great love.

Sixth, there is a blessing for man when he overcomes temptation. James says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas. 1:13).

The sum of all these facts is simply this: there is some ultimate good to be realized in allowing man to be tempted to sin. Perhaps it is an end that only God in His infinite wisdom can see. Nevertheless, in view of the foregoing scriptural information, we conclude that there is a purpose to God's method. We know that it is good for man to resist, overcome, and endure temptation and trials. God requires that man be reconciled and redeemed, if recovered at all, only after tasting the bitter fruits of rebellion and the futility of resistance to God's will, and by repentance of the evil formerly chosen.

Alternatives to Special Creation

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rationalistic philosophy eroded the confidence of many, academics and common folks alike, in the literal historical record of the Bible, and Genesis in particular.

In the early nineteenth century, Charles Lyell published *Principles of Geology*, a work that presented the uniformitarian theory of geology. The uniformitarian view states that the observed geological formations and strata of the earth were formed very slowly

Critique of Evolution

Behe, Michael. *Darwin's Black Box*. The Free Press.

Johnson, Phillip. *Darwin on Trial*. Regnery Gateway.

Lubenow, Martin L. *Bones of Contention*. Baker.

Periodical

Reason & Revelation and Discovery (for children), 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117. \$10 per year for each. (from Apologetics Press)

over extremely long periods of time. Lyell denied that the Flood (Gen. 6-9) was a worldwide catastrophe, and he also laid the foundation that Charles Darwin and others would build upon.

Bolstered by uniformitarian geology's contention that the world had been around for a very, very long time, men like Charles Darwin felt that they could hypothesize an origin for life on earth through a gradual, evolutionary process. The publication of *Origin of the Species* in 1859 helped the acceptance of Darwinian evolution in the academic world of Western Civilization. For many, God was dismissed from the picture, and naturalistic forces were credited with shaping the world into what we see today.

Many Bible-believing people reacted by trying to accommodate the proclamations of "science" with the biblical record. Instead of subjecting the evolutionary theory to the kind of scrutiny that would have exposed its fallacies, they tried to meld two diametrically opposed concepts. The result has been such ideas as: (1) the days of Genesis 1 are representative of something other than literal days, such as epochs of time or geologic ages; (2) the "gap theory"; and (3) theistic evolution.

"Day = Age of Time" Theory

"The days of Genesis 1 are representative of ages of time." This accommodation to uniformitarian geology and evolutionary philosophy may lull one into thinking that they have found a workable compromise that allows one to hold their faith and also hold to the findings of science. It is a delusion. This is a step that leads to further steps away from the historical, literal acceptance of the narrative of Scripture. Remember, uniformitarian geology and evolutionary dogma are direct challenges to belief in God and supernaturalism. Why should we be interested in compromising with such?

More to the point, Scripture is against this interpretation. (See above under *The First Day: Genesis 1:3-5*.) If one adopts the "Day=Age Theory," several problems with the text of Genesis 1 become apparent. First, if "day" really means "age of time," then what do the terms "evening" and "morning" mean (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)? Clearly, God intended for these days in Genesis 1 to be understood as literal days. This is also proven by Exodus 20:9-11.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the

sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Noted Hebrew scholar Edward J. Young says that when the Hebrew *yom* is combined with a cardinal (one) or ordinal (first) number, it always refers to literal days. In Genesis 1 that is the case.

There are further problems in the narrative of Genesis 1 if an age is meant by the term "day." Plants were created on day three, but insects not until day six. Many plants, however, depend on insects for cross-pollination to survive. If one is going to try to accommodate Genesis 1 to the theories of science, then one will have to adopt further accommodations to explain away the apparent meaning of the Genesis 1 narrative. Bible-respecting people, however, cannot do that—they must accept the account at face value. "Our God is able" (Dan. 3:17; Mt. 3:9).

The Gap Theory

The Gap Theory states that a vast "gap" of time existed between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, and that during this "gap" lived successive generations of plants, animals, and even pre-Adamic men (some views leave out the men). According to the Gap Theory, God destroyed the original creation because of a Satanic rebellion (some views omit this, too), and so Genesis 1:2 is translated to suggest that the earth "became" waste and void. The creation days of Genesis 1 are then said to be "re-creation" days. It is sad when men feel compelled to try to accommodate evolutionary presuppositions.

First, Exodus 20:11 plainly states that "in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day." Notice all that the statement includes. If everything was made in six days, then nothing was created prior to those six days. The Bible is its own best interpreter, as always. This one verse demolishes the Gap Theory.

Second, Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) is called the "first man." That excludes any pre-Adamic race of men. Adam was the first.

Third, at the conclusion of the sixth day, God saw everything He had made, and behold it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). If Jehovah's original creation had become contaminated through Satan's rebellion, and thus was consequently destroyed—and the new creation rested on a veritable graveyard of corruption—it is difficult to see how God could have surveyed the situation and then used the expression "very good" to describe it!

Fourth, Gap theorists claim that the Hebrew word for "was" (*hayetba*) should be translated "became" or "had become," indicating a change of state from the original perfect creation to a chaotic condition (v. 2). Yet, none of the

scholarly translations of the Bible so translate the verse. Noted Hebrew scholar J. W. Watts has stated:

In Genesis 1:2a the verb is perfect. It indicates a fixed and completed state. In other words, original matter was in a state of chaos when created; it came into being that way (*A Survey of Old Testament Teaching*, Vol. I, p. 16).

Fifth, Gap theorists assert that the phrase "without form and void" of Genesis 1:2 (*tohu wabohu*) can refer only to something once in a state of repair but now ruined. John C. Whitcomb replies by saying:

Many Bible students, however, are puzzled with the statement in Genesis 1:2 that the Earth was without form and void. Does God create things that have no form and are void? The answer, of course, depends on what those words mean. "Without form and void" translate the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu*, which literally means "empty and formless." In other words, the Earth was not chaotic, not under curse of judgment. It was simply empty of living things and without the features that it later would possess, such as oceans and continents, hills and valleys—features that would be essential for man's well-being. In other words, it was not an appropriate home for man (*And God Created*, Vol. II, pp. 60-70).

(For more good information on the gap theory, consult W. W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976] for a full treatment most excellently done. Also *Reason & Revelation*, July 1994.)

Theistic Evolution

Theistic evolution is just materialistic evolution with God as the "First Cause" or directing intelligence. Therefore, to analyze whether theistic evolution is a viable alternative, we need to look at the theory of evolution itself. Lawrence O. Richards writes concerning evolution:

How could it have happened? Somehow in the great shallow seas life, it is said, was spawned. Over the eons, life forms grew more complex. The single cell multiplied differentiating into eye and lung and brain and blood and bone. Never mind the fact that biologists "know of no other way than random mutation by which new hereditary variation comes into being" (C.H. Waddington, "The Nature of Life," *Atheneum*). Ignore the fact that "there is a delicate balance between an organism and its environment which a mutation can easily upset" so that "one could as well expect that altering the position of the brake or gas pedal at random would improve the operation of an automobile" (Frederick S. Hulse, "The Human Species," *Random House*). Today, as in the ancient world, the urge persists to find some

explanation for man and the universe, but an explanation which leaves out God.

Yet, reason and revelation both bear witness. You and I live in God's universe. As we teach this wonderful passage we do so with the attitude of the psalmist, who acknowledged God, and who worshipped and praised the Lord for His wonderful creative works (p. 21).

Theistic evolution is liable to all the criticism that may be lodged against materialistic evolution. It is founded upon the materialistic attempt to write God out of the picture. As with the Gap Theory, theistic evolution encounters a number of problems with Genesis 1 (see chart below). A comparison of the teachings of evolutionary philosophy and biblical truth will suffice to demonstrate that theistic evolution is not the answer. Edward J. Young wrote:

I do not believe it is possible to hold to the Bible and theistic evolution at the same time . . . You cannot hold to the evolution of the body of woman and hold to the Bible at the same time, for the simple reason that the Bible shows us how Eve was created (cf. 2 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 11:2).

A Comparison of Teachings of the Bible and Evolution

Bible	Evolution
Genesis 1:11 says the first life was on land.	Life originated in primeval oceans.
Genesis 1:11, 20-21 teaches that plants, including fruit trees, were created first.	Fish and other marine organisms developed before life on land.
Genesis 1:21 states that birds and fish were created the same day.	Fish evolved hundreds of millions of years before birds.
An abundance of marine life with great complexity (Gen. 1:21)	Life in the ocean began as a minute blob of chemicals.
The first "animal" created (indicating the origin of sentient life, as distinct from plant life) was the great whale!	First marine life was minute microorganisms and trilobites.
Created life reproduces "after their kinds"	Slow descent of all organisms from a common ancestor.
Man made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), his body formed from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7)	Man descended from ape-like animal, and ultimately from the blob of chemicals in the primeval ocean.
God created woman from man's body.	Man and woman evolved simultaneously.

The Day=Age Theory, the Gap Theory, and theistic evolution are all compromises adopted in vain attempts to "harmonize" the Bible with materialistic science. To engage in such compromise is dangerous.

Attempts to explain creation lead naturally to attempts to explain the miracles. This further leads to attempts at discrediting other supernatural elements of the Bible, and when this is done there is nothing left but the tenets of modernism (Bolton Davidheiser, p. 170).

Limitations of space prohibit full treatment of the subject of evolution beyond the general statements that have been made. The reader is referred to the following works on the creation/evolution controversy for more in-depth treatment. This list is not exhaustive. Other sources of information can be discovered through the resources listed.

General Works on the Creation-Evolution Controversy

Davidheiser, Bolton. *Evolution and the Christian Faith*. Presbyterian & Reformed.

Geisler, Norman and Kerby Anderson. *Origin Science*. Baker.

Morris, Henry. *Genesis*. Baker.

_____. *Scientific Creationism and the Twilight of Evolution*. Creation-Life Press.

Thompson, Bert. *The Scientific Case for Creation*. Apologetics Press.

Genesis 2

The Seventh Day: God Rests (vv. 1-3). The wording in English might leave open the idea that God did some work on the seventh day. For example, I say "I finished painting the house today," you would probably conclude that I had done some of the painting today and had finished my work today. A look at the Hebrew clarifies the statement made in verse 2. E. J. Young explains, "The form of the verb that is used here is often declarative, and what it means is this: 'And God on the seventh day declared finished the work which he had made.' It does not say anything about his working on the seventh day" (p. 61).

Since God's creative activity was "finished," the idea that new species could evolve is checked. Many species have become extinct since creation, and a great deal of variation has become evident (dog family, cat family) in some species, but no new species are coming into existence.

"The generations of the heavens and the earth" (v. 4). Concerning this phrase, Young writes:

The introductory statement, "These are the generations, etc." is extremely important for a correct understanding of the framework of Genesis. It occurs eleven times in Genesis and always as the heading of the section which follows. The word "generations" in this phrase signifies that which is begotten or generated. The parallel uses of the phrase make this clear. Thus, e.g., "the generations of Noah" (6:9), heads the section which deals with the descendants or offspring of Noah. It is true, as Driver remarks (*LOT*, p. 7), that some account of the person named in the phrase is also given, but since this account is usually of such a minor or secondary character, it in no sense detracts from what has been said above (Introduction, p. 54).

This phrase in 2:4, therefore, does not introduce another account of the creation of heaven and earth, but rather of the offspring of heaven and earth, namely, man. Man's body is from the earth, and his soul is of heavenly origin, breathed into him by God. The grand theme of 2:4-4:26 is the formation of man and the first period of human history. The contents of 2:4-15 clearly indicate that it is not a duplicate history of creation.

On these are the generations, . . . Since the genitive in this formula is uniformly subjective, the reference is not to the origin of *the heavens and the earth* but the sequel thereof, particularly the early history of the earthlings. The first part of this verse, therefore, must be taken not with the preceding but the following account, which is not, then, presented as another version of creation. *When they were created* is literally 'in their being created'. This expression is used like the grammatically equivalent 'in their going forth from Egypt' (Dt. 4:45; 23:4; Jos. 5:4) and 'in your passing over the Jordan' (Dt. 27:4, 12) to denote an era according to its opening and formative event. Cf. also Gn. 33:18; 35:9 (Kline, p. 83).

Edward J. Young makes the following points:

- 1) The words of 2:4b, ". . . in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens," rather than introducing an account of creation, serve rather to point out that the creation has already taken place.
- 2) The entire description opening chapter 2 prepares the way for the planting of the garden of Eden (2:8-9).
- 3) That which is fundamental in a creation account is missing in chapter 2, e.g. formation of the earth, sea, dry land, firmament, sun, moon, stars, vegetation on earth, etc. In 3:18, man is to eat the herb of the field, but the only previous mention of this is in chapter 1, not in chapter 2.

Chapter 2 in relating the planting of Eden, is not chronological, but topical in its method of treatment. It serves as an introduction to the narrative of the fall (ch. 3). Thus it explains the nature of man, his body formed from the dust and his life inbreathed by God . . . When the purpose of chapter 2 is thus clearly recognized, it will be apparent that any contrasts made between the two upon the assumption that each is an independent account of creation are beside the point. There are different emphases in the two chapters . . . Chapter 1 continues the narrative of creation until the climax, namely, man made in the image and likeness of God. To prepare the way for the account of the fall, chapter 2 gives certain added details about man's original condition, which would have been incongruous and out of place in the grand, declarative march of chapter 1 (Introduction, pp. 54-55).

Allis adds:

Genesis 1 gives an account of cosmic creation that is comprehensive and general. Genesis 2 is a specific account of man's creation and of the provisions made for man by his Creator. Chapter 1 is panoramic; chapter 2 is a "close-up" of man, the climax of creation. Chapter 2, then, is an expansion of 1:27 (p. 15).

Following the account of creation in 1:1-2:3 are three natural divisions:

- The Creation of Adam and Eve (2:4-25)
- The Temptation and Fall (chapter 3:1-6)
- The Consequences of the Fall (3:7-4:26).

The Creation of Adam and Eve (2:4-25). Genesis 2:4-6 summarizes the state of things as they were on days one through three of Genesis 1. What follows is detail about day six. The planting of the garden is not an alternative account of day three (1:11-12), but is an account of a special provision that God made for man at the time of the creation.

The same infinite care with which God created the universe and earthly vegetation and animals is apparent in His preparation of a home for man. God, according to 2:8, "planted a garden eastward in Eden." This is another special and particular act of God in behalf of man. The Creator desired man to have ideal living conditions in which to realize his potential. The garden, the beauty of which must have been unexcelled, provided an environment in which man was to examine, and to learn. Man's early diet was diversified and complete; God gave him and the animals "every green herb for meat" (1:30). The trees in the garden were designed especially for man (2:9) (Davis, p. 82).

Man's spirit is from God (Zech. 12:1; Acts 17:28-29; Heb 12:9), but man's body is formed from the dust of the earth (2:7; 3:19). There are some

physical similarities between man and the animals. This, however, does not prove man evolved from them. There are similarities between a wheel, a pulley, and a gear, but that only means that each incorporates a common design that enterprising engineers have used to full advantage. On the other hand, the physical differences are greater than the similarities. However, it is the intelligent, rational, moral, and spiritual aspects of man that mark his isolation from the animal creation and his likeness to his Creator.

"Breathed" (verse 7), with which compares John 20:22, seems to suggest an intimacy of relationship, which is involved in the fact that man is a "son" of God, made in His image (Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28). The narrative clearly implies that man as created was capable of intimate communion with God. This must mean that God's "image" in him included such communicable attributes as "knowledge, righteousness, holiness" (Col.3:10; Eph. 4:24); and the dominion over the creatures which was given him is an evidence both of his distinctness from them and of his superiority to them. They stand in the same relation to him in which he stands to God. It should be remembered, however, that the Fall made a radical change in man's status. Fallen and sinful man has no right to claim sonship to the Holy God, any more than the Jews of Jesus' day had a right to call themselves children of Abraham. They were Abraham's "seed", but not his sons. They were not sons of God, but children of the devil (John 8:42-44). The words which are so often on the lips of Modernists and Unitarians ("the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man") ignore the fact of the fall of man. It was only as long as he was sinless that Adam was privileged to dwell in the garden. Expulsion from the garden (paradise) was the consequence and penalty of his alienation from God; restoration to it (Luke 23:43; Rev. 2:7) means complete restoration to sonship in the Father's house (Allis, p. 16).

Two trees of special significance were "the tree of life" and "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (2:9). Reading the text as the historical narrative it is, these must be literal trees. Their special significance and powers were designated by God. The tree of life was given so man could enjoy immortality in his fleshly existence (3:22). The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test of whether man would obey or disobey God. God commanded man: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' " (2:16-17).

At the very outset the proper relationship in which man stands to God is made clear. It is covered in the broadest sense by the word *command* which has as its correlative *obey*. Thus it is made plain that

man's duty is to do the will of God. As His creature, man owes his Creator willing and perfect obedience (Allis, pp. 16-17).

Next, God brought the animals to man for naming. Some have seen a conflict between chapters 1-2 here. There is, however, an important purpose in this action of God. Allis says:

The statement that God formed the animals and brought them to the man to name (2:19f) serves to stress the difference between man and the lower orders. It does not conflict with the order of creation given in Genesis 1. "Had formed" or "having formed" would be a perfectly proper rendering of the Hebrew (p. 15).

Having impressed upon Adam that he was different from the rest of the animal life around him, God causes a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and using a rib or bone taken from him, God creates woman. God said it was "not good" for man to be alone. Clarke says, "This is God's judgment. Councils, and fathers, and doctors, and synods, have given a different judgment; but on such a subject they are worthy of no attention. The word of God abideth forever" (p. 46).

The account of the creation of Eve clearly teaches that the body of the first woman was formed from that of the first man. That Paul so understood it is shown by 1 Timothy 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:9, where he not merely asserts that the man was created before the woman and that the woman was created for the man, but that the woman was "of the man". This shows that Paul saw in the original creation something quite unique and highly significant. Every child of man since Adam is "born of woman" (Job 14:1). Eve was to be the "mother of all living" (3:20); but she was "of" the first man. The fact that both Jesus (Matt. 19:4f.) and Paul (1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31) appeal to this narrative shows its great importance.

The woman, Adam perceives at once, is "bone of my bone." She is human, just as man is human. Hence, being created male and female, they can become "one flesh" in that conjugal relationship which God has ordained for the comfort and happiness of mankind and for the continuance of the race. Monogamy, as our Lord points out, was man's original and basic social relationship. The family is the most fundamental of the three institutions ordained by God: the family, the state, the church. Everything which invades the sanctity of the home or minimizes its importance by undermining its authority, endangers our whole Christian civilization (Allis pp. 16-17)

Some have taught, as referred to by Clarke above, that the marriage state is an undesirable state (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3), or at least a lesser state spiritually. Note, however, that God gave the command to man to be fruitful and multiply

and fill the earth *before* the Fall (1:28). God created Eve to be man's companion and wife *before* the Fall. This was all a part of the original, idyllic, perfect world into which God placed the first human pair.

"God made the woman for the man, and thus He has shown that every son of Adam should be united to a daughter of Eve to the end of the world (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3)" (Clarke, p. 46). Any corruption of this arrangement by fornication or homosexuality meets with God's condemnation (Mt. 19:3-12; Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-7:5; Jude 7). However, God also allows a person the freedom to abide single, and this may be the best choice under certain circumstances (1 Cor. 7).

The Temptation and Fall (Gen. 3)

Davis says, "It would be marvelous indeed if the same could be said of man throughout history that was said in the beginning: he was 'not ashamed' (2:25)" (p. 85). Genesis 3 has been called the saddest chapter in the Bible. It records the temptation and fall of man. The rest of the Bible makes no sense without an understanding and acceptance of the events recorded in Genesis 3. Everything in the Bible, including the cross of Christ, must be understood with reference to this chapter.

The Tempter

Were we left with nothing more than what is said about the serpent in Genesis 3, we would be at a loss to explain who and what this being is that so abruptly appears on the scene. Like man, this being is rational and capable of communication. Not until much later is it revealed that the real agent, Satan, is using his deceptive powers to give the appearance that a beast of the field can speak. Satan is, in fact, engaged here in a horrendous deception that will have far-reaching consequences for the first human pair and their descendants. Satan is the real tempter here (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; cf. Job. 1:2; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). Satan desires to disrupt the communion between God and man, and to a large degree he has succeeded.

The Temptation

From that time to this, the chief weapons in Satan's arsenal are lying and slander. First, he casts doubt on God's Word. He does not begin with brash denial or bitter denunciation. He just questions: "Yea, hath God said . . . ?"

His question was carefully couched and apparently included an element of surprise or exclamation . . . The sense would be, "Is it really true that . . . ?" . . . [Satan] suggests that perhaps God was not being completely fair with Adam and Eve, despite the fact that He had

granted them access to all other trees. The question, designed to elicit a response, attacks the sanctity and appropriateness of God's word. The real tragedy is not that Eve was tempted, nor that she listened to the question and examined its implications, but that, as her response to her interrogator revealed, she was inclined to agree with his subtle attack on God . . . [S]he weakened God's warning of punishment for disobedience. God had said: "Thou shalt not eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil]: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (2:17) Eve's paraphrase was: "Ye shall not eat of it . . . lest ye die"; (3:3). God promised that death *would* follow disobedience; Eve implied only that death *might* follow. Satan's question already seems to have aroused doubts in Eve concerning God's goodness toward her and Adam (Davis, pp. 88-89).

Second, after getting the woman to doubt, Satan proceeds to deny God's Word. Satan did not deny that God had a right to restrict man from the fruit of this tree. However, after raising doubts about God's good will toward man, Satan denies God's promise of punishment: "Ye shall not surely die" (3:4). It is interesting that the very first doctrine of God that Satan denied was that of judgment! Paul says that in all this Eve was "deceived" (1 Tim. 2:14). However, that did not acquit her before God.

The steps leading to Eve's transgression serve as a warning to all generations. First, she listened to Satan (3:1). "But," one objects, "she didn't know it was Satan! She probably didn't even know that she had an enemy!" But she did know God and His great provisions for her welfare and Adam's. She should have reposed her faith and confidence in God and His Word. Furthermore, she should have recognized that a serpent speaking, a "beast of the field," was a violation of the natural order God ordained.

By engaging in apologetic discourse with the challenging serpent, the woman accepted Satan's violation of the law of God's kingdom whereby all things visible had been placed under man's rule. She thereby yielded to the usurped authority of Satan (Kline, p. 84).

Second, she entered into a dialogue with Satan (3:2). Whenever people forget there can be no compromise with Satan and error, the consequences are disastrous.

Finally, she yielded to Satan's reasoning and rebelled against God's known will (3:6). What choice did she have? "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas.4:7; cf. Mt. 4:1-11).

Adam's sin was different from Eve's. He was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). However, Adam chose separation from God rather than separation from Eve.

He followed her into disobedience and loved the creature (Eve) more than the Creator.

Adam and Eve stand at the beginning of human history with a clean slate. They are endowed with great prospects for good or evil. They are placed in a perfect environment. Nevertheless, they were subject to the appeal and influence of evil. That they were subject to such must not be understood as a defect in their original state; rather it was a necessary part of that liberty which qualified them for fellowship with God and for a place of honor and authority over the world. The historic origin of evil appears to be here in Eden (Jn. 8:44; however, Ezek. 28; Isa. 14). The real origin of evil, however, is a personal matter. Evil as it entered the lives of Adam and Eve, did so with their permission. It is true that they were deceived; but temptation was made possible only as they relinquished faith and obedience to God and gave in to the appeal to selfish desire. Weighing the law of God against personal desire they chose the latter. This decision on the part of these first parents involved them and their posterity in separation from the ideal environment of Eden, and the curse of God upon the earth. Paul later said that God subjected man to vanity, with the purpose that man might be induced to find hope in the God whom he had set aside (Rom. 8:20). Prodigal man was to taste the beggarly diet of Satan's promises that he might be led to return to the sure Word of the God of heaven (author unknown).

The Consequences of the Fall (Gen. 3:7-4:26)

The consequences of this act follow quickly. "The tempter promised that eating the fruit would open Adam's and Eve's eyes, but he did not say what they would see. They saw themselves as sinners devoid of their original beauty" (Davis, p. 91).

[Note] the terrible consequences of this act, how it affected man himself and all man's relationships: man and God (fear, flight, banishment, replace loving and reverent intimacy); man and his wife (mutual reproach, tyranny, suffering, shame, inordinate desire replace "oneness"); man and the animals (loss of dominion); man and nature (toilsome, ill-repaid labour, thorns and briars). Note how Eve first, and then Adam, seek to shift the blame for this act of sin; a very common practice, that avails nothing and does not clear the guilty (Allis, p. 19).

God pronounces His curse upon the serpent (Satan), the woman, and the man (3:14-19). First, the serpent is cursed. Jeremiah 12:4 and Romans 8:20 make it clear that all the animal creation was affected by the Fall and the curse

that God placed on creation. The serpent, however, was cursed "above all cattle and above every beast of the field."

In verse 15, which spells the doom of Satan and all who follow his leading, there is the first glimmer of hope for lost mankind. This verse has been called the "protoevangelium" or "first gospel" or the "seed prophecy" of Scripture. The passage teaches how prophecy was intended to work in God's revelation.

First, the sentences are enigmatic. That is what God intended. God never intended prophecy to enable man to read the future. It is in retrospect, after prophecy's fulfillment, that prophecy's main purpose is realized, for then men can see the evidence that God has been at work. It is doubtful that anyone before the gospel age truly understood the import of Genesis 3:15. From our perspective, we can see that the Lord was literally "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). If man could have foreseen from God's prophecies exactly what would transpire, then Satan could have also. God safeguarded His plan for human redemption by ensuring that it was enough of a mystery that, until the great redemption was accomplished, Satan could not interfere with the plan.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God (2 Cor. 2:6-10).

Second, clarity is provided for prophetic interpretation through New Testament revelation. The fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 is now clear. The New Testament throws light upon this promise made to Satan so long ago. The seed of Satan are those who oppose the truth (Jn. 8:44). The Seed of the woman is ultimately Jesus Christ, descended from Adam and Eve, and eventually born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). Subsequently, those who are "in Christ," His body (church) (Rom. 16:20), are the godly seed that perpetuates the Lord's work on earth. The warfare continues, but the victory is assured. Jesus suffered, as the faithful have in the past (Heb. 11:34) and as Christians do now (1 Pet. 2:21-23), but only Satan and his minions have been dealt a fatal blow.

The curse on the woman is suffering and subjection. Man and woman will face struggles in their own relationships. Sin turned the harmonious system of God-ordained roles into repulsive struggles driven by self-interest. As lifelong companions, husbands and wives will need God's help in getting along. The

woman's desire will be to lord it over her husband, but the husband must rule (Eph. 5:22-25). This is the divine decree.

The curse on the man is toilsome work and ill-requited labor, quite different from the pleasant task originally assigned to him. The reason given for the curse on the ground and human death is that man turned his back on the voice of God to follow his wife. The woman sinned because she acted independently of her husband, disdain his leadership, counsel, and protection. The man sinned because he abandoned his leadership and followed the wishes of his wife. In both cases, God's intended roles were reversed.

The direst consequence of the Fall is death (2:17; 3:19). This includes physical death (as seen in the oft repeated refrain in chapter 5, "and he died"), but is more than physical death. In its full sense, "death" means "separation" (cf. Jas. 2:26; Eph. 2:1; Is. 59:1). Adam's and Eve's physical deaths were years in coming, but their spiritual deaths were immediate upon their sin, just as God promised. The history of humanity since then is a history of the rule of death, and stands as a grim reminder that God must be obeyed or the consequences will be terrible.

We conclude with the words of Oswald Allis.

The Fall is rarely mentioned in the Bible (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. John 8:44). Its effects are more frequently referred to: sin, suffering, death. It is of fundamental importance to all that follows. It alone accounts for the subsequent course of the history of mankind upon the earth, for the awful contrast between 1:27, 31 and 4:5 (cf. Rom. 1:23), and for the catastrophic course of human history which the Bible records. It represents sin as alien to man's nature as originally created; as the result of seduction from without; as something that ought not to be; as a bondage from which God purposes to redeem man. It does not, like the evolutionist, attribute it to ignorance, immaturity, limitation of being, or to the fact that man has a dual nature (body and soul). It tells us that man was created "good". Man is now a fallen being. What he needs is not merely education: he needs salvation. Only when we realize the fallen nature of man and his utter inability to save himself are we in a position to understand the way of salvation from sin, which it is the purpose of the Bible to make known to us (Allis, p. 20)

717 N. 13th St., Ozark, Missouri 65721

Bibliography

- Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible.** Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967.
- Allis, Oswald T. **God Spoke By Moses.** Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958.
- Archer, Gleason L. **Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties.** Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.
- Brantley, Garry K. "Genesis—From Heaven or Ancient Babylon?" **Reason & Revelation**, XII, 7:25-28 (July 1992).
- Clarke, Adam. **A Commentary: Genesis to Deuteronomy**, Vol. 1. Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.
- Crawford, C. C. **Genesis: The Book of Beginnings.** Joplin, Missouri: College press, 1966.
- Davidheiser, Bolton. **Evolution and Christian Faith.** Tappan, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961.
- Davis, John J. **Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis.** Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975.
- Kitchen, K. A. **Ancient Orient and the Old Testament.** Chicago: Intervarsity Press, 1966.
- Kline, Meredith. "Genesis" in **New Bible Commentary**, 3rd ed. Donald Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds. Carmel, New York: Guideposts, 1953, 1954, rev. 1970.
- Morris, Henry. **The Genesis Record.** Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976.
- Phillips, John. **Exploring the Scriptures.** Chicago: Moody, 1965, 1970, rev. 1989.
- Richards, Lawrence O. **The Teacher's Commentary.** Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1987.
- Smith, Wilbur. **Old Testament History.** Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970, rev. Wilbur Fields, 1979.
- Thompson, Bert. "Popular Compromises of Creation—The Day-Age Theory," **Reason & Revelation**, XIV 6:41-47 (June 1994).
- Young, Edward J. **An Introduction to the Old Testament.** Grand Rapids: Erdman's, 1956.
- _____. **In the Beginning: An Exposition of Genesis 1-3.** Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967.

The Genesis Flood

(Gen. 6:1-9:17)

by Johnny Elmore

It is my conviction that we cannot understand the flood as we should until we know its cause. My study is going to be divided into three parts: the cause of the flood, the story of Noah, and the New World.

The Cause of the Flood

And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD (Gen. 4:25-26, KJV).

The Diverging Line of Seth

In these lines, the divine writer begins to trace the diverging line of Seth from the common mass of humanity. Apparently the line of Cain began many years before. This would certainly be true if Cain were born not long after the Creation. The Cainites were notorious for building cities, polygamy, instrumental music, brass and iron metalwork, and murder. They were gifted and industrious in the arts and sciences, but they had forgotten their relationship to God.

On the other hand, the Sethites began to "call upon the name of the LORD." One commentator said of the name "Seth," "We may adequately interpret the name Seth to mean 'substitute'" (Leupold, p. 226). It is significant that the time of this calling "upon the name of the LORD" coincides with the birth of Seth's son, Enos or Enosh (Hebrew). It is pointed out that the common noun, enosh, is used, often in contrast with God; therefore, it means "frail one," or "the mortal" (Leupold, p. 227). Another commentator says:

In this name, therefore, the feeling and knowledge of human weakness and frailty were expressed (the opposite of the pride and arrogance displayed by the Canaanitish family); and this feeling led to God, to that invocation of the name of Jehovah which commenced under Enos (Keil, p. 119).

Leupold states, "Since this calling out by the use of the name definitely implies public worship, we have here the first record of regular public worship" (p. 228).

The purpose of the writer of Genesis seems to be to trace the godly line that ultimately resulted in the coming of the promised Savior. Therefore, the divine writer turns his attention from the worldly ambitions of the Cainites and devotes his attention to the Sethites. In Genesis 5, the chronology of the Sethites is given. Midway between the creation and the flood, Enoch was translated. What an example in the midst of a people preoccupied with worldly success! A man so pious, so righteous and godly that Jehovah God did not allow him to suffer the common fate of man—he was translated, that he should not see death!

Adam was still living when Lamech, Noah's father, was born. Noah barely missed knowing Adam and Seth. Enoch's son, Methuselah, who may have inspired Enoch's "walk with God," died in the year of the flood and Lamech predeceased him by five years. Apparently, no Sethites perished in the flood. Without commenting at length on the chronology found in chapter five, let us look at the next chapter.

Sons of God and Daughters of Men

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Gen. 6:1-8).

Men had become numerous upon the face of the earth. Of course, we have no way of knowing how many people perished in the flood. I have read some guesses at 25,000,000 people. With great numbers came the swift development of evil. Daughters were born unto them. Now this was not something new, but this is mentioned because of its impact upon society. Now "the sons of God" began to look upon these "daughters of men," as Leupold puts it, "indiscriminately" (p. 250). Their quest does not seem to be to find a wife who will help them please God and raise their children to be righteous and God-fearing. The only thing they saw was that "they were fair." Apparently, the sons of God

reached the point that they did not care if the "daughters of men" were Cainites or Sethites, but only whether "they were fair."

Now we want to know: who were these "sons of God"? Some commentators have appealed to the legends of the apocryphal book of Enoch, the writings of Josephus, and the Septuagint version to enforce the idea that this was a case of angels, sons of God, if you will, marrying and having relations with "daughters of men," and producing giants, who became the demigods or heroes of ancient myths. Rationalists, of course, take this to mean that angels cohabited with women and produced a race of giants and then pronounce the whole account as a myth. Even one commentator who is pretty conservative takes this to mean that the "sons of God" were wicked angels who inhabited the bodies of men and women, causing seductive behavior on the part of the women and obsession with sex on the part of the men. He even suggests that these wicked angels then inspired "genetic manipulation" to produce a race of giants (Morris, pp. 172-173).

I have always believed that the reference to "sons of God" is simply a way of stating that the "godly" line of humanity, the Sethites, intermarried with the ungodly, worldly descendants of Cain, leading to wholesale apostasy and depravity.

First, the context has to do with this very thing. Nothing has been said about angels. The old rule that a text, taken out of context, becomes a pretext surely holds true here. The descendants of Seth were men who "walked with God," like Enoch (Gen. 5:22), looked to higher comfort in life's miseries, like Lamech (Gen. 5:29), and publicly worshiped God (Gen. 4:26). The phrase in the Hebrew, translated "sons of God," is used of true followers of God as well as angels in the Old Testament. Examples would be Psalms 73:15, Deuteronomy 32:5, and Hosea 1:10.

Second, the very idea of angels marrying human beings is repugnant to the Scriptures as well as to reason. Jesus said in Matthew 22:30, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The phrase, "they took them wives of all which they chose," is the standard expression for marital union. It is not illicit intercourse, such as adultery, fornication, or even the "strange flesh" of Jude 7, but lawful union which caused the downfall of humanity. Here, I would like to warn all Christian boys and girls. Do not make the mistake many have made of looking only for pretty faces and shapely forms. When that is the only criterion, degeneracy has set in! Solomon said in Proverbs 31:30, "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (KJV).

Third, if it were true that angels are meant here and "they took whichever one they liked best" of the daughters of men, then they were the chief offenders, while the women were practically innocent. Now notice this strange sequence of events: angels sin, but men are punished! Some commentators assume that angel marriages are referred to in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, but if that is the case, then there must have been another fall of angels in addition to the original. In addition, for all mankind to be punished must mean that practically all were involved in such irregular unions (Leupold, p. 254).

The account of how the pious descendants of Seth became affected and infected with wholesale degeneracy is critical to the narrative. It explains why it was necessary to doom the whole human race to destruction, with the exception of one family.

God's Spirit Not to Strive

Now note Genesis 6:3, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." This passage is crucial to understanding the cause of the flood. God's Spirit had striven long and patiently with man, but the time came when longsuffering gave way to strict justice. How did God's Spirit strive with man? Leupold says, "God's Word, according to the consistent and the uniform teaching of the Scriptures, is the means of grace. Through it God's Holy Spirit (*ruchi*) operates, instructing or also reproving and judging men" (p. 255).

But, finally, God determined that He would no longer restrain His Spirit. When men reach the point that they no longer care what sort of woman is made the center of the home and care nothing for divine grace, they are no longer simply sinful—they have fallen to the level of only being flesh. Aristotle said of such a man, "If he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony" (Crawford, p. 422). When every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil continually, and when the whole earth was filled with violence, God said, "I will destroy."

But, even then, God offered a period of respite—a reprieve of 120 years to give them opportunity to turn from wickedness. We know that at least one "preacher of righteousness" strove with them, "while the ark was a-preparing" (1 Pet. 3:20). If men are determined to be lost, they must do so in the very face of manifestations of God's longsuffering and grace.

Giants in the Earth

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare

children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown (Gen. 6:4).

This passage is quite simple, if we do not read it and study it under the influence of the myths and fables of men. To those who wish to hook it up with the "angel marriages" of verse 2, it has been pointed out that verse 4 does not begin with a conjunction, therefore, not attaching the substance of verse 2. Morris argues that the word "nephilim," the Hebrew word translated "giants," should be taken literally, since this is the sense in which it is used in Numbers 13:33 (Morris, pp. 172-173). However, Gesenius, Strong, and others render the word to mean "a feller, i.e. a bully, or tyrant." The verse makes it clear that these were already abroad in the earth in those days when the Sethites cohabited with the Cainites. This was such a sad occasion that time was reckoned from it. Through them, the earth was filled with violence. And it was true then, as it is now, that men of violent deeds were "men of renown," whether simply famous or infamous.

But, as we have said, there was one preacher of righteousness, and that was Noah, a man who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." How did Noah know of the doom about to descend on mankind? Through faith, of course (Heb. 11:7). God warned him of it, and he believed God. If he preached the inevitability of divine judgment for 120 years, then he must have begun preaching twenty years before the birth of his sons. He persevered in the face of what must have been scorn, ridicule, and even violence. That brings us to the story of Noah.

The Story of Noah

The story of the flood is actually the story of Noah. Genesis 6:9 states, "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." If, out of all families on the earth, Noah's family was to be saved, he must have had an unusual family. There are very few who are called "just" and "perfect" by Holy Writ. The word for "just" is also defined as "righteous." Noah had a right relationship with God and was perfect (or complete), suggesting a well-rounded life, with no essential quality missing. He believed God (Heb. 11:7); he walked with God (v. 9); he obeyed God (v. 22). By mentioning his three sons again in the next verse, the writer undoubtedly indicated the effect that Noah's piety must have had on them.

The Earth to be Destroyed

In God's judgment, "all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth," and God pronounced that destruction of men, together "with the earth," was immi-

nent. That man should be destroyed and his habitation with him indicates how serious this matter was. Leupold points out that "way" is "the course man is to follow" and that only a moral being can corrupt its way (p. 267). Before God revealed the method of destruction, He directed Noah to prepare the device that would save him.

The Ark

Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it (Gen. 6:14-16).

From this description, no doubt, Noah could draw conclusions about the impending doom of mankind. He was commanded to make "an ark of gopher wood." Lexicographers define the ark as a "box" or a "chest" (Gesenius, p. 855). The ark was designed for its carrying and floating ability rather than for speed and handling qualities. The only other time the Hebrew word rendered "ark" is used, it refers to the ark used to hide baby Moses.

Details of the Ark

The ark was to be built of gopher wood, or resinous trees, which many scholars believe to be cypress trees. The word for "rooms," in the Hebrew, is the same word used for "nests," and is also rendered "cells" or "chambers." It was to be rendered watertight with pitch, "within and without." The word for "pitch" is the regular Hebrew word for "atonement," as in Leviticus 17:11, occasioning Morris to say that "it sufficed as a perfect covering for the Ark, to keep out the waters of judgment, just as the blood of the Lamb provides a perfect atonement for the soul" (p. 182).

The dimensions were to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. If the cubit spoken of here was the common cubit, "the cubit of a man" (Deut. 3:11), calculated to be 18 inches (from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger), then the dimensions of the ark were 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. But, even if the cubit were the shortest of all cubits, the dimensions were such that it would be almost impossible to capsize. Also, the capacity of such a vessel is calculated to be approximately 1,400,000 cubit feet, or the equivalent of 522 standard livestock cars. Morris states that since about 240 sheep can be transported in one car, the ark could have held 125,000 sheep (p. 185).

A window was to be provided, and some commentators have speculated that the opening consisted of a one-cubit opening around the circumference near the roof to provide light and ventilation, with an overhang to keep out the rain. A door was to be set in the side of the ark, and it was to have three "stories" or "decks." The Hebrew is brief, saying, "with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." Such a project tells me that antediluvian man was not a plodding Neanderthal, but a man of high intellect and great ability.

The undertaking of such an immense project must have seemed ridiculous to the scoffers of Noah's day. Apparently they had never seen rain, much less a flood, according to Genesis 2:5, but "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear" and "prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7).

God's Warning and Noah's Preparation

For the first time, Noah was told the nature of the destruction that would come upon "all flesh." God would send an "inundation of waters, a deluge," (Gesenius, p. 446). The word for "flood" is used only concerning this particular flood in Genesis 6-9 and Psalm 29:10. The Hebrew word, *mabbul*, is thought to be related to an Assyrian word meaning "to destroy," hence the Hebrew word for "waters" is added to indicate what kind of destruction. In references to this flood in the New Testament, the usual Greek word is not used, but one which is unique, showing that this flood was not comparable to any local flood.

This destruction of waters was to "destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven" (v. 17). Added to this warning was the statement that "everything that is in the earth shall die" (v. 17). We learn from Genesis 7:22 that all creatures living on "dry land" were included. Noah was assured that God would establish His covenant with him and that he and his family would be spared. Most commentators agree that the covenant is the one mentioned later in Genesis 9:9.

Noah was to be responsible also for the preservation of animals. A male and female of each kind were to be brought into the ark, "to keep them alive with thee" (v. 19). He also learned that he was responsible for food for himself, his family and for the animals. Although this may seem to have been a daunting task, it was by no means impossible. It has been estimated that there are less than 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians living in the world today. Even if we double this number to allow for extinct animals and allow for two of each, plus enough to allow for the five extra "clean" species, we come up with around 75,000 animals (Morris, p. 185).

Since we have already seen that the ark could have carried 125,000 sheep and most land animals are smaller than sheep, no more than 60% of the room on the ark would be needed to house the animals. Also, the Bible does not use the word "species," but "kind," which may be much broader than the "species" of modern biology. We know that jackals, foxes, dingoes, wolves, and coyotes all fall into the dog category. Besides that, there is nothing in the narrative to exclude young animals, which would be much smaller. There is also speculation that all of the animals may have been providentially in a state of hibernation, which would have limited the need for food.

Some critics have seen great difficulties in collecting animals from all over the earth, but, according to the text, there were no hunting and trapping expeditions because God told Noah that "two of every sort shall come unto thee" (v. 20). The earth itself must have been quite different before the flood, perhaps with milder temperatures and more uniform features of geography.

The greatness of the task before him did not overwhelm Noah. We hear no murmuring or complaint. On the contrary, the Bible says, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (v. 22).

The Flood

The story of Noah next takes up some seven days before the flood. At this point, the ark was finished and the supplies were stored and it only remains for Noah, his family, and the animals to board. Because of the righteous lives of Noah and his family, God said, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark" (7:1).

A general direction to collect two of every kind of animals was given earlier, but now a detail was given, that is, that Noah was to take seven each of the clean animals. It has been thought that the "clean" animals included birds and beasts considered suitable for domestication and sacrifice.

God warned that in seven days the rain would come for forty days and forty nights and that every living thing would be "destroyed from off the face of the earth" (v. 4). We are told that Noah had passed his six-hundredth birthday at the time of the flood.

This marked the end of the old world and the beginning of the new order. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his son's wives went into the ark. Again, there was no roundup or trapping expedition—all the beasts and birds "went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah." After seven days, the flood came. We are told that it was in the six hundredth year, second month and seventeenth day of Noah's life that

"all the fountains of the great deep" were "broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (v. 11).

Apparently, in the world before the flood, there was a firmament, above and below in which there was water. The word for "firmament" has been defined by Strong as "an expanse" (p. 110). God said:

Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so (Gen. 1:6-7).

Morris suggests that the phrase, "waters above the firmament," refers to a vast blanket or canopy of transparent water vapor, which had numerous beneficial effects. Among these were warm, pleasant temperatures, no wind or rain, lush vegetation with no barren deserts or ice caps, a filtering of ultraviolet radiation, cosmic rays and other energies, contributing to human longevity. He also sees the "waters under the firmament," (Gen. 1:9-10), as being vast reservoirs, formed as great subterranean chambers within the earth's crust (pp. 58-60).

On the day of the flood, "all the fountains of the great deep" were broken up and "the windows of heaven were opened." This must mean that the waters below the crust of the earth burst their restraints and the waters above condensed and fell upon the earth. For forty days and nights the vast quantity of water that had been retained in the sky now flooded the earth, even as God had predicted.

In Genesis 7:13-16, we have a passage, reminiscent of epic poetry, meant to impress upon the reader, no doubt, the living conditions on the ark and perhaps, also, to show that the seemingly insurmountable problem of gathering the animals was no problem at all. When all were aboard that God had designated, the Bible states, "the Lord shut him in" (v. 16), "so guarding him against possible assaults of the wicked, as well as preventing him from attempting to show ill-timed mercy to last-minute penitents" (Leupold, pp. 299-300).

The actual flood is described in Genesis 7:17-24. The account tells of the rising water and that it bore the ark above the earth. The statements that the waters "prevailed," "were increased greatly," and later that they "prevailed exceedingly" indicate the raw power behind the raging, surging waters. Such mighty power surely must have wrought dramatic changes upon the earth. Undoubtedly, earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and upheavals were produced by such a catastrophe. The waters continued rising until "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered" (v. 19). The word for

"all" (kol) is found twice in the Hebrew text, which Leupold pronounces "almost a Hebrew superlative," indicating that "all" cannot be used in a relative sense, thus conveying "the idea of the absolute universality of the Flood" (pp 301-302).

Morris gives twenty-six reasons for believing that the flood was a universal flood instead of simply a local flood of the regions known to Noah. The reasons he gives are powerful and compelling. We have to agree with him that the efforts of Noah in building and preparing the ark were "an absurd waste of time and money" if it were only a local flood and that "migration would have been a far better solution" (pp. 199-203).

In stark simplicity, the Bible records that "all flesh died that moved upon the earth . . . all in whose nostrils was the breath of life . . . all that was in the dry land . . . every living substance was destroyed . . . and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (vv. 21-23).

The flood "prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days" and God "remembered" Noah and everything in the ark. Actually, God had not forgotten Noah and those in the ark. Morris says that the term is a Hebraism for "began to act again on their behalf." Just as God used natural agencies to bring about the flood, He employed them to end it. He did three things: (1) caused a wind to pass over the earth; (2) stopped the fountains of the great deep; and (3) restrained the rain from heaven.

Wind alone would not have been enough to dispel the shoreless ocean; thus, there must have been a total rearrangement of the earth's features, with continental land masses rising and oceans deepening and widening. This is thought to be exactly what happened, according to Psalm 104:6-9:

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

The first five verses of this psalm apply to the creation period, but verses 6-9 obviously apply to the flood, with even a reference to God's covenant with Noah in verse 9. The 150 days mentioned in Genesis 7:24 evidently represent the total time the waters dominated the earth without abatement. The first thing that must have happened after the abatement began was the ark coming to rest on land. Since the mountains (plural) of Ararat are mentioned, and since the entire region was later known as Ararat (according to Jer. 51:27), perhaps the language does not demand that the ark landed on the loftiest, most

inaccessible peak. On the first day of the tenth month, the mountaintops became visible.

Forty days after the appearance of the mountain peaks, Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven. Since the raven is a scavenger bird, Noah knew he could survive, finding carcasses here and there. It did not return, having no qualms about resting on slimy surfaces, so Noah knew that there was no longer a shoreless ocean of water about him. Seven days later, Noah sent forth a dove, a bird that will not rest in places that are not clean, and it returned to him. After another seven days, he sent forth the dove again and it returned to him with an olive leaf, indicating that seedling olive trees were already growing. Seven days later, on the 285th day, Noah sent the dove out again, and this time the dove did not return, showing that the land was sufficiently dry and the vegetation enough to sustain bird life.

After another twenty-nine days, Noah removed the covering of the ark and discovered that the "face of the ground" was dry, but it may have been that there was still much water and a desolate landscape without adequate food. At any rate, they waited another fifty-seven days, 371 days after the flood began, until God's command: "Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy son's wives with thee" (Gen. 8:16). The animals of the ark went forth to "breed abundantly" and "multiply upon the earth." All present-day animals are therefore descendants of those that were on the ark. All tribes and nations of men are descended also from Noah's family for the Bible says of Shem, Ham and Japheth that "of them was the whole earth overspread" (Gen. 9:19).

The New World

On the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the occupants left the ark and began life in a new world. Life must have been much different in the new world. We are not able to mention all of the changes that may have taken place, but they included more extensive oceans; less extensive land areas; loss of the thermal water blanket (the waters above the firmament); rugged mountain ranges; wind, rain, and snow; dangers from ultraviolet light and cosmic rays unfiltered by the vapor canopy (perhaps leading to shorter human life); tremendous glaciers, rivers, and lakes; and recurring seismic activity because of the earth's unstable crust.

In perfect keeping with the character of a righteous man, Noah built an altar and sacrificed one of each of the clean beasts and fowl. Noah's thank-offering was generous and represented one-seventh of the animals and fowl that he would need the most. God was pleased for the record says that He "smelled a sweet savor" (Gen. 8:21).

In response to Noah's sacrifice, God made promises. The way Leupold renders the second part of verse 21 makes sense to me: "Never again will I curse the ground for man's sake, because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; never again will I smite all living things as I have done." Those who see this as a passage teaching total depravity should be reminded that it says "from his youth," not from his birth. God is not excusing man's evil imaginations (as Leupold renders it, p. 322), but explaining why the flood came. This promise must have reassured Noah and his family, who may have expected a recurrence of the flood at any moment. The context becomes important here. Since the curse comes directly after the flood, it does not refer to the curse in Genesis 3:17, but that which they had just experienced.

Another promise is given in Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." This promise would be "while the earth remaineth." Is there an implication here that one day the earth will not "remain"? Peter said:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

Morris sees this as assurance to Noah that although the "new hydrologic cycle would produce rains, and sometimes floods," God would never destroy all life on earth (pp. 218-219). Generations have come and gone, but God has kept his promise. God commanded Noah and his sons to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1). He assured them that fear and dread of man would be upon the animals, and that the animals "shall be meat for you," with the restriction that they were not to eat the blood of animals. The blood was sacred, containing the principle of life. God also required the life of one who would shed man's blood. The wanton killing characteristic of conditions before the flood was not to be permitted.

Three features of the covenant God made with Noah are still recognized in our time. They are: the eating of meat (1 Tim. 4:3-4), keeping from blood (Acts 15:19-20), and governmental authority to "bear the sword" (Rom. 13:4).

In Genesis 9:8-12, God stated that His covenant, made to both man and beast, was that "all flesh" shall not be "cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." (This would be a meaningless promise if the Genesis Flood had been only a local flood.)

As a token of this covenant, God promised, "I do set my bow in the cloud" and "when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in

the cloud" (Gen. 9:13-14). Not only could man look upon the rainbow and be reassured, but God also said, "I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant" (v. 16).

Many who subscribe to the "local flood" theory find it hard to believe that a rainbow had never appeared previously in the sky. Of course, rationalists argue that whenever light strikes a prism, it will be broken up into the colors of the rainbow. To counter this argument, some have pointed out that the word rendered "set" can be defined "appoint." Thus, although the rainbow had been seen before, God, on this occasion, appointed it as a token of the covenant. Others argue that the tense is ambiguous and could mean "I set long ago." But we have to admit that if it had never rained before the flood, there is a real possibility and probability that the rainbow had never been seen in the clouds before this time. Therefore, I agree with Leupold when he said "that the preponderance of evidence points to the fact that the rainbow in the clouds now first came into being."

Conclusion

What lessons can be learned from the flood? Our Savior not only endorsed the historicity of the flood account, but he also warned that "as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. 24:37). Just as the antediluvians thought they had a lease on life and were preoccupied with worldly affairs, so will men be when the Savior returns.

Peter warns those who argue that nothing will happen because nothing has ever happened that they are forgetting the impressive lessons of the flood. He says, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished," and "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:3-7).

We can also learn of the loving favor of the Heavenly Father. After the antediluvians had exhausted the limits of divine grace and forbearance, God gave them another period of respite to repent. And during that period, our Savior went by the Spirit, in the person of Noah, and preached. Only a few accepted his grace and entered the ark. In our time, grace has been extended to us, for Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21, "the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 419 K SW, Ardmore, OK 73401

Bibliography

- Crawford, C. C. **Genesis 1 & 2**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Publishing, 1985.
- Gesenius, William. **Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch, "The Pentateuch," in **Commentary on the Old Testament**, James Martin, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978.
- Leupold, H. C., D.D. **Exposition of Genesis**, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965.
- Morris, Henry M. **The Genesis Record**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.
- Strong, James. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance**. "Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible." Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, n.d.

The Hebrew Patriarchs

by Mike Criswell

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6, NIV).

With these profound words, God's messenger to the Gentiles unlocks the sublime mystery of heaven's redemptive plan. Once veiled for centuries, the light of the glorious gospel now bursts its radiance upon a dark world of sin. For those living in the land of the shadow of death a great light has dawned (Mt. 3:16, NIV).

But the truth of Paul's words transcends the fact that Jesus is Israel's Messiah. In Christ "Israel" is redefined. No longer must one trace his physical lineage to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. "For not all who have descended from Israel are Israel . . . In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (Rom. 9:6ff, NIV).

Clearly the "promise" is only found through faith in Christ (Acts 2: 39, Eph. 2:8). In one body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4), Gentiles are heirs together with Israel. Indeed the church is "Spiritual Israel." Thus, Paul encourages Gentiles by saying, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

But why did Paul spend so much time explaining these things to his Gentile converts? Was it for the purpose of making them Jewish? Did Paul espouse the same doctrine as the Judaizers of his day? Certainly not! For those who were "bewitched" by such legalism Paul reserved his harshest criticism (Gal. 3:1). Paul's aim was rather to instruct his readers on the true purpose of the Law in order to reveal its beauty.

Some 430 years¹ before Sinai, God extended a promise to Abram that through his seed all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3:7; 15:18-20; 17:4-

¹ Galatians 3:17 suggests 430 total years between Abraham and Sinai whereas Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40, and Acts 7:6 indicate 430 years of actual Egyptian bondage. The LXX arbitrarily reduces the number in Exodus 12:40 to 215 years, but Keil notes that this is an unwarranted interpolation. Lenski is probably right in concluding that Galatians 3:17 is a deliberate "understatement" by the apostle. The point of Galatians 3:15-18 is that the "promise" came before "Law" and thus supercedes it. Upon hearing 430, Paul's readers would have added the missing years, thus making the time between the "promise" and "Law" even greater. Hence, by understating his case, Paul lets the readers convince themselves.

8). Christ was the fulfillment of that promise (Gal. 3:16). But between Abraham and Christ, preparation had to be made. Emanuel would need to be presented to the world in an appropriate historical context (Gal. 4:4). God forged Israel for such a task. Edersheim says, "This people was to be trained from its cradle until it had fulfilled its mission, which was when He came who was the Desire of all nations" (*Old Testament Bible History*, Chapter X, p. 69). To this special nation the Law was given to arrest her sinfulness and to demonstrate her own need of a savior. Paul says, "It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come" (Gal. 3:19). Although Israel was the bearer of the Messiah, she was not exempt from His atoning work. Thus, in the grand scheme of redemption, the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). But never in the process did it abrogate God's promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:17-18, Rom. 4:13).

Only with this realization are we now ready to survey the Hebrew Patriarchs. The depths of God's grace cannot be sufficiently plumbed without being fully cognizant that Christ is the theme of the Patriarchal Age. Indeed He is the theme of every Age. From Genesis to Revelation, Christ stands at the center of God's redemptive scheme. Great men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become no more than a blip on the screen of history if they are not interpreted in light of the Messianic trail they helped to blaze. This great age named for its "father figures" stands at the fore of man's physical and spiritual history. For the astute reader the book of Genesis is more than a book of "beginnings." It foreshadows the consummation of God's love toward his creation as manifest in His Son.

Generally speaking, the "Patriarchal Age" may be viewed as that period between Creation and Moses. During this era God communicated with mankind through the heads of various households. The term "patriarch" (Gk. *patriarches*) refers to one who is a founder of a tribe, a progenitor (*pater*, "father"; *arches*, "head") (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 830). As such, these "father heads" exercised paternal leadership over their respective families or descendants. For all practical purposes they fulfilled the triad role of prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, the patriarch received God's revelation and passed it on to his household. As priest, he acted as mediator between God and his family in the exercise and ordinance of worship and sacrifice (Job 1:5). As king, he was the ruler of his family, whose will was absolute law from which there was no appeal. Crawford notes that he retained this authority over his descendants as long as he lived, regardless of any new connections they may have formed (vol. 2, p. 36). At his death the leadership passed to his eldest son.

The book of Genesis includes many illustrious figures in its list of patriarchs. Such men as Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph play major roles on the stage of human drama. Their lives serve as a reminder that God graciously works through men of flesh despite their sin and failures.

As suggested by our topic, we have narrowed our survey to "The Hebrew Patriarchs." By this, we mean those men who played an immediate role in the development of the nation of Israel and whose interaction with God directly impacted the scheme of redemption.

The divine plan to redeem humanity actually began long before the Hebrew Patriarchs were ever born. Before creation's light dawned, knowing man would sin, God purposed to save man through His Son (2 Tim. 1:9). On a practical level, however, we need not journey back in time any farther than the Garden. Here God first reached down and graciously extended that promise which, once magnified through the Patriarchs, would lead to the Messiah.

After Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise, the Lord responded by describing the consequences of their rebellion (Gen. 3:14-19). Once sinless and perfect the Creator's masterpiece now groaned and travailed (Rom. 8:20-22). Thus, by the sweat of his brow Adam would till a thorn laden soil until he returned to its dust by reason of death. Eve, mother of all living, would see her joy in childbirth marred by pain.

But high in the dark, foreboding, storm clouds of sin, God graciously placed a rainbow. Amid streaks of Satanic lightning, the loving Father promised the radiance of Son-shine. Satan's reign was powerless to drown even the most tender of herbs (Is. 53:2) for a "root of Jesse" would spring forth from dry ground to rule the nations (Is. 11:10, Rom. 15:12). Woman's seed would crush Satan's head (Gen. 3:15).

It is this "Seed promise" that becomes the focal point for all that follows. Years later, another "seed promise" would be given to Abram (Gen. 12:1-4). From his lineage the world would be blessed.

Genesis 9 is the key to understanding the lives of the Hebrew Patriarchs, for Shem, Noah's son, was the progenitor of Abraham and his descendants. The significance of this, however, lies deeper than a mere genealogical record. Noah's words as found in Genesis 9:24-27 serve up a prophetic foretaste of spiritual redemption.

After emerging from the ark with his three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—Noah became a husbandman and planted a vineyard. Jewish legend holds that its source was a "slip of the vine that had strayed out of Eden" (Edersheim, ch. XII, p. 55). Apparently the vineyard was successful, for Genesis

9:21-22 notes that Noah drank some of its wine, became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. Keil attributes Noah's behavior to an ignorance of the fiery nature of wine, believing that vine tending was something Noah took up only after the flood. Thus, this otherwise righteous patriarch fell peril to his new-found occupation (vol. 1, p. 154). Perhaps Keil is right, but the notion stretches credulity, as toxic wine is not a natural product of the vine but comes via human manipulation of juice. One also wonders if Noah had ever before witnessed drunkenness? This seems likely given the moral condition of the antediluvian world.

When Ham saw his father, he was not content to take personal delight in his father's nakedness but proclaimed it to his brothers. Thus, Keil notes that Ham exhibited shameless sensuality. Some even see in Ham's action homosexual behavior. Note that in Leviticus 20:17 "seeing nakedness" is a Hebraism for sex. Note also that Genesis 9:24 states that Noah saw what Ham "did" to him. The case for homosexual behavior is perhaps less than *prima fascia*, but should at least be considered. In any event, Luther says, "Ham would not have mocked his father . . . if he had not long before cast from his soul that reverence which, according to God's command, children should cherish towards their parents."

In contrast, Shem and Japheth demonstrated a reverential and childlike modesty by walking in backwards and covering their father (Keil, vol. 1, p. 155). When Noah awoke from his stupor and discovered what had occurred, he cursed Ham but pronounced blessings on Shem and Japheth.

Since Shem, Ham, and Japheth were to re-people the earth, Noah's words are significant. Within the soil of Noah's prediction, the seeds of redemptive history continue to germinate. And since Noah's words directly impact our understanding of the Hebrew Patriarchs, we turn to his revelatory triad.

It is important to note that the curse was not against Noah's own son per se, but against his grandson. Canaan, fourth son of Ham (10:1), would "be lowest of slaves to his brothers." Why Ham was not cursed is obscure, but several logical possibilities have been proposed. Perhaps as a child Canaan was already walking in the footsteps of his father's impiety and sin. Perhaps it was because Noah was shamed by his son, so Ham was destined to be shamed by his. Or maybe it was by inspiration that Noah discerned the fate of Canaan. Either way we should note that Canaan represents roughly only one-fourth of the Hamitic race and is the only son under consideration here. The other three are neither specifically cursed nor blessed.

In any event, the prophecy that Canaan would be the slave of Shem was most specifically fulfilled when Israel, descendants of Shem, made her con-

quest of the land of Canaan. Also note that the Haran call of Genesis 12 included a promise of this land (12:7, 15:18, 17:8). Note, too, that the term "Canaan" has been variously interpreted as meaning, "the submissive one" (Keil, vol. 1, p. 157).

The blessing pronounced upon Japheth and Shem round out Noah's prophecy and here we "uncover" a prophetic link to the Messiah. Genesis 9:26-27 reads:

- A. "Blessed be the Lord (Yaweh) the God of Shem!
 - 1. May Canaan be the slave of Shem.
- B. May God (Elohim) extend the territory of Japheth,
 - 1. May Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
 - 2. And may Canaan be his slave."

While Shem is the major player in Noah's prophecy, careful analysis of the Scripture reveals that all is contingent upon God. In other words, Noah's praise centers on the Almighty. Shem's accolade is only secondary. But this should not surprise us. Noah realized what all of God's servants understand: that every good and perfect gift comes from above (Jas. 1:17). But notice the subtle difference between what Noah says to Shem and what he says to Japheth.

In blessing Shem, he invokes the name "Yahweh"—an epitaph for God that depicts "saving spiritual goodness and covenant." The implication of this is beautiful! While the Shemites would enjoy Canaan's land, their blessing would not be predominantly physical but spiritual. They would be the people of God's covenant. Edersheim says:

To speak in an anticipatory figure, Shem's portion, in the widest sense, is that to be hereafter assigned to Levi, amongst the Jews; and Japheth is to dwell in his tents,—in other words, Israel is to be the tribe of Levi to all nations" (*Old Testament Bible History*, Chapter VII, p. 57).

In contrast, Noah's blessing upon Japheth invokes "Elohim"—an epitaph for God that depicts his creation power. So while Shem received the spiritual blessing (i.e. Jehovah's covenant), Japheth was to enjoy an increase in God's physical creation (i.e. enlargement of territory). Keil agrees by saying that Japheth's blessing had primary reference to the blessings of the earth and not to any spiritual blessing (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 1, p. 159). Here again the Hebrew text makes a play on words, for Japheth means "enlargement."

We also note that Japheth was to "dwell in the tents" of Shem. This is a Hebraism that implies a friendly sharing in another's hospitality and blessings (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 353). Thus, indirectly Japheth's descendants would enjoy the same blessings that Shem enjoyed—not the least of which was spiritual. In short, Japheth, albeit indirectly, would also come to participate in God's covenant.

This is further illustrated by the fact that Japheth's descendants became the "Indo-Europeans" who stretch across Europe and the Western Hemisphere. To these Gentiles the Messianic gospel was also preached. Thus, Leupold says:

The Japhethites have now very largely come in to share Shem's blessings, for as Gentiles they have been grafted on the good olive tree. Shem's spiritual heritage is ours. Abraham is become our father in faith and we are his true children (*Exposition of Genesis*, p. 353).

We have briefly noted the impact that Shem had on the scheme of redemption. All nations would find refuge in his Messianic tents. But to understand how this came to pass we must look more carefully into the Patriarchal Age. As noted, Abraham was the descendant of Shem, as was Isaac and Jacob, and then later Jesus Christ. Because Genesis 12-35 devotes the bulk of its narrative to these three astonishing figures, we shall also give them the lion's share of our survey.

Before entering into the specifics of these men's lives, at least three preliminary and general observations are appropriate:

1. God's selection of these men,
2. their service, without which they would not have pleased God (Heb. 11:6),
3. their sins, as seen in the occasional demonstration of deceit and dishonesty.

God's Selection

The selection of what later would become "the people of God" begins with the Hebrew Patriarchs. Edersheim notes that this process is marked by the two-fold characteristic "that all is accomplished, not in the ordinary and natural manner, but, as it were, supernaturally; and that all is of grace" (ch. X, p. 70). No doubt he is right in his assessment. Abraham alone was singled out from his father's house while still in Ur of the Chaldees. Through a supernatural birth, God demonstrated his selection of Isaac over Ishmael, Abraham's elder son. And in similar fashion, Jacob received the blessing over him who sought it with bitter tears (Heb. 12:17).

But lest we misconstrue the biblical doctrine of election, let it quickly be noted that God's selection of these figures was for the purpose of bringing

forth a Messiah. While no less of grace today, God's election occurs when one accepts that Messiah in obedient faith. This is surely what Paul had in mind in Ephesians 1:4 when he spoke of Christians being predestined to the adoption of sons through Christ Jesus. In Christ, all obedient believers are part of God's elect group regardless of national heritage.

God's selection process was necessary to portray to mankind His glorious providence. What begins in Abraham as a single root finally blossoms into the chosen nation of Israel. But even here physical Israel was simply a means to an end. All that God did through her regarding ordinance, sacrifice, and monarchy pointed singularly to Jesus Christ. Abraham may have been the "root," but Christ was the "shoot"—the *netzer* from Nazareth (meaning "shoot town")—from the stump of Jesse (Is 4:2; 11:1; 53:2).

Israel had possessed the priesthood in Aaron, the royal dignity in David and his line, and the prophetic office in the likes of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. But in Christ the triple crown was united. He is forever Prophet, Priest, and King of Kings. Edersheim beautifully notes:

But in the "last days" the triple crown of priest, king and prophet has been united upon one, Him Whose it really is, even Jesus, a "Prophet like unto Moses," the eternal Priest "after the order of Melchizedek," and the real and ever reigning "Son of David." And in Him all the promises of God, which had been given with increasing clearness from Adam onwards to Shem, then to Abraham, to Jacob, in the law, in the types of the Old Testament, and, finally, in its prophecies, have become "Yea and amen," till at the last all nations shall dwell in the tents of Shem (*Old Testament History*, Chapter 10, p. 70).

Service

A second preliminary component in the lives of the Hebrew Patriarchs is their faith. In fact, so astounding was Abraham's that he is known as "The Father of the Faithful." This truth became Paul's springboard as he demonstrated to first century believers that they were justified by faith and not by works of the Law (Rom. 4, Gal. 3). Likewise, the letter to the Hebrews indicates that the Almighty accepts nothing less than a faith of Abrahamic quality (Heb. 11: 8-19).

But what kind of faith did these Patriarch's possess? What quality makes one a "Friend of God?" The answer is found quickly in the fact that true faith is always a working faith. Edersheim notes, "Abraham was the man of joyous, working faith: Isaac of patient, bearing faith; Jacob of contending and prevailing faith" (ch. X, p. 72). We should not be surprised then to find Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob active in their service to God. James says,

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did (Jas. 2:21-22).

Likewise, every individual on the honor roll of Hebrews 11 demonstrated active, working faith. By faith Abel "offered." By faith Noah "built." By faith Abraham "went." By faith Abraham "offered" Isaac. By faith Isaac "blessed" his sons. And on and on it goes, thus confirming the fact that God rewards action. Hebrews 11:6 attests to the same, for only those who "come" and "seek" please Him.

But we should not think that the faith of the Hebrew Patriarchs made them invincible. Like others, their lives were peppered with discouragement, impatience, temptation, and even sin. While perfect faith is impenetrable, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob possessed no such thing. We credit them as men of "great" faith, but they were not men of "perfect" faith. Even as God led them, they occasionally strayed from the heavenly paths of honesty and kindness.

Sins

We now turn to that third preliminary component in the lives of the Hebrew Patriarchs: their frailty and sinfulness. We remember the deceit of Abraham in Egypt as he lied to Pharaoh about the identity of Sarah (Gen. 12:10ff), a deception that was repeated with Abimelech, king of Garar (Gen. 20:1-2). Years later the trait reared its head in Abraham's son, Isaac, as he lied about Rebecca by saying, "She is my sister" (Gen. 26:7). After receiving God's assurance that a son of promise would be born, we recall that Abraham and Sarah impatiently took matters into their own hands as they contrived to continue Abraham's seed through Hagar (Gen. 16:1ff). And we remember the deceit of Jacob who, with the help of his mother, stole Esau's birthright and blessing (Gen. 27:36).

Thus, in their lives we see faith and frailty intertwined into that mixture we call "humanity." Very quickly we come to understand that God uses man's imperfection as a suitable backdrop to reveal His immutable glory. Concerning the apostles, Paul said, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). Surely the same might be said of the Patriarchs—they were men of unparalleled godliness, but they were not without flaw. They were vessels to God's honor but not without cracks. They were the clay from whence a Messianic nation was thrown, but even so they needed the Potter. In the end analysis, it was not their inherent goodness that reserved for them a place in God's scheme of redemption, but it was from beginning to end the grace of God.

Abraham

We have noted that Abraham was perhaps the most notable Patriarch of this age. But this fact does not adequately describe the impact this great man had on human development. As the forefather of national Israel, his influence helped to mold Jewish thinking during the Mosaic Age. And as a man of faith, from whose seed the Messiah came, Abraham is a point of divine reference for believers in the Christian Age. Therefore to understand Abraham is to understand God's scheme of redemption.

Descending the genealogy of Shem, Abram stands tenth among the "fathers" after the flood. He was one of three sons of Terah along with his brothers, Haran and Nahor (Gen. 11:27). The first glimpse we get of Abram is with his father's clan in an area of southern Babylon known as "Ur of Chaldeans" (Gen. 11:28). Here God first appeared to him. Later Abram would journey to Haran where the call would be renewed, and subsequently he would pilgrim toward the land of Canaan (Acts 7:2-4).

That God would call Abram from his homeland and his father's house is both amazing and providential. On the one hand, we might imagine that God's holiness would demand that only those of the finest lineage be chosen to receive divine favor. But with Abram we quickly discover that his faith was not predicated upon any family righteousness, for Terah was an idolater. In fact, it was this horrifying reality that Joshua used to challenge Israel before he died (Josh. 24:2, 15). Ur was the great "Moon-city." Here the stars, planets, and Hurki, the ancient moon-god, were worshiped. Edersheim notes that the exceeding brilliancy of the night sky in that part of the world probably first led to this celestial paganism (ch. XI, p. 74). No doubt Abram himself had gazed heavenward many times. Surely Yahweh drew on this experience as He promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen. 22:17). With such paganism as the backdrop, however, we also begin to see that Abram's call was providential. By removing him from his pagan surroundings, the purity and godly integrity of this great sage were preserved.

The renewal and expansion of Abram's call at Haran become the focal point for all that follows. Edersheim notes that the journey from Ur, in the far south, had been long, wearisome, and dangerous. Therefore, the fruitful plains around Haran must have provided many inducements for a pastoral tribe to settle (ch. XI, p. 75). But God had other things in store for this great man. Having received the heavenly vision, he was not disobedient, but set out toward Canaan (Gen. 12:1-5). For renouncing and denying all natural ties, the Lord gave Abram the inconceivably great promise (Keil and Delitzsch, Volume 1, p. 192).

The call of Abram in Genesis 12:2-3 may logically be divided into four elementary components. Keil notes that these are to be regarded as an ascending climax, expressing four elements of the salvation promised, the last of which is still further expanded in verse 3 (Keil and Delitzsch, Volume 1, p. 193).

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

In the end analysis, we may diagram God's promises to Abraham here and in subsequent verses as follows:

- Bountiful Offspring (Gen. 13:16, 15:3-5, 17:2-4, 22:17),
- Blessings by God (Gen. 17:1-8),
- Beautiful Land (Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 15:18-21, 17:8),
- Blessing for all Nations (Gen. 12:3, 22:18).

These basic components were later repeated to Abraham's son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

Bountiful Offspring

From a purely human perspective God's promise to make Abram into a "great nation" must have perplexed him a great deal. At the time he left Haran, he was already seventy-five years of age and was childless, for Sarai was barren (Gen. 11:30). Another twenty-five years would pass before Isaac would be born (Gen. 21:5). Even so, Hebrews 11:11 indicates that Abraham's faith did not waver.

But the promise of offspring was not at once fully revealed. Genesis 12:2 serves only as a precursor of what God would do later. From Haran we follow the patriarch into Egypt where after becoming rich he returns to the Negev and separates from his nephew Lot. Abram's new found wealth is no doubt a fulfillment of God's promise to bless him. Shortly afterwards the Lord appears to him again. This time the patriarch bemoans his childlessness as he fears that his servant, Eliezer of Damascus, would become his heir (15:2-3). Scholars indicate that some ancient cultures allowed a childless man to adopt one of his own male servants to be heir and guardian of his estate, a practice Abram seems to have contemplated. Eliezer may have been acquired by Abram on his journey southward from Haran. To Abram's concern, God responds with ad-

ditional revelation. His heir would not be an adopted son, but one from his own body (15:4).

What follows sets the stage for drama and conflict. As we arrive at chapter 16, some time has passed and God's promise has not yet been fulfilled. We cannot surmise the thoughts of Abram, but Sarai at least is upset with the whole process. Her retort in verse 2 implies that her patience had run out and that she held God responsible for her plight. Genesis 16:2 reads, "So she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.'"

In haste for offspring, she persuades Abram to take her maidservant, Hagar, to wife and bear children. To this union Ishmael is born. What results is not a "promised heir" but rather contention and strife between the two women—strife that would later haunt their descendants (Gen. 25:13-18).

The next significant point in the life of Abram occurs thirteen years later as God gives the covenant of circumcision. If the descendants of this great patriarch were to be separate as Abram himself was separate, then they would need some mark of distinction. To this God answered with circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14). All future generations, including national Israel, would practice the rite.

To further demonstrate His promise, God changed both Abram's and Sarai's names. Abram (meaning "exalted father") was changed to Abraham (meaning "father of many"). Sarai was changed to Sarah (meaning "princess"), indicating that she would be the mother of nations and kings (NIV Study Bible, p. 31).

Before leaving the issue of circumcision, it is necessary to notice the implication that it holds for both the Old and New Covenants. Just as the "blessing of all nations" found its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, so circumcision finds its ultimate meaning in His body, the church.

Physically the rite separated Abram and his seed from other nations. Milligan notes that as such it served as a sign, seal, and token of the Jewish nation (p. 80). In Christ, however, the symbol is spiritualized. Christian "circumcision" is not a cutting of the flesh, but is instead a cutting of the body of sin from the soul, and the subsequent sealing of it by the Holy Spirit (Milligan, p. 80).

Getting this truth across to what was at first a predominantly Jewish church proved to be a formidable task indeed. For centuries, Jews had held circumcision with pride. After all, it symbolized their relationship with the true God. But now all of a sudden Gentiles were entering the church. Surely the least God could do was to require circumcision of them! So strong was the

sentiment among some "Judaizers" that they made it a point of salvation (Acts 15:1). To this, the Jerusalem council quickly responded with their decree. The Apostle Paul fairly exploded over the issue calling for such "agitators to go the whole way and emasculate themselves" (Gal. 5:12). Note that in Philippians 3:2 he calls them "dogs" and "mutilators of the flesh."

If such language makes the twentieth century Christian uncomfortable, we must remember the peril inherent within the heresy. Had it gone unchecked, the grace of the gospel and freedom from the law would have been destroyed. Such response was needed to allay the controversy. Paul repeatedly makes the point:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward, and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, not by the written code (Rom. 2:28-29).

Note that here Paul uses the word "Jew" to typify those pleasing to God. He is not suggesting a return to the Mosaic system. Paul would continue in Philippians by saying, "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (3:3). Likewise Colossians 2:9-12 indicates that this cutting away of sin occurs in conjunction with baptism. And so once again we see in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the key to God's scheme of redemption as fulfilled in the New Covenant.

Not long after Abraham received the covenant of circumcision, God gave him the most specific hope yet. Near the great trees of Mamre, the Lord appeared to the aging couple in the person of three visitors. The message was precise: "about this time next year, Sarah your wife will have a son" (Gen. 18:10). The message again challenged the couple's faith. By now they were old and well past natural child birth. Sarah was almost ninety, and Abraham was almost one hundred. But this would be no ordinary natural birth. The birth of this seed, like the birth of *the* Seed many hundreds of years later, would be the work of the Almighty. Thus, Isaac is born and becomes the next redemptive step leading toward the Messiah (Gen. 17:21).

Isaac

The birth of Isaac must have seemed a Godsend to the aging couple. By this time they were old, very old, and the patter of little feet in the tent and the shrill cry of a little voice must have thrilled their hearts. But little did Abraham realize that in just a few years his faith would be tested like it had never been tested before. Little did he understand the depth of commitment his Leader required.

The details of Genesis 22 are perhaps some of the most poignant of any in Scripture. The God whom Abraham had faithfully served all his life and the God who had gifted him with a precious son now demanded his life on an altar. One wonders the horror in Abraham's heart as God commanded, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:2).

The story of what follows is a familiar one. In grace, God stayed the hand of Abraham, Isaac was spared, and instead God provided a ram for sacrifice. But the story serves more than to illustrate the faith of the one from whom the Messiah came. It points to the Messiah himself. For hundreds of years later, on the same ridge of hills where Abraham's knife was stayed, another Son was driven through with spikes. Near the same place where Abraham had received his only son back to life, another Father gave His only Son to die (Heb. 11:17-19). Paul said it like this, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). What was foreshadowed at Moriah was fulfilled at Calvary.

At forty years of age, Isaac married Rebekah. The events of Genesis 24 serve not only to remind us of the specific details of their courtship, but also of God's providence in helping this Patriarch find the right mate.

Although barren at first, to this union were born Jacob and Esau. Genesis 25:23 notes, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated." From Jacob came the nation of Israel. From Esau came the Edomites who subsequently came into conflict with Israel. The story of Jacob and Esau is filled with intrigue and deceit. Before birth, while still in Rebekah's womb, the conflict began, only to continue throughout the boys' lives. Most readers will be familiar with the story of how for a bowl of lentils Esau sold his birthright (25:29) and how by deception Jacob received Isaac's blessing (27:1-40).

Jacob

While the story of Esau is both interesting and important, the Messianic promise continues through Jacob. To the younger son of Isaac God renewed His covenant. While fleeing from Esau's wrath toward Haran, Jacob had a dream (Gen. 28:10ff).

In Jacob's dream he saw a stairway (probably a ziggurat tower, not a ladder as western thought has it) resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven. On it the angels of God were descending and ascending. Above stood the LORD whose voice spoke renewal of the promise once given to his grandfather. Jacob would receive land, numerous offspring, and all nations would be

blessed through him (Gen. 28:13-15). When Jacob awoke, he responded with praise and sacrifice to God.

As in the life of Abraham and Isaac, here again these events point toward the Messiah. Jesus told Nathanael, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (Jn 1:51). Just as Jacob's "ladder" had been his link to heaven, so his descendant, Jesus Christ, would be mankind's bridge to God. Jesus is our only mediator (Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Soon after his vision, Jacob arrived in Haran and there married two wives, Rachel and Leah, both daughters of Laban, his mother's brother (28:2; 29:10). Genesis 29 serves to remind us of the deceptive nature of the patriarchal line, for after serving Laban seven years for Rachel, he received Leah instead. Another seven years would be required to obtain the woman with whom he first had fallen in love. Jacob's relationship with his father-in-law remained less than cordial as Genesis 30-31 reveals.

Perhaps the most significant event in Jacob's life came while he was in the process of making peace with Esau. Several years had passed since the initial conflict between the two brothers, and now an older and wiser Jacob set his face toward reconciliation. One night while maneuvering his family in preparation for Esau's arrival, Jacob had an encounter with God that would forever change his life. Genesis 32:22-31 tells of Jacob's wrestling match. "Jacob had struggled all his life to prevail, first with Esau, then with Laban. Now, as he was about to reenter Canaan, he was shown that it was with God that he must wrestle. It was God who held his destiny in his hands" (NIV Study Bible, p. 55). Out of this encounter came a blessing. Now that he had acknowledged that God was in control, Jacob's name would become Israel. The NIV Study Bible notes,

Here in Father Jacob/Israel, the nation of Israel got her name and her characterization: the people who struggle with God (memorialized in the name Israel) and with men (memorialized in the name Jacob).

What follows is one of Scripture's most beautiful demonstrations of providence and divine love. Israel became the progenitor of twelve sons, one of whom was sold by his brothers into Egyptian slavery only to become ruler and save them from famine. Genesis 37-50 records the events of Joseph in Egypt and how by the hand of God Israel's descendants grew into a mighty nation. Later, after falling into slavery, they emerged victorious under the leadership of Moses. From there, they journeyed back to inherit the very same land to which God had once called Abraham. The land of Canaan would finally be theirs just as Noah had prophesied.

Conclusion

But why is the story of the "Hebrew Patriarchs" so significant? The answer is quickly found in their relationship to the scheme of redemption. In the Hebrew Patriarchs the seeds of redemptive history first begin to germinate. God promised to give Abraham bountiful offspring, but this was so that the nation of Israel could eventually be formed. From this nation the world received her Messiah. Christ was the promised "Seed" from whence all nations would receive blessing. Paul told the Galatians:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ (Gal. 3:16).

Paul went on to tell the Romans:

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations" (Rom. 4:16-17).

God promised Abraham a "beautiful land," but this was so that the progenitor of the Messiah might have a place to dwell. Upon these Judean hills and plains came the footfalls of the Master.

And God promised that Abraham would be a blessing to all nations, but this was so that both Jew and Gentiles would one day enter into covenant with the Almighty.

For those of us, Gentiles by birth, who are twenty centuries removed from the blood of Christ, the sacrifice all too often loses its significance. Many of us have been Christians all of our lives. To the first century Gentile, however, the call for salvation rang with a deafening volume. First century Gentile Christians were only a stone's throw from paganism. From such debauchery the gospel had rescued them. Once excluded from the salvation previously enjoyed only by the Jews, they now flooded into the body of Christ. The "promise" to Abraham had now been extended to all who would accept the Son of God. On the Day of Pentecost Peter cried, "The *promise* is for you and your children and for all who are far off—or all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). To the Galatians Paul wrote:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the *promise* (Gal. 3:26-29).

Likewise Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the *promise*, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ . . . his mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:11-13; 3:6).

And so with this realization we draw our study to a close. We have barely touched the hem of the garment of what God did through the Hebrew Patriarchs. To overlook their contribution is to miss the very essence of the scheme of redemption. In Christ, all those who are of "faith" are children of Abraham. With this in mind, we conclude with the words of a man who, while yet a Jew, understood the meaning of what his Master did for all the world.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

To God be the glory—great things He hath done! 219 NE Carriage Ct., Lee's Summit, MO 64064

Bibliography

- _____. **New International Version Study Bible**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Crawford, C.C. **Survey Course in Christian Doctrine, Volumes 1 and 2**. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1962.
- Edersheim, Alfred. **Old Testament Bible History**. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982.
- Keil, C.F. and Frank Delitzsch. **Commentary on the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988.
- Leupold, H.C. **Exposition of Genesis**. Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1942.
- Milligan, R. **Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption**. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company.
- Unger, Merrill, F. **Unger's Bible Dictionary**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

Let My People Go!

(A Survey of Exodus)

by Doug Edwards

When Moses was first ushered into Pharaoh's presence, he wasted no time with pleasantries or formalities, and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, 'Let my people go'" (Ex. 5:1). These powerful words form the theme for the second book of Moses that we call the Exodus. When Genesis closed, Pharaoh honored the family of Jacob and allowed them to settle in the land Goshen. However, with the passing of time and changes in the administration, the Egyptians changed their favorable outlook toward the children of Israel to that of hatred and disdain. Consequently, the book of Exodus opens with the children of Israel in cruel bondage. The Egyptians had reduced this proud, strong family of Jacob to suffering, tormented slaves.

No one enjoys enslavement at the hands of cruel and ruthless masters. No man welcomes the humiliation and abuse. The human spirit, in these situations, first groans, and then cries out for deliverance. Sometimes the parties involved have to take drastic measures. Exodus describes how God personally intervened on behalf of His people to free them from their suffering and shame. It is, quite simply, the book of deliverance. It fills its readers with the lofty concepts of freedom and liberty.

As we consider some important truths from Exodus, we will limit our study to these areas:

- Exodus' place in the Messianic program,
- The author of Exodus,
- A brief examination of some key thoughts,
- Principles within the book that point to Christianity.

Exodus and the Messianic Program

When studying the individual books of the Bible, it is important to see their role in God's Messianic program for the world. As we shall see, Exodus plays a vital role in God's great scheme of redemption. God made this promise to faithful Abraham when He called him from Haran:

Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will

curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you . . . To your offspring I will give this land (Gen. 12:1-3, 7, NIV).

The promise to Abraham was two-fold. First, God promised that a great nation would come from him and receive a certain land (vv. 2, 7). Second, God promised that He would bless all nations through Abraham's seed (v. 3). Both temporal and spiritual components make up this promise. The temporal serves to bring into existence the spiritual, and once this happens, the temporal accomplishes its purpose. The Jewish nation residing in Palestine was the temporal aspect of the promise designed to bring into existence the Messiah who would bless all nations. The mission of the Messiah was the spiritual part of the promise. The ultimate goal of the Abrahamic promise was not the continual dwelling of Israel in Palestine, but the spiritual mission of the Messiah. This Abrahamic promise is a thread that runs throughout the entirety of the Bible. As one traces the fulfillment of the temporal and spiritual parts of the promise, he discovers the meaning of both the Old and New Testaments.

Exodus describes how Israel fulfilled the temporal part of the promise by becoming a nation—a covenant people. God initially gave this promise through a family—Abraham, and then his descendants, Isaac and Jacob. A single family would not make much of an impact upon the world, but a kingdom of priests would make an impact (Ex. 19:5-6). Israel had an important mission to fulfill. They were to be a light to the world, they were to teach God's morality and spirituality to a sin-cursed world, and they were to bring into the world the Messiah. Thus, we see that Israel's establishment as a nation was one of several important stages in the Messianic program.

Moses the Author

Until about one hundred years ago, scholars almost universally believed Moses to be the author of Exodus, as well as the other books of Pentateuch. At that point, a practice called higher criticism began to redate many Old Testament books and consequently change the traditional authors. Critics taught that traditional dates and authors were wrong and that many of the books were not as old as originally thought. Many liberal Bible scholars subscribed to a theory called the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD hypothesis). According to this theory, Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but about a thousand years after his death, anonymous writers compiled various oral traditions, myths, and written documents and produced the Pentateuch. Each initial (JEPD) represented a different author or group. For example, "J" stressed the name of Jehovah (Yahweh), "E" used the name Elohim for God, "P" referred to a priest or a group of priests who lived during the exile in Babylon and wanted to stress the worship and need of holiness for the people, and "D" stressed reform

in religious practices. When the unknown scholar composed D, the works of J, E, and P were not in a single work. These same critics focused their attention on Exodus and determined that different authors at different times wrote sections of Exodus and then eventually combined them into one book. For instance, some scholars consider "J" to be the author of Exodus 1:8-12, 4:1-16, and other sections. They also believe "E" to have written the first account of the Sinai covenant (Ex. 19-24), and "J" to have written the second account (Ex. 34). It is interesting that these scholars often disagree over which author wrote which sections. (See "Critical Theories in the Old Testament" for more details on the JEPD theory.)

In this article, we stand with the traditional view that suggests Moses through inspiration was the writer of Exodus. Throughout the book, he claims to be the author. Consider the following passages:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. 17:14).

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 24:4).

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27).

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28).

At the Lord's command Moses recorded the stages in their journey. This is their journey by stages (Num. 33:2).

After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end (Deut. 31:24).

Skeptics sometimes raise the question, "Could Moses in such a primitive time have written a work such as the Pentateuch?" We must not forget that the Spirit of God guided the men who wrote the Bible to say the correct things (2 Pet. 1:20-21). We must also remember that Moses "was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action" (Acts 7:22). Charles Pfeifer, in his book *Egypt and the Exodus*, lists the curriculum of an Egyptian nobleman's education. He first mastered the hieroglyphic system of writing, and then he learned to read the Akkadian cuneiform method of writing on clay tablets. He also studied the maxims of Ptah-hotep and other wise men

who gave Egypt a reputation for wisdom in the ancient world (1 Kgs. 4:30). His education also involved studying with the sons of the princes of the Syro-Palestinian city-states who were sent to Egypt to study with Egyptian royalty. Thus, he could have learned quite a bit about geography and history from these sources (pp. 41-43). Jochebed, no doubt, also taught Moses about the ways of the children of Israel. Perhaps Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, taught him many important spiritual truths while Moses lived in the desert for forty years before returning to Egypt. Thus, it is highly likely that Moses received an excellent education for his day and was eminently qualified to write a work such as Exodus.

The Lord Jesus Christ certainly believed Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch. When the evil Pharisees asked Jesus about Moses' permitting a man to write a certificate of divorce and send his wife away, Jesus replied, "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law" (Mk. 10:5). In John 5:46-47, Jesus again said to the Jews, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" Thus, we see the Lord placed His stamp of approval on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

A Brief Capsule of Exodus

It is possible to divide Exodus into three sections: (1) Israel in Egypt (ch. 1-12); (2) Israel in the desert (ch. 13-18); and (3) Israel at Mt. Sinai (ch. 19-40). Several important events took place during each of these three sections. We will provide a short summary of each.

Israel in Egypt (Chapters 1-12)

Exodus begins with the sobering statement, "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt" (1:8). This Pharaoh proved to be ruthless and cruel and brought tremendous suffering upon God's people. God heard the cries of His people and raised up Moses to lead them from bondage. When He called Moses to this work at the burning bush, He told him:

I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I

am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. 3:7-10)

Moses asked God what he was to say if the people asked about His name (Ex. 3:13). God replied,

"I AM WHO I AM." He added, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation (Ex. 3:15).

This name derives from the Hebrew consonants YHWH that translates into Jehovah or Lord. It comes from the Hebrew verb "to be" or "to become," hence emphasizing existence. God told Moses that He did not make Himself known to the patriarchs by this name (Ex. 6:3). Why was it important to reveal this particular name to the Israelites? Remember that Moses was returning to a people who were in slavery. They had heard of the God who made some special promises to Abraham. They must have dreamed of the day when God would keep these promises. But right now they were slaves. God may have been real in the past with Abraham, and He might be real in the future with that fortunate generation, but He did not seem very real to them in their lives. Then Moses came to Egypt, and God was present in the mighty works he performed. God was present in the water turning to blood, the frogs, and all of the plagues. He was very much present. The name, then, signified that God was not limited to just the past or the future, but He was present with them.

When Moses asked what he should do if the people would not believe him, God granted him the ability to perform miraculous signs (Ex. 4:1-9). In this short passage, the Bible explains the purpose of miracles. They were signs to prove the validity of the messenger and his message. Throughout the narrative of the plagues on Egypt, Moses made the statement that these signs were to create belief in God (Ex. 7:17; 8:22; 9:29; 10:2). The New Testament teaches this same truth as well (Mk 16:20; Jn. 20:30-31) (Cottrell, pp. 232-236).

When Moses first confronted Pharaoh and told him that the Lord wanted His people released, Pharaoh replied, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2). The question that Pharaoh asked was a good one, but his actions proved he was not searching for truth when he asked it. This set the stage for what appeared to be a showdown between Moses and Pharaoh, but in reality was between the God of Israel and the gods of Egypt. Ten plagues fell upon Egypt causing the Egyptians much suffering, while the children of Israel were spared. The plagues in order were:

Water to blood (7:14-24)	Boils (9:8-12)
Frogs (8:1-15)	Hail (9:13-35)
Gnats (8:16-19)	Locusts (10:1-20)
Flies (8:20-32)	Darkness (10:21-29)
Livestock (9:1-7)	Death of firstborn (11:1-10)

Despite the Bible referring to these events as miracles, many try to explain them away as natural causes. Wilber Fields in his commentary on Exodus refers to writers who explain the plagues as follows: microcosms known as flagellates that redden the Nile killed the fish, the decomposing fish drove the frogs ashore where their diseases spread to the livestock, the hail naturally came in January, the locust in the spring, and the sandstorms that bring a thick darkness in March (p. 173). The natural cause explanation, however, does not explain why these plagues came only on the Egyptians and not the children of Israel.

The ten plagues were God's judgment against the gods of Egypt. In Exodus 12:12 God said, "I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord." The Egyptians were a polytheistic and idolatrous people. Animal forms (e.g. bulls, serpents, crocodiles, rams) and celestial bodies (e.g. the sun, moon, stars) represented their gods. Several of the plagues were pointed directly against Egyptian gods. God wanted to demonstrate the complete inability of these gods to save the Egyptians. He also wanted His name known among the nations (Josh. 2:9-11; 9:9-10).

The plagues had two effects upon Pharaoh. First, at times he wanted to compromise with Moses (Ex. 8:25; 8:28; 10:8-11; 10:24). Moses understood the danger of compromising God's ways so he refused. Even today, we should avoid compromising God's truths at all cost. Second, the plagues caused Pharaoh to harden his heart and refuse to let the people go (Ex. 8:15; 8:32; 9:34). The Scriptures also say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10). This hardening of Pharaoh's heart by God has caused some to wonder if God was overriding the free will of men at this point. Was God fair? We should point out that Pharaoh first hardened his own heart (Ex. 3:19; 5:2). He chose to be rebellious. Once Pharaoh started down that path, God merely made it convenient for him to continue. God used this man's stubbornness for His glory.

The last significant event of Israel while in bondage was their observance of the Passover (Ex. 12). The Lord gave them detailed instructions as to what kind of lamb to sacrifice, how to place the blood over their door frames, and how to cook the lamb and eat it with bitter herbs. They were to eat the lamb whole, without its bones being broken. They were also to eat in haste, pre-

pared to leave at the Lord's signal. The Passover lamb was a beautiful picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29).

The Date and the Pharaoh

As we prepare to leave this section, we need to consider questions dealing with the date of Israel's exodus and the Pharaoh of that time. There is no mention of Israel's exodus in the recorded history of the Egyptians. That should not be too surprising. In their official records, ancient kings were notorious for exaggerating their accomplishments and completely ignoring their failures. Would a proud country such as Egypt want to record for its posterity the successful revolt of its slaves and the humiliation of their gods, their king, his people, and their mighty army?

Scholars commonly present two approximate dates for the exodus. The first is 1440 B.C. and is based on the statement in 1 Kings 6:1 that reads, "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD." Since the fourth year of Solomon's reign was about 960 B.C., simple mathematics would place the exodus around 1440 B.C. Egyptian history tells us the Pharaoh of that time was Amenhotep II, who reigned from 1448-1423 B.C. Thutmose III preceded him, and he would be the Pharaoh of Moses' birth and the one who threatened to kill Moses. Thutmose III died and a new Pharaoh (Amenhotep II) ascended to the throne (Ex. 2:23). The book of Judges also helps with this chronology. In his letter to the threatening Ammonite king, Jephthah asks, "For three hundred years Israel occupied Heshbon, Aroer, the surrounding settlements and all the towns along the Amon. Why didn't you retake them during that time?" (Jgs. 11:26). If Jephthah lived around 1070 B.C. and Israel had already been in the land for three hundred years, then combined with the forty years of wandering and other factors, the date of the exodus would come close to 1440 B.C.

The second possible date for Israel's exodus from Egypt is 1290 B.C. This date comes from archaeological findings. Archaeologists have stated that Bethel, Lachish, and Debir in Palestine fell as a result of violent attack sometime between 1250 and 1200 B.C. Recent studies at Jericho suggest this possible date also for the destruction of that great city. If this be true, the Pharaoh of the oppression would be Seti I (1317-1301 B.C.) and the Pharaoh of the exodus would be Ramses II (1301-1234 B.C.). The problem with this date is that one must then come up with a creative explanation for what the Bible says in 1 Kings 6:1. We must assign the four hundred eighty years a symbolic meaning rather than a literal meaning. Pfeifer writes:

Bible students have long been aware that the figure 40 and its multiples appears very frequently in the earlier books of the Bible. Solomon and David each reigned forty years. The judgeships of Eli, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, and Othniel were each forty years, that of Ehud, eighty years. Israel spent forty years in the wilderness until the generation that left Egypt (except for Caleb and Joshua) had died. In this usage forty years appears to be a conventional way of saying a generation, and the four hundred eighty years from the Exodus to Solomon may represent twelve generations (p. 85).

In this explanation, the figure 480 years refers to twelve generations and that could be a much shorter time than a literal four hundred eighty years. We accept the first date 1440 B.C. as it seems to harmonize better with the Bible.

Israel in the Desert (Chapters 13-18)

On the night of the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, the stubborn heart of Pharaoh relented and he allowed the children of Israel to leave. They left with their families, their possessions, their livestock, and the gold and silver and other riches the Egyptians had given them. Moses described the beginning of their journey with these words: "The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children" (Ex 12:37). Adding the men, women, and children would have produced a large number of people, possibly well over two million. Bible critics have long questioned the validity of this large number of people. How could Egypt have kept enslaved such a large number of people? How could such a group successfully travel anywhere? Some suggest that we should understand the number as six thousand men, making a total of around twenty-five thousand people. However, there is no reason to question the validity of these numbers. The exodus was a great event, unlike anything the world had ever seen.

Moses describes the beginning of the journey with these words:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle (Ex. 13:17-18).

Israel's route from Egypt to Sinai is somewhat difficult to determine because of the uncertainty of some of the stops that Moses mentions. One thing is certain, wherever they went they needed lots of room. J. W. McGarvey estimates that their total encampment area would probably cover six miles square (36 square miles) (pp. 346-347). The trip from Egypt to Mount Sinai is

only 275 miles, but to a large group such as this, it was a major undertaking. It took them approximately fifty days to reach Mount Sinai.

Several key events took place during the trip to Sinai. God delivered Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14). It did not take Pharaoh and the Egyptians long to change their minds and pursue the Israelites. They cornered them at the Red Sea and prepared to destroy them. God intervened on behalf of His people, parted the Sea, and allowed them to walk across on dry ground. When the Egyptians pursued them into the Sea, the water returned and destroyed them. Moses and the people then sang a song of deliverance to the Lord (Ex. 15). Soon the people began to grumble over the harsh conditions of the desert. They came to Marah and found only bitter water that they could not drink. They complained to Moses, and the Lord caused Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water and it became sweet (Ex. 15:21-26). Then they journeyed to the Desert of Sin where they grumbled against Moses because of a lack of food. God again abundantly provided for His people by sending manna and quail (Ex. 16). It was during this time that God introduced the Sabbath to His people. The people were to gather enough manna for only one day. If they gathered more than they needed, the excess rotted. On the sixth day, though, they were to gather twice as much. Moses told them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord'" (Ex. 16:23). They were not to gather manna on the seventh day, as it would be a day of rest to them. Other Old Testament passages also teach that God first gave the Israelites the Sabbath while in the desert (Neh. 9:14; Ezek. 20:10-12).

When the Israelites came to a place called Rephidim, they again discovered there was no water. They became so angry with Moses they were almost ready to stone him. God told Moses to strike a rock, and water gushed from it for the people (Ex. 17:1-7). All was not peaceful for the Israelites as they wandered in the desert. At Rephidim, the Amalekites surprised Israel and threatened to greatly harm them. Joshua led the men into battle, and with Moses holding his hands in the air with the help of Aaron and Hur, they were able to defeat the Amalekites. God then made a promise that He would someday destroy the Amalekites, which years later King Saul was to fulfill (1 Sam. 15).

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, paid him a visit during this time of wandering in the desert. He saw the overwhelming burden placed on Moses in trying to judge the people's problems and suggested that Moses delegate more of the daily judgmental duties to other faithful men. This freed Moses to listen to only the more difficult cases (Ex. 18).

Israel at Sinai (Chapters 19-40)

In the third month after leaving Egypt, Israel came to the desert of Sinai and camped before the mountain (Ex. 19:1-2). There God announced to Moses His purposes for Israel:

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites (Ex. 19:5-6).

Israel was to be very special to God—His treasured possession. He would enjoy an intimate relationship with them that He would not enjoy with the other nations. He would do great things for Israel. However, Israel was to remember that they enjoyed this privilege, not because of their own goodness or righteousness, but because of the promises made to the fathers (Deut. 7:7-8, 9:5-6). Israel was to be a kingdom of priests. This suggests that the Israelites were to serve as a go-between between God and the nations. They were to offer their lives in sacrificial service to God and to teach the other nations about God and bring them to Him. Israel was also to be a holy nation. Their becoming a nation was important in God's plans. Remember that God promised to Abraham that He would make him a great nation (Gen. 12:2). Wilber Fields says, "But when Israel left Egypt, they were hardly a nation! They were a band of escaped slaves without homeland, national constitution, an established system of government, judges, or priests" (p. 399). It was at Sinai that Israel became a nation. They were to be holy in that God set them apart for His use. Peter applies all of these titles to the Lord's church (1 Pet. 2:9).

God told Moses to tell the people to consecrate themselves for He would come down to the mountain to meet them. Moses described this meeting as follows:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder (Ex. 19:16-19).

It was at this point that God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). It is difficult to overestimate the impact these ancient commandments have had on our modern world. The western world recognizes the Ten Commandments as the very basis of public morality within society. They teach us that morality is essential in religion, and we cannot separate the two. They are

special in the sense that they teach that one's duties to man is on par with one's duties to God. However, God gave Moses many other commandments besides the Ten Commandments (Ex. 21-23). These ordinances dealt with issues such as:

- Laws concerning Hebrew slaves (21:1-11),
- Laws concerning death or injury to person (21:12-32),
- Laws governing damage to property (21:33-22:15),
- Social responsibility (22:16-31),
- Laws of justice and mercy (23:1-9),
- Sabbath laws (23:10-13),
- Laws concerning the three annual feasts (23:14-19).

God gave these laws to the people for the purpose of guiding them in the routines of life. Israel was a theocracy and thus combined civil, criminal, and religious laws together. These laws would guide Israel for almost 1500 years until the law of Christ came into effect (Gal. 3:24-25).

The Law of Moses did not make a clear distinction between the Ten Commandments and the other laws. Some have tried to make a distinction between the moral (Ten Commandments) and the ceremonial law (other parts of the law). Some argue that while the Lord nailed the ceremonial law to the cross (Col. 2:14), the moral law including the Sabbath observance continues. Man makes this distinction, though, not God. Both the Old and New Testaments picture the law as a unit, with the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy being a part.

God ratified this special covenant He made with Israel in Exodus 24. Moses took the blood of young bulls and sprinkled it upon the altar he had erected at the foot of Sinai. Then he read the Book of the Covenant to the people, and they responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey" (24:7). Moses then sprinkled the blood on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (24:8). Thus, God entered into a covenant with Israel. They were now a covenant people. The Scriptures often referred to this special covenant with national Israel (Deut. 5:2; Jer. 31:31-32; Hag. 2:5; Heb. 9:18-20).

The Tabernacle and Priesthood

Beginning with chapter 25 and continuing through the rest of book, Moses gives detailed instructions for the priesthood and the construction of the tabernacle. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they took with them a part of the riches of their former masters. God made the Egyptians "favorably disposed"

to share their wealth with the Israelites (Ex. 12:35-36). Moses used this wealth to construct the tabernacle, its furniture, and the clothes of the High Priest and other priests. The people voluntarily gave of this wealth for the tabernacle. In fact, they gave so generously that Moses had to give an order for them to quit giving (Ex. 36:5-7).

The tabernacle was quite an impressive structure. It was a tent, 45 feet in length, 15 feet in height and width, and composed of two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place (holy of holies). The most holy place was a perfect cube, being 15 foot in length, height and width. God directed Moses to place four successive curtains looped together on top of its wooden stands and allow them to fall down over the sides. They made the first curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet, embroidered with figures of cherubim, and looped together with golden fastenings. The second curtain was made of goat's hair, the third curtain of ram skins dyed red, and the fourth curtain of sea cows (Ex. 25). Curtains also separated the entrance into the holy place and the most holy place. The tabernacle was placed within a courtyard that measured 150 feet by 75 feet.

Outside the tabernacle were the altar of burnt-offering and the laver. The altar stood in the midst of the courtyard and was associated with sacrifice (27:1-8; 38:1-7). It was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. The fire was always burning on this altar, and continual burnt-offerings were made. The laver was a bronze vessel that stood between the altar of burnt-offerings and the entrance into the tabernacle (30:17-21; 38:8). The priests washed there when consecrated into office, when they went into the holy place, and when they offered sacrifices at the altar of burnt-offering. Thus, we see that God connected the furniture of the courtyard with sacrifice.

The furniture within the tabernacle was associated with the deeper mysteries of meditation and access to God. Within the holy place were three articles of furniture. On the north side, God said to place the table of shewbread (25:23-30; 37:10-16). It was made of acacia wood, covered with gold, and furnished with golden bowls, dishes, spoons, and covers. The priests were to place twelve cakes of fine flour upon it every Sabbath. On the south side of the holy place, the golden lampstand was placed (25:31-40; 37:17-24). It was lit at every evening service. Lying just before the curtain leading into the most holy place was the golden altar of incense (30:1-10; 37:25-29). The priests daily burned incense on this altar at the morning and evening sacrifices. Behind the veil and in the most holy place was the ark of the covenant, the most sacred of all the furniture (25:10-22; 37:1-9). It was a chest of acacia wood overlaid within and without with pure gold. On top of the ark was the mercy-seat, which was a plate of pure gold, with two cherubim on top with their faces

bent down and their wings meeting. It was considered to be the throne of God. Stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments were placed within it, and Aaron's rod that budded and a pot of manna were placed beside it (Num. 17:10; Ex. 16:34; 1 Kgs. 8:9).

While at Sinai, the priesthood for the service of God was established (28-29; 39:1-31). The priests came from the tribe of Levi and descended from Aaron. The high priest wore sacred garments consisting of the ephod, the breastplate, a robe, a coat, a sash, and a turban. The other priests wore white tunics in their service to God. The priests had to be consecrated to perform their service. They were first washed, then dressed in their garments, then blood from a ram was placed on their right ears, thumbs, and big toes. Then some of the blood and anointing oil was sprinkled on them.

All was not well with Israel while Moses received these instructions for the tabernacle and priesthood on Mount Sinai. He was away from the people for many days during this time. Unfortunately, the people grew restless in his absence and persuaded Aaron to mold them a golden calf (Ex. 32). When Moses returned from the mountain, he found the people in wild celebration. His anger burned and he threw down the stone tablets, breaking them. The Levites rallied to Moses while the crowd reveled, and Moses commanded them to kill those who were worshiping the calf, and about three thousand died that day. Later, Moses chiseled out two more stone tablets and returned to Mount Sinai to again receive the Ten Commandments.

Exodus and God's Grace

There are many wonderful principles in Exodus that point to Christianity, but we will notice only three. First, the theme of God's grace fills Exodus. We generally connect God's grace with the New Testament and coming of Jesus. After all, John did say, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17). While we see the greatest example of God's grace in the coming of Jesus, we must not remove God's grace from the Old Testament. Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage must surely rate as the second greatest example of God's grace. Please note this passage that so perfectly describes God's grace in freeing His people:

Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an

outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 26:5-9).

These verses overflow with God's grace, picturing Him with outstretched arms, reaching out tenderly to a people who cannot help themselves. Israel was in an impossible situation. They could not save themselves. God provided their means of escape, and is that not what grace is all about? Moses gives the glory to God and not to Israel for their redemption. God did everything necessary to free them. All the people could do was cry out to God for help. Surely the theme of grace runs throughout the Exodus.

As one continues through the Old Testament, he finds this theme of God's grace associated with the delivering of His people in Exodus. Please note the following passages:

The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers" (Jgs. 2:1).

Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out (Josh. 24:5).

But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices (2 Kgs. 17:36).

I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it (Ps. 81:10).

I brought you up out of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the desert to give you the land of the Amorites (Amos 2:10).

Thus, we see that Exodus powerfully teaches us of the wonderful grace of God and our desperate need of it.

The Typology in Exodus

A second important principle in Exodus is the typology found throughout the book that points to Christ and His church. A type is a person, place, or thing in the Old Testament that points forward to a person, place, or thing in the New Testament. The New Testament gives notice of the use of type and shadows in the Old Testament. Jesus said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Lk. 24:44). Paul wrote in Colossians 2:16-17, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is

found in Christ." The writer of Hebrews said, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves" (Heb. 10:1). The following is a partial list of the types found in Exodus along with their corresponding antitypes:

Type	Antitype
Slavery in Egypt	Man's slavery to sin
Pharaoh	the devil
Moses	Christ (Heb. 3:5)
Passover lamb	Christ (1 Cor. 5:7)
Crossing Red Sea	Baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-2)
Rock that provided water	Christ (1 Cor. 10:4)
Manna	Christ (Jn 6)
Holy place	Church
Most holy place	Heaven
Altar of burnt offering	Christ's sacrifice
Laver	Baptism
Table of shewbread	Fellowship with God
Golden lamp stand	God's Word
Altar of incense	prayer
High priest	Christ
Priests	Christians
Veil between the holy and most holy place	A type of Christ's flesh
Mercy seat	Christ, our place of mercy

What was the purpose of this typical language? Robert Milligan in his book, *The Scheme of Redemption*, mentions two purposes for the types. First, types are to give a pictorial and outline representation of something in the future, especially of the scheme of redemption. That seems to be the primary objective of the sacrifices offered during both the Patriarchal and Mosaic Ages. Just as a child must learn to crawl before he can walk, so must man learn the importance of sacrifice before he can understand the Lord Jesus Christ and His mission. Second, God gave the people under the Old Testament a typical system in order that these types might serve as proof and demonstration of the divine origin of the antitypes. The One who ordained these types also perfectly understood the corresponding antitypes. This is something that

only God could have known. Therefore, these types actually serve the purpose of proving divine inspiration (pp. 68-72). The understanding of types helps to strengthen the faith of believers.

The Importance of Obedience in Worship

A third principle found in Exodus deals with the importance of obedience in worship. It is significant that Moses used thirteen chapters to describe the tabernacle and priesthood (25-31; 35-40) while using only two chapters to describe the creation of the universe (Gen. 1-2). Does that not tell us something about the importance of true worship to God? When God gave His instructions for the building of the tabernacle, He carefully told Moses to be sure to build everything according to the pattern. Notice the following examples of what God said to Moses:

- Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you (25:9).
- Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain (26:30).
- Make the altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain (27:8).

Did Moses and the children of Israel obey God and do just as He said? Did they follow the pattern? If you will take the time to read Exodus 39:23, 43, and 40:16-33, you will see they carefully obeyed God. Their careful obedience tells us something about the importance God places on obedience in worship. We are not free to pick and choose our methods and means of worship. "Have it your way!" may be a great slogan for a hamburger chain, but that outlook has no place in our worship to God. He created us for His glory; therefore, we should honor Him in the way He prescribes. We, too, must follow the pattern. The New Testament teaches us of different forms of worship. Some worship is conducted in ignorance (Acts 17:23), and some worship is vain (Mt. 15:9). Some worship is acceptable, such as that performed in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). The picture portrayed in Exodus reinforces the importance of following God's pattern in worship.

Conclusion

As we study through the Old Testament, surely Exodus must be one of its most important books. Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage to the land of Canaan is to the Old Testament and Judaism what the cross is to Christianity. The Exodus is critical in the Old Testament while the cross is critical in the New Testament. Exodus introduces its readers to some important spiritual

themes: salvation, redemption, worship, law, covenant, and priesthood. The New Testament fully develops these great themes. The order of Israel's deliverance—bondage, deliverance, wandering, Promised Land—closely parallels the Christian's life. 104 N. E. 8th St., Moore, OK 73160

Bibliography

- Bright, John. **A History of Israel**. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975.
- Cottrell, Jack. **What the Bible Says About God the Father**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1984.
- Fields, Wilbur. **Exodus**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1979.
- Garrett, Leroy. "The Exodus and the Grace of God." **Restoration Review**, Vol. 22, May 1991, pages 82-87.
- Huey, Jr., F. B. **Exodus**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.
- Kelton, Tom. "'Lord' in the Scriptures." **Gospel Advocate**. Vol. 138, May: 1992, pages 58-59.
- McDowell, Josh. **More Evidence that Demands a Verdict**. Campus Crusade for Christ, 1975.
- McGarvey, J. W. **Lands of the Bible**. Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate, 1966.
- Milligan, Robert. **The Scheme of Redemption**. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1975.
- Merrill, Eugene H. **An Historical Survey of the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966.
- Pfeiffer, Charles F. **Egypt and the Exodus**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964.
- Smith, James E. **The Pentateuch**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1992.
- Smith, William. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970.

A Survey of Leviticus

by Alan Bonifay

In 1 Peter 1:13-16, Peter reiterates the essential principle of the book of Leviticus: God is Holy and therefore in order to approach Him His people must be holy. Leviticus is God's guidebook for His newly redeemed people, showing them how to worship, serve, and obey a holy God. Fellowship with God through sacrifice and obedience—these are the central messages of the book. The God of Israel is incredibly holy. The book focuses on the worship and walk of the nation of God. In Exodus, Israel was redeemed and established as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). Leviticus reveals just how God's people were to fulfill their priestly calling.

The shortest of the books in the Mosaic collection and probably the least read of all the books of the Bible, the book of Leviticus is nevertheless very important to Christians. The Bible of Jesus contained this book. More than forty New Testament references to Leviticus have been identified. Many of the "shadows of good thing to come" (Heb. 10:1) take their rise here as Old Testament types. Even the laws found here, which we often consider pure tedium to read, may be of more importance than we have previously thought. Bob Waldron observes:

These laws were much more than a list of rules to check off each day, more than a ritual to be performed. They were a guide for living. They were to teach the people how to be God's chosen people. They were to be a special people, because their God was special. Over and over in the book of Leviticus, the expression, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is found. This was God's way of saying, "I want you to do this or that so that you can be like me."

The laws were to help them understand the nature of Yahweh so they could know how to imitate His nature. How could they know what God did or did not like if He did not reveal Himself to them? In the New Testament, God sent His Son into the world to show mankind what God is like (Jn. 1:14), so that those who believe in Him can imitate His life (1 Pet. 2:21-22). But in the Old Testament, God revealed His character by giving laws His people were to obey in order to be like Him.

An understanding of the law in this light greatly enriches our study. Most of the Israelites missed the point, just as we misunderstand our relationship to the new law under which we live. There were rules and regulations the Israelites were required to follow, and there are laws we must obey in order to receive God's blessings. But in both covenants, the reason for obeying the

laws is not to earn our salvation, but to enable us to imitate the nature of God so that we can be fit subjects to receive His blessings (2 Pet. 1:4) (Waldron, pp. 149-150).

Description of Leviticus

James Smith asks, "What can a believer expect to find when he opens the book of Leviticus? What kind of book is this? Four introductory observations are appropriate" (p. 344).

1. Leviticus is a divine book. No other book of the Bible affirms divine inspiration so frequently as Leviticus. Under the verb "to speak" alone, no less than thirty-eight occurrences of Yahweh speaking to Moses or to Aaron are recorded. In Leviticus, the book claims fifty-six times that God gave these laws to the people through Moses. Jesus himself underscored the divine authority of this book by ordering a cleansed leper to go and "show himself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded" (Mt. 8:4; Lev. 14:1-4; also Mt. 12:4; Lev. 24:9; 2:22). Mosaic authorship of Leviticus is uniformly affirmed by ancient testimony. It is true that modern critics argue that the book was written by a priestly cast of the exilic or post-exilic period. No believer can possibly entertain such a foolish notion. The teaching found in the book itself provides another argument in favor of its divine origin. Fundamental theological themes are emphasized here. Some have referred to Leviticus as the "Book of Atonement" or "the Romans of the Old Testament."

2. Leviticus is a legal book. There is almost no historical action in this book. Only two historical incidents are narrated: (1) the consecration of the priests and the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (8-10); and (2) the punishment of a blasphemer (24:10-14). Instead, this book is full of laws, general and specific, severe and merciful. Bob and Sandra Waldron divide the law into two overarching categories: religious laws and civil laws. Under religious laws they list eight main categories: (1) the Basic Covenant; (2) Idolatry; (3) Tabernacle; (4) Priests and Levites; (5) Sacrifices; (6) Special times; (7) Vows; (8) Cleanness. Under civil laws, they arrange two broad categories: judicial laws and human relationships. For Moses, however, law was law. He made no distinctions between types of law.

In Leviticus, we see two fundamental kinds of laws from God. There are moral laws that involve matters of universal absolutes concerning right and wrong, and there are arbitrary or positive divine laws which do not involve innate rightness or wrongness, but which are equally as binding by God's fiat decree. In both of these expressions of His will, God sought to govern either by broad principle or specific precept the whole life of his people. According to H. T. Sell,

Everything is calculated to stimulate the spiritual life. Sanitary and dietary laws are not laid down as such but are made distinctive marks of a consecrated life of a chosen people; details of ritual are prescribed to express the sense of the holiness of God in whose service they are exercised. The effect of the law was to make Israel a Holy Nation (p. 21).

3. Leviticus is a priestly book. The priests are mentioned more often than the Levites—about 730 versus 290 times. Aaron as the high priest is the central figure in Leviticus. But the book is much more than simply a manual to guide Aaron and his sons through the intricate ceremonies of the law. Much of the time Moses speaks directly to the people—seventeen times as opposed to only eight times to the priests. It is a book of instructions to the nation and their priestly representatives. God reckoned the people were entitled to know what was required of them and of their priests in the service of the sanctuary, which was so central to them all.

4. Leviticus is a picture book. Here is set forth in ritual typology the redemptive program of God. In his definitive *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, J. Barten Payne identified here 27 types involving 462 verses.

Setting of Leviticus

Chapters 1:1 and 27:34 reveal that Leviticus finds its setting in the same scenes closing the book of Exodus. These laws were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Heb. 8:5). In chapters 8-10, where the ordination of Aaron and his sons is recounted, we see the implementation of the instructions found in Exodus 29 and exact compliance with the regulations given in Exodus emphasized—"as the Lord commanded Moses" (8:9, 13). The laws of cleanness (Lev. 11-16) and holiness (Lev. 17-26) presuppose the establishment of the covenant that was narrated in Exodus.

The last event in Exodus is dated to the first day of the first month of the second year of the Exodus (Ex. 40:17). The first event in the book of Numbers is dated to the first day of the second month of the same year (Num. 1:1). The time spanned in Leviticus is, therefore, one month. James Smith notices the centrality of Leviticus both chronologically and theologically in the Pentateuch:

That Leviticus is an essential part of the Pentateuchal sequence is apparent. Genesis identified God's remedy for man's ruin—the Seed of woman. Exodus revealed God's answer to man's cry—the blood of the Lamb. Now Leviticus speaks of God's provision for man's need—sacrifice and priesthood. Leviticus is central in the Pentateuch chronologically; it is also central theologically. With its doctrine of

mediation through sacrifice and priesthood, and reconciliation at the altar, Leviticus is the very heart of the Mosaic books—and the Gospel as well.

While continuity between Leviticus and the preceding books is obvious, a marked contrast between Exodus and Leviticus is also obvious. Exodus begins with enslaved sinners; Leviticus with redeemed saints. In the former book, God got His people out of Egypt; in the latter He got Egypt out of His people. Exodus is the book of deliverance emphasizing the fact of sacrifice; Leviticus is the book of dedication and sets forth the doctrine of sacrifice. In Exodus, God speaks from the mount, and He approaches man; in Leviticus, God speaks from the tent and man learns to approach God. Exodus dwells at length on the erection of the Tabernacle, while in Leviticus, Tabernacle duties are set forth (pp. 346-347).

Structure of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus can be summarized in two words: sacrifice and sanctity. The book illustrates perfectly the two-pronged teaching of 1 John 1:7. The first half of Leviticus stresses that "the blood cleanses us;" the second half focuses on, "if we walk in the light."

The first section of Leviticus details the way into the presence of God. The first seven chapters describe the five basic sacrifices through which an Israelite could approach God. The first three of those sacrifices were laws of approach to God when in fellowship with Him, and the last two were the laws of approach to God when out of fellowship with Him.

The law of mediation (chs. 8-10) identifies the Aaronic priesthood as the avenue of approach. Chapters 11-15 emphasize the holy separation of God's people by giving the laws to establish clean foods, pure bodies, and clean houses. Chapter 16 reveals the laws of national atonement through the annual sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. Chapter 17 closes the first half of Leviticus with a series of addenda concerning the location of sacrifices and the use of blood.

The second section of Leviticus tells an Israelite how he might maintain his relationship to the Lord. In this division, the emphasis is upon the sanctification of the nation. God's people must be set apart to His service. Holiness must govern every aspect of their lives. The abiding lesson in the book is that holiness is essential. The word itself appears more than 130 times in the book.

Chapters 18-22 reveal the laws of sanctification for the people (18-20) and the laws of sanctification for the priesthood (21-22). The Israelites were not to follow the pagans of Egypt or Canaan in their idolatrous relationships

and unlawful marriages. The priests were to set the example of commitment. Chapters 23-25 reveal the laws of sanctification in worship. Here are discussed all of the feast days so important in Israel's worship to God. In the last two chapters, the results of obedience and disobedience are detailed and the regulations concerning voluntary vows are recorded.

Concerning chapter 26, Gleason Archer comments:

A remarkable authentication of the divine origin of this Mosaic code is to be found in the semi-prophetic twenty-sixth chapter. Here there is a preview of the subsequent history of Israel, with its progressive decline from faith to apostasy and a clear intimation of the Babylonian Exile (vv. 32-39) and the subsequent restoration (vv. 40-45). It is not to be wondered at if antsupernaturalist critics felt under compulsion to date the origin of Leviticus as Exilic (Document H) and post-Exilic (Document P). No other cause is open to one who on philosophical grounds denies the possibility of supernatural divine prediction (p. 228.)

Teaching of Leviticus

While Exodus spoke of redemption and instruction, Leviticus speaks of fellowship with God, holiness, and worship. Griffith Thomas has offered an excellent analysis of the teaching of Leviticus under seven heads (p. 110).

1. The Great Problem: Sin. The fact of sin is recognized in the whole book. Sin is unlikeness to God, distance from God, and wrong done against God. By sin, man is excluded from nearness to God and communion with him.

2. The Great Provision: Sacrifice. The words "offering" and "sacrifice" appear over ninety times. Two other words of high frequency are "blood" and "life." The key phrase in the book, "before the Lord," appears some sixty times. The fact of redemption is the key to the whole book. The redemption is achieved through substitution, imputation, and death. The innocent animal pays the death penalty for the guilty sinner. Redemption from death is founded on righteousness and therefore is possible only through blood (life) poured out.

3. The Great Power: Priesthood. Man can and must approach God through divinely appointed mediators. Reading the Book of Leviticus, the Christian is reminded of his need for an intercessor, a priest superior to Aaron and his kin. That need is met in Jesus who offered up His own blood once for all on behalf of sinful man.

4. The Great Plan: The Day of Atonement. Once each year the high priest was to enter the Holy of Holies with blood to atone for the sins of the

priesthood and the nation. A goat was driven into the wilderness to symbolize the removal of sin.

5. The Great Possibility: Access to God. Man can come into fellowship with God and can maintain that fellowship.

6. The Great Principle: Holiness. God's holiness demands holiness on the part of His people. The word "holy" and its cognates appear some 131 times in the book. Closely related is the concept of cleanness. The word "clean" and its cognates and contrasts appear some 186 times. Leviticus stresses (1) clean food (ch. 11), (2) clean bodies (12:1-13:46), (3) clean clothes (13:47-59), (4) clean houses (14:33-57), (5) clean contacts (ch. 15), and (6) a clean nation (ch. 16). The verse which captures the essence of the book is Leviticus 19:2, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

7. The Great Privilege: The Presence of God. When man approaches God in the prescribed manner, he enjoys the presence of God and consequent blessing.

Keys to Leviticus

The **New Open Study Bible** lists three keys to Leviticus in its introduction to the book:

1. Key Word: Holiness. The book centers around the concept of the holiness of God and how an unholy people can acceptably approach Him and then remain in continued fellowship. The way to God is only through blood sacrifice, and the walk with God is only through obedience to His laws.

2. Key Verses: Leviticus 17:11; 20:7-8.

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

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them. I am the Lord who sanctifies you (20:7-8).

3. Key Chapter: Leviticus 16. The Day of Atonement was the most important single day in the Hebrew calendar, as it was the only day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to "make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (16:30) (**The New Open Bible**, p. 117).

Typology of Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus is replete with types and allusions to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and this characteristic of the book rescues it from the tedium of laws which seem to have no bearing upon the Christian. Oswald Allis wrote concerning Leviticus, "This is the New Testament gospel for sinners stated in Old Testament terms and enshrined in the ritual of sacrifice; and it finds its fullest expression in the ritual of the Day of Atonement" (p. 135). The typology of Leviticus appears in four different areas of study: (1) the sacrifices, (2) the appointed times, (3) the priesthood, and (4) the high priest.

Sacrifices

Each of the five basic sacrifices points forward as a shadow of Christ's perfect sacrifice of Himself:

1. The burnt offering in which the animal was wholly consumed upon the altar and thus ascended to heaven as a sweet-smelling savor typifies Christ's total commitment of Himself in submission to His Father's will. Ephesians 5:2 says, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

2. The significant fact concerning the meal offering seems to be that no corrupting element (e.g. leaven) could be added to it. This probably foreshadows Christ's perfect (sinless) manhood which made His sacrifice acceptable (Heb. 10:1; 4:15; 1 Cor. 5: 7-8).

3. The peace offering is a type of the fellowship that believers have with God through the work of Christ on the cross. According to Ephesians 2:14, "Christ is our peace."

4. The sin offering depicts sin covered by blood and thus removed and judged. Christ is called the Christian's sin offering (1 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24).

5. The sin offering is a shadow of Christ's payment for the damage of our sins. Christ gave His life as a ransom in payment of the penalty for our sins (Mt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 5:8-11).

Appointed Times

The book of Leviticus established eleven appointed times to be observed scrupulously. James Smith reckons that "at least nine of these have more or less obvious typical significance" (p. 352).

1. The weekly Sabbath points to the eternal Sabbath rest of God's people (Heb. 4:9).

2. The lamb of the annual Passover depicts Christ, the Christian's Passover (1 Cor. 5:7).

3. The Feast of Unleavened Bread suggests the holy walk of believers (1 Cor. 5:8).

4. The required presentation of firstfruits each year reminds the believer that Jesus was the firstfruits of those who sleep (1 Cor. 15:33).

5. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) reminds the Christian of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

In the sacred seventh month, three appointed times convey typological truth:

1. The blowing of trumpets at the beginning of the year points to the gathering of God's people (Mt. 24:31).

2. The Day of Atonement sets forth the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ in beautiful symbolism. Kellogg has stated: "What the fifty-third of Isaiah is to Messianic prophecy, that . . . is the sixteenth of Leviticus to the whole system of Mosaic types, the most consummate flower of the Messianic symbolism" (S.H. Kellogg, cited by Allis, p. 135).

3. The Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) portrays the worship in the Messianic kingdom (Zech. 14:16-18).

In the fiftieth year (Jubilee), a release was proclaimed throughout the land. The Gospel Age is depicted in the freedom and restoration that was part of this celebration (Isa. 61:2; Lk. 4:19).

Priestly Consecration Service

Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 list seven steps in the consecration of the Old Testament priesthood. Each of these finds a counterpart in the ordination of the New Testament priesthood of all believers.

1. The sons of Aaron were called to be priests (Ex. 29:4). Believers are called to the priesthood through the Gospel (1 Pet. 2:9).

2. The Old Testament candidates were washed with water (Lev. 8:6). Candidates for Christian priesthood are washed in baptism (Acts 22:16; Heb. 10:22; Tit. 3:5).

3. After washing came robing (Lev. 8:7-9). In baptism the believer has "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27; Rev. 3:18; Rom. 13:14).

4. Anointing with oil came next (Lev. 8:12). The believer's anointing refers to his reception of God's Word (1 Jn. 2:20, 27).

5. Blood was applied to the garments of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:30). So also the heart of the believer has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:22; 9:13-20).

6. Through this ceremony, the sons of Aaron were consecrated or made holy (Ex. 29:21). Christians are a holy people (Heb. 10:10).

7. The sacrifices were then eaten by the candidates (Lev. 8:31). Believers too partake of their sin offering which is Christ (Heb. 13:10-12; 1 Cor. 11:23-29).

High Priesthood

The Book of Hebrews clearly reveals Aaron to be a type of Christ (Heb. 4:14-5:9). Consider the following table (cf. Smith, p. 253):

A Better High Priest	
Aaron As High Priest	Christ As High Priest
Called from among men (Ex. 28:1)	Called from among men (Heb. 5:4, 10)
Compassion for the wayward (Heb. 5:2)	Prayed with tears (Heb. 5:7)
Spotless in dress (Lev. 16:4)	Spotless in character (Heb. 4:15)
Entered earthly tabernacle (Lev. 16:3)	Entered heavenly temple (Heb. 6:19)
Entered once each year (Lev. 16:2)	Entered once for all (Heb. 9:25)
Entered beyond the veil (Lev. 16:12)	Rent the veil (Heb. 10:20)
Offered for his own sins (Lev. 16:11)	Offered only for our sins (Heb. 9:27)
Offered blood of animals (Lev. 16:15)	Offered His own blood (Heb. 9:12)

Significance of Leviticus

What is the abiding value of Leviticus? J. Sidlow Baxter presents four suggestions to which I would add a fifth.

1. Leviticus reveals to the Christian the character of God as clearly as it revealed Him to Israel of old. God's character has not changed.

2. Leviticus symbolically sets forth the basic principles which underlie all dealings between God and men. The Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, and the law itself have all been fulfilled in Christ and hence abolished; but the spiritual realities which they pictorially presented abide for all time (Rom. 15:4).

3. Leviticus suggests principles which should govern civil legislation today. Light is shed on property rights, marriage, capital, labor, religion, the state, and many similar issues.

4. Leviticus is a treasury of symbolic and typical teaching. Here the grand facts of the New Covenant are illustrated in the great types of the Old (Baxter, pp. I, 114-115).

To these I would add that this book clearly reveals to us why Paul said:

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:20-21).

One of the overarching purposes for which God gave the Law was to prove beyond any doubt these facts: (1) the exceeding sinfulness of man, (2) the fact that no man could be saved on the basis of his perfect, meritorious observance of the law, and (3) that salvation thus must be reached through the gracious provision of God as seen in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 523 *Jessie Ave., Manteca, CA 95337*

Bibliography

- _____. **The New Open Bible: The New King James Version.** Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1990.
- Allis, Oswald T. "Leviticus" in **New Bible Commentary**, F. Davidson, ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954.
- Archer, Gleason. **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction.** Chicago: Moody Press, 1970.
- Baxter, J. Sidlow. **Explore the Book.** Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960.
- Sell, H. T. **Bible Study By Books.** London: Revell, 1896.
- Smith, James E. **The Pentateuch.** Joplin, Mo: College Press Publishing, 1996.
- Thomas, Griffeth. **Through the Pentateuch Chapter by Chapter.** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Waldron, Bob and Sandra. **You Shall Be My People.** Athens, Ala: Bob Waldron, 1992.

A Survey of Numbers

by Alan Bonifay

The largest book of the Pentateuch and the fifth largest in the Old Testament, the book of Numbers teaches graphically the all-important lesson that perseverance is essential. Actually, the book is misnamed, for Numbers reflects the two censuses that are recorded in chapters 1 and 26. The Jews use the fifth Hebrew word in verse 1, meaning "in the wilderness," to designate the book. This is a much more accurate appellation, for most of the book is taken up with Israel's experiences as they wander in the wilderness. For Israel, what should have been an eleven-day journey (Deut. 1:2) became a forty-year agony due to God's judgment against the nation for continual murmuring. Some have even called this the "Book of Murmuring."

The Author and Setting of Numbers

The book makes a strong claim to Mosaic authorship. There are more than eighty claims that "the Lord spoke to Moses," and the first is in 1:1. The itinerary of the journey in chapter 33 is directly attributed to Moses. Verse 2 expressly says, "Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord." Twelve times events in the book are linked to Mt. Sinai. External evidence is equally strong. The Jews, the Samaritans, and the early church all give testimony to Mosaic authorship. Numerous citations from Numbers in the New Testament associate Moses with the book (Jn. 3:14; Acts 7, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 3, 4; Jude 11).

Some scholars have rejected Moses as the author because he is often referred to in the third person. However, this is a flimsy objection since it was common practice for authors in the ancient world to refer to themselves in the third person. Caesar, for example, did the same thing in his writings.

Leviticus covers only one month, but Numbers stretches over almost thirty-nine years. It records Israel's movements beginning with the last twenty days at Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:10). It then covers Israel's wanderings around Kadesh Barnea and finally the arrival in the plains of Moab (10:11-22:1). The last section of Numbers takes place on the plains of Moab (22:2-36:13).

The tents of the Israelite camp must have occupied several square miles whenever they stopped, for based on the census figures of chapters 1 and 26, the people probably numbered in excess of two and a half million. God miraculously fed and sustained them in the desert—He preserved their clothing and shoes and gave them manna, meat, and water.

The Purpose of Numbers

The legal content of the book clearly sets it apart from Leviticus. Numbers focuses on the laws of Israel while on the march. Only here are found the military order of the tribes, the census of the fighting force, and the travel duties of the Levites. Leviticus emphasizes the believer's worship and purity; Numbers the believer's walk and pilgrimage.

"Marching and Murmuring" is a perfect caption summarizing the book. Its most immediate purpose is to sketch the history of God's people from the time of the first census until the final encampment before Israel entered the Promised Land. During the largest part of this period, Israel was on the march from Sinai to the plains of Moab, just across Jordan from Jericho. Throughout the march and in spite of God's gracious leading and miraculous provision, God's people whined and complained about their circumstances.

The key thought in Numbers is discipline. Part of the schooling and discipline of Israel took place in Egypt. Another part took place in the years of wilderness wanderings. Freedom needs discipline as well as law. In Genesis, the theme is the formation of the nation of Israel; in Exodus, the focus is the salvation of the nation; in Leviticus, the emphasis is the sanctification of the nation. In Numbers, the theme is the education of the nation. The key passage relative to God's discipline is:

The carcasses of you who have murmured against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in (14:29-30).

God sentenced an entire generation to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of their lack of faith, until everyone died who was over the age of twenty when the census of Numbers 1 was taken.

The key passage relative to Moses and Aaron records a similar judgment upon them. It is found in 20:12:

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

The key chapter in the book is, of course, chapter 14. There is a critical turning point when Israel rejects God by refusing to go up and take the Promised Land. God judges Israel:

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection (14:34).

God was training His people through various judgments like these for their special role in the scheme of redemption.

The ultimate purpose and abiding lesson of Numbers is that perseverance is essential. Only two adults of those who left Egypt were permitted to enter the Promised Land. Those who make a good start are not crowned, but those who finish the course. Paul drew from this book the lesson that Christians must avoid presumption (1 Cor. 10:1-12). The writer of Hebrews saw a warning here against disobedient unbelief (Heb. 3:19).

Outline of Numbers

Three main divisions are discernible in the book. James Smith calls them: (1) The Preparation for the March (1:1-10:10); (2) The March (10:11-22:1); The Conclusion of the March (22:2-36:13) (pp. 405-407). **The New Open Bible** introduction calls them: The Old Generation (1:1-10:10), The Tragic Transition (10:11-26:1), and the New Generation (26:1-36:13) (p. 157).

The first section takes place at Sinai and comprises five parts, according to Smith:

1. the mustering of the tribes and the care of the Tabernacle (chs. 1-4),
2. the enforced purity of the camp (chs. 5-6),
3. the offerings for proper worship (chs. 7-8),
4. the second observance of the Passover (ch. 9),
5. the signals for service (10:1-10).

The second section contains the wilderness wanderings. It contains all that is revealed of that thirty-eight years and is at best only a sketchy series of episodes along the way.

1. We learn about the journey to the borders of Canaan before Israel's refusal (10:1-13:33). Discussed are these incidents:
 - (a) the burning in the camp at Taberah,
 - (b) the sending of the quail,
 - (c) the sedition of Miriam and Aaron,
 - (d) the expedition of the spies and their report.
2. A curse is pronounced because of the nation's loss of faith and refusal to enter Canaan. The events narrated (chs. 14-20) are:
 - (a) the rebellion of Korah and Dathan,
 - (b) Moses striking the rock,
 - (c) the plague of serpents,
 - (d) various enactments of law,
 - (e) Miriam's sin,
 - (f) Aaron's death.

3. The last chapter of this section (21) records the defeat of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan, in Transjordan as Israel emerges from the wandering.

The third major division records five incidents at the conclusion of the march:

1. the efforts of Balaam to destroy Israel (chs. 22-25),
2. the second numbering of the people (ch. 26),
3. the naming of Moses' successor (chs. 27-30),
4. the triumph over the Midianites and distribution of the Transjordan territory (chs. 31-33),
5. the directions for settlement in Canaan (chs. 34-36).

The History of Numbers

Eason observes in his survey that Moses did more than merely re-cord facts in Numbers. He interpreted the history of his people. In every event, he saw the hand of God shaping His people for their witness to the world. The Lord provided for their needs, guided their journeys, kept His covenant in spite of their unfaithfulness, and disciplined them. Through all these experiences, God revealed His true nature to Israel (Eason, p. 98).

Smith notes that the main characters in Numbers are Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Eleazar and Phinehas, Aaron's sons, figure prominently in the narrative, as do Caleb and Joshua. Numbers bridges the gap between the giving of the law to Moses and the death of the great Lawgiver. The action revolves around seven crises:

1. A leadership crisis. Miriam and Aaron questioned the authority of Moses (ch. 12).
2. A faith crisis. At Kadesh, the people believed the reports of the ten spies and refused to trust God for victory in Canaan (chs. 13-14).
3. A second leadership crisis. The leadership of Moses and Aaron was challenged by Dathan and Korah and their followers (ch. 16).
4. A personal crisis. Moses arrogantly and angrily smote a rock when he was but to speak to it. The people received water from the rock, but Moses lost the opportunity to lead his people into Canaan (ch. 20).
5. A program crisis. When Israel was not permitted to pass through the land of Edom, they were forced to take a detour through the desert. Poisonous snakes in the region caused havoc and death (ch. 21).
6. A military crisis. Israelite soldiers were forced to go to war against walled cities in the Transjordan for the first time (ch. 21).

7. A religious crisis. Balak, King of Moab, at Balaam's suggestion (31:16), used beautiful temptresses to lure the men of Israel into Baal worship at Peor (ch. 25) (Smith, pp. 407-408).

The Theology of Numbers

The book of Numbers illustrates well Paul's admonition in Romans 11:22, "Behold the goodness and the severity of God." The religious instruction of Numbers can be summarized in five timeless principles:

1. God is present with His people. The guiding presence of the Lord was visibly made known in the cloud that hovered over the Tabernacle night and day. The Israelite camp moved at the cloud's behest (9:15-23). When Moses' leadership was attacked, God explained to the rebels His unique presence with His servant. Moses was permitted to view the form of God, and the Lord spoke to him "mouth-to-mouth" (12:6-8).

2. God provides for His people. God gave Israel all that she needed, physically and spiritually. The daily supply of manna was a constant reminder of God's provision. Even when they complained about the manna He had graciously given, He still provided them quails (ch. 11). Their thirst led God to provide them with water from a rock (20:8).

3. God is patient with His people. The Israelites' constant grumbling wore the divine patience thin more than once, and the people were disciplined sternly. Nevertheless, God's forbearance is amazing. In spite of her sins and her grumbling, God never abandoned Israel.

4. God listens to the prayers of His people. Numbers contains several examples of dramatic intercession, especially by Moses. He prayed for the healing of his sister who had rebelled against his leadership (12:9-15). When the people rebelled at the report of the ten spies, Moses prayed for pardon on the grounds of God's reputation and merciful character (14:13-16).

5. God protects His people. The would-be curses of a pagan diviner were turned into blessings. Magical incantation and ritual, so feared in the ancient world, could not harm the people of the Lord. Sihon and Og, with mighty armies, were unable to prevail against Israel.

The Typology of Numbers

The book of Numbers is important to the Christian student for four reasons:

1. Numbers narrates the history of God's dealings with Israel at this vital stage of national development.

2. It provides the backdrop for later citations and allusions in Scripture.
3. Numerous illustrations of spiritual teaching are found here.
4. The book contains both Messianic prophecy and several types.

In his fourth oracle, Balaam utters a wonderful Messianic prophecy. He saw a ruler whom he called the "star" and the "scepter." This ruler would crush the enemies of his people. He would arise after Amalek had passed from the scene, after the Assyrian captivity, after the Greek conquest of Mesopotamia, and after the fall of the Greek Empire. In other words, Balaam foresaw the ruler arising during the days of the Roman Empire (Num. 24:15-24).

There are at least eight discernible types in Numbers:

1. The Nazarite of Numbers 6 may be a type of the Christian. A Nazarite took a voluntary vow to live a life especially consecrated to God.
2. Aaron's rod that budded (ch. 17) points to the resurrection of Jesus, which established His right to serve as the high priest of the new Israel of God.
3. The ashes of the red heifer (ch. 19) together with those of cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool were used to produce the waters of purification. So the benefits of the death of Jesus can be appropriated by obedience in the watery grave of baptism.
4. The brazen serpent (ch. 21) erected in the wilderness brought healing to snake-bitten souls. So the son of man, lifted up on a tree, brings spiritual healing to sin-smitten souls (Jn. 3:14).
5. The rock that quenched the thirst of millions of souls is also a type of Christ: "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).
6. The daily manna pictures the true Bread of Life Who later came down from heaven (Jn. 6:31-33).
7. The guidance and presence of Christ is seen in the pillar of cloud and fire (9:15-23).
8. The sinner's refuge in Christ may be seen in the cities of refuge (35:9-34).

523 Jesse Ave., Manteca, CA 95337

Bibliography

The New Open Bible: The New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1990.

Eason, J. Lawrence. **The New Bible Survey.** Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963.

Smith, James E. **The Pentateuch.** Joplin, Mo: College Press Publishing, 1996.

A Survey of Deuteronomy

by Duane Permenter

Some Jewish rabbis call Deuteronomy five-fifths of the law. We take the name Deuteronomy from the Greek Old Testament, the name meaning, "second law." Some rabbis call it the "The Book of Exhortations," but most call it by the first Hebrew word in 1:1, meaning "Words" or "These are the words." Deuteronomy is a repetition of the law, a repetition necessary because the Israelites entering Canaan were a new generation and did not hear Moses give the law at Mount Sinai forty years earlier (Archer). H. I. Hester says the main purpose of the book is:

... to get them to realize how much God had done for them, how dependent they were upon Him and the necessity of unswerving loyalty to Him forever. The burdens of this message were the penalties of disobedience and the rewards of obedience to God (Hester, p. 135).

The fact that New Testament writers quote Deuteronomy so often serves to illustrate the importance of this ancient book. Jesus also emphasizes the importance of Deuteronomy by quoting from it often in His ministry. A lawyer once came to Jesus and asked him which was the greatest commandment. Our Lord advanced a verse from Deuteronomy 6:5:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 22:37-40).

This survey of Deuteronomy covers eight different areas in the book that will help us better appreciate this inspired communication.

The Authorship

Most Bible scholars believe Moses was the inspired scribe of the book of Deuteronomy. Many internal (within the Bible) and external proofs support this conclusion.

First, the book itself claims about forty times that Moses was the author. Deuteronomy 1:1-5 reads, "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness . . . On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying . . ." Again, near the conclusion we read in Deuteronomy 31:9-10, "So Moses wrote this law and delivered it . . . And Moses commanded them, saying . . ." The text avers Moses' authorship of this ancient book.

Some scholars note that Moses did not write the first few verses of the book and could not have written his own epitaph at the conclusion. They then assume that this is proof positive he is not the author. The simplest and best resolution to this observation is that Moses' successor, Joshua, wrote both the introduction and conclusion of the book. This is not at all unusual. It occurs even in books published today. For instance, J. W. McGarvey wrote his commentary on Romans and finished the eighth chapter. He then expired and Pendleton finished the work. Yet, we still credit the commentary to McGarvey. The fact that Moses did not write the introduction or conclusion to the book of Deuteronomy does not take away from the Mosaic authorship any more than Pendleton's finishing McGarvey's commentary on Romans would mean that McGarvey did not write the first eight chapters.

Another amazing internal evidence concerning the authorship of Deuteronomy is the fact that Jesus and the New Testament authors cite passages from this book more than eighty times. Please note the following three examples.

First, in Luke 20:28, a Sadducee asked Jesus a question based on Deuteronomy 25:5-10. "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother." Both Jesus and the Sadducee in this place believe in the authenticity of the Mosaic authorship.

Second, when Peter was preaching in the book of Acts, he also quoted from this ancient writing and gave Moses the credit for its origin. The account is found in Acts 3:22, "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'" This quotation is from Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Third, the Apostle Paul also affirmed Moses to be the author in Romans 10:19, "But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation'" (cf. Deut. 32:21).

While these three examples are not exhaustive, they support the affirmation found within the scope of God's Word that Moses is the writer of this book. Moses truly is the author of Deuteronomy.

What about external proof? We could cite more, but Flavius Josephus should be adequate to prove that Moses wrote the book. Josephus concurs with the above passages that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy (Josephus, IV.8).

Since most of the people who read this manuscript already believe that Moses wrote this book, I will not present any more evidence, but simply refer

you to McGarvey's book on **The Authorship of Deuteronomy** in the bibliography at the close of this article.

The Time of Writing

Moses wrote this book at the end of the wilderness wanderings covering approximately a month's time, possibly in 1405 B.C. Deuteronomy 1:3 reads, "Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them." Deuteronomy 34:8 reads, "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended." Joshua 4:19 reads, "Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho."

Please notice that these verses state that Moses began his Deuteronomic speech the fortieth year, the eleventh month, and the first day of the month. After Moses died, the people mourned for him thirty days, then on the tenth day of the first month of year forty-one the people crossed over Jordan for the first time. Approximately seventy days passed from the beginning of Moses' speech until the people of Israel actually crossed over Jordan and ended their wilderness experience. Moses delivered this great book at the end of the journey, but before the people actually crossed the Jordan river (Smith).

For Whom Was the Book Written

Moses specifically wrote the book to the Israelites who were alive the day he gave it, Deuteronomy 5:1-3. Moses gave the law in its completeness to the children of Israel and their progeny. God never intended this to be for all people of all time. You may also refer to the book of Galatians and various other writings in the New Testament that support this fact.

God's Special People

The Israelites were to remember that they were God's special people, and they were to separate themselves from the wicked practices of the Canaanites. Unless they remembered this, they would never keep themselves from the great evil that had engulfed the Canaanites and most of the rest of the world. God gave the Israelites two guidelines that they might accomplish this great task.

First, Joshua and the people were to destroy all the Canaanite tribes, Deuteronomy 7:1-7. This command is often very difficult for us to understand. Please remember that God understands things we know nothing about. He has

a purpose and His purpose is always just, even if we do not understand it. Remember, too, that the Israelites did not obey this command—they did not totally destroy the Canaanite influence. Their disobedience in this regard resulted in God's people being influenced to great sin. God knew this in advance. Therefore, for their own good, He commanded the people to eliminate Canaan's influence. God's way is always best even when we do not understand.

Second, in order to enjoy God's blessing to its fullest, the Israelites were to put God's law in their hearts and lives, Deuteronomy 10:12-17. As with God's first guideline, they failed miserably and again suffered as a result.

Comparatively, we still see the same processes at work today. The strongest Christians are those men and women who have placed themselves in positions to be influenced by other Christians (for example, by marrying in the Lord) and who have carefully placed God's Word in their hearts. They have become the people God wants them to be.

Moses Changes the Law

The lifestyle of the people was about to change from wandering vagabonds to a settled nation in the Promised Land; consequently, Moses changes some laws that he had given at Sinai. C. F. Keil wrote:

The tendency of this book was simply to inculcate once more upon the people merely the principal contents of the earlier legislation, and to supplement it by appending various important laws in reference to the future residence of the people in the land of Canaan (p. 137).

New laws:

1. Deuteronomy 4:41-43, cities of refuge east of Jordan.
2. Deuteronomy 12:1-14, one place of worship.
3. Deuteronomy 12:11,17; 14:22; 26:12, special tithes appointed or sacrificial feasts.
4. Deuteronomy 13, laws dealing with false prophets, seducers, and individuals seduced to worship idols.
5. Deuteronomy 17:14-20, laws of the administration of the king.
6. Deuteronomy 18:1-15, laws for the prophetic office.
7. Deuteronomy 20, laws affecting war and military service.
8. Deuteronomy 21, laws for homicide where no one knew who committed the crime or how it took place, laws regarding female captives, laws regulating their practice of polygamy, primogeniture laws, laws dealing with rebellious children, a law concerning those punished by hanging.
9. Deuteronomy 22:13-30, laws relating to unchastity and rape.

10. Deuteronomy 24:1-4, law about remarrying a woman a man had already divorced.
11. Deuteronomy 27:2-8, erecting stones for a memorial of the law.
12. Deuteronomy 22:5; 23; 25, minor laws.
13. Deuteronomy 26, thanksgiving and tithing of the first fruits.

Some old laws extended:

1. Deuteronomy 15:12-18, this law expands the law found in Exodus 21:2, and it was concerning Hebrew slaves (Keil).

Outline of the Book

The book of Deuteronomy contains three different speeches delivered by Moses along with the appointment of Joshua, the song of Moses, and the epitaph of Moses.

Moses' first sermon is from Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43, and the theme is retrospective. Moses looked back in remembrance that obedience always brought great blessings to Israel. On the other hand, God's condemnation was always meted out to the people when they were disobedient. He reminded them that out of all the adults who left Egypt forty years earlier, only two were still alive to cross over Jordan, and the same fate awaited all who would disobey.

Moses' second speech (4:44-26:19) demanded introspection by each individual. This moral and legal speech is by far the longest portion of the book. The main purpose was for Israel to understand that their future depended on a right relationship with God. Moses informed them there were basically three categories of the law, (1) testimonies, chapters 5-11, (2) statutes, chapters 12:1-16:17, and (3) ordinances, chapters 16:18-26:19.

Moses' third speech (27:1-32:44) is prospective in nature, with the hope that Israel would understand that their destiny depended on the directive by which they would choose to live. The prophet explained the options of enjoying either God's infinite blessing or horrendous cursing. Chapter 28 speaks of Israel's history in advance with the hope that Israel might be spared the many curses disobedience would bring into their lives.

Moses also gave them a song to help them remember. This song was to serve as a great reminder of how good God had been to His people, and how important it was for them to stay faithful in the Promised Land.

This section also tells of Joshua's appointment as Moses' successor. Moses delivered a final word of caution and love to the people, and God commanded him to ascend Mount Nebo. Almighty God gave Moses a view of

the Promised Land and then he died. God buried Moses on the mountain in an unknown tomb.

Joshua evidently appended Moses' epitaph to the end of the book. It is interesting that Moses finally did enter the Promised Land during his appearance with Elijah to Jesus and three of His disciples (Mt. 17:1ff). We appropriately assume that Moses had been in the spirit world and brought back for this special appearance during the ministry of Jesus. This was the first time Moses was actually in the land of Canaan.

Important Prophecies and Comparisons

The book of Deuteronomy contains several important prophecies and comparisons that are a benefit to us in the gospel age. Please note three good examples.

First, in Acts 3:22-26, the Apostle Peter applied the "prophet like unto Moses" mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:14-20 to Christ. Stephen also mentioned this great prophecy in Acts 7:37 during his sermon to the court shortly before his death. In reality, Moses was a type of Jesus Christ in many ways. Victor Hoven enumerates some of these in his book, **Substance and Shadow**, pages 60-67:

1. The Lord providentially preserved both Moses and Jesus Christ at birth.
2. God sent both as a deliverer.
3. Both officiated as lawgiver and mediator.
4. Both worked as a builder of the Lord's sanctuary.
5. Both served as ruler and intercessor.
6. Both were distinguished prophets of the Lord.

Second, the cities of refuge, mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:41-43 and 19:1-13, bear an incredible comparison to our refuge in Jesus Christ (see also Num. 35:9-34; Josh. 20:1-9). The Lord appointed six cities, and it surely is not an accident that each city name has a definition that describes a particular aspect of our relationship in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 8:16-20 speaks of Christians' fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in Jesus Christ. This is a very interesting comparison to Jesus Christ. Following is a listing of the cities of refuge and their respective word meanings:

1. Kedesh, coming from the word "holy" (Robinson);
2. Shechem, meaning "back or shoulder" (Brown);
3. Hebron, meaning "league, association," which is very closely related to fellowship (Brown);
4. Bezer, meaning "remote fortress, fortification" (Brown);
5. Ramoth, meaning "high things, heights, or elevation" (Brown);
6. Golan, meaning "joy or exultation" (Brown).

Third, the kinsman's redeemer found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 is an important portrayal of the work of Christ (see also Lev. 25:24-34). The book of Ruth is a story illustrating this important part of the law. The following interesting note is found in **The New Open Bible** by Nelson: "The kinsman redeemer must be related by blood; be able to pay the price of redemption; be willing to redeem; and be free himself (Christ was free from the curse of sin)." This law speaks volumes about our redemption in Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy and Archaeology

Finally, the book of Deuteronomy has some interesting evidences found in the field of archeology. Please remember that archeology is not an exact science and is far from a perfect source to prove the Bible and its events. However, archeology does provide evidence that compliments investigation of the Scriptures.

First, in Deuteronomy 8:9, Moses said that Canaan was, "A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper." Some men of great learning scoffed at the idea of copper being found in Israel. Even in the twentieth century, many thought that copper in Palestine was only the unrealistic thinking of religious zealots. Nevertheless, in 1934, archeologist Nelson Glueck decided to look for evidence of copper and found it south of the Dead Sea. In fact, the evidence discovered probably dated from the mines of King Solomon (Free, p. 97).

Second, archaeology sheds light on the restriction concerning the offering of a kid in the milk of its mother mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:21 (see also Ex. 23:19; 34:26). In 1929, a farmer accidentally uncovered a subterranean passageway on the coast of Syria. This led to the discovery of the Ras Shamra tablets that contained information of a ritual in seeking the favor of a deity worshiped in Canaan in which they sacrificed the animal in the milk of its mother. While this does not prove beyond all doubt that the Bible is from God, it does support the historicity of it. The Lord knew in advance that Israel would be tempted to follow this ritual, and He forbade it before it was even a temptation for them (Free, pp. 122-123).

Conclusion

The Book of Deuteronomy reminds us how important it is to turn our lives completely over to God. Just as Moses taught the Israelites, Christians render heart, mind, body, and soul as sacrifice to the one and only true God of the universe. The way of security and peace for God's people in every age lies in their faithfulness to all His commandments. The great prophet Moses stated in Deuteronomy 10:16-17:

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

P.O. Box 80687, Midland, TX 79708

Bibliography

- Archer, Gleason L. **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.
- Brown, Francis. **The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon**. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979.
- Free, Joseph P. **Archaeology and Bible History**. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press Publications, reprinted 1969.
- Hester, H. I. **The Heart of Hebrew History**. Liberty, Mo.: The Quality Press, 1962.
- Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton. **A Survey of the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Hoven, Victor. **Shadow and Substance**. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1934, p. 60-67.
- Josephus, Flavius. **Antiquities of the Jews**. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1957.
- Keil, C. F. **Introduction to the Old Testament**. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted 1988.
- McGarvey, John William. **A Guide to Bible Study**. Hollywood: Old Paths Book Club, reprinted 1950.
- McGarvey, John William. **The Authorship of Deuteronomy**. Indianapolis: Faith and Facts Press, reprinted 1992.
- Robinson, George L. **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, "Deuteronomy." Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1956.
- Smith, James E. **The Pentateuch**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Publishing Company, 1992.
- Smith, William. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970, revised by Wilbur Fields, 1983.
- Waldron, Bob and Sandra. **You Shall Be My People**. Athens, Ala.: n.p., 1992.

Joshua

by J. Wayne McKamie

There are twelve history books in the Old Testament, Joshua being the first and the foundation of the twelve. The twelve books cover the period from the conquest of the land of Canaan through the end of the Old Testament history. Even the poetic and prophetic books that follow fall into this history.

The order of Old Testament books is evidently due to more than mere human selection. Genesis begins with God and leads us back to the origin of divine grace that binds itself by a covenant "ordered in all things and sure." Exodus tells the story of redemption; Leviticus of worship; Numbers of position in the ordered ranks of God's army; Deuteronomy of a more spiritual concept of the law of God; and the book of Joshua is an indispensable link in this chain that leads to the consummation of redemption.

The book of Joshua might be regarded as an appendix to the Pentateuch, although it was never actually joined to it as a part of the same work, standing in the same dependent relation to the writings of Moses as that in which Joshua stood to Moses himself—servant and successor. The book of Joshua contains the story of the extermination of the Canaanites, of the partition and settlement of Canaan, and of the noble work and military exploits of Joshua himself. It is, however, impossible to suppose that so much space should have been given to the record of these events, unless there were a deeper and holier purpose. Surely all these things happened unto them for ensamples (1 Cor. 10:11). There is a spiritual significance in this wonderful story, and there are significant parallels between the story of this book and the experiences of the church and the individual Christian—parallels so precise as to establish our faith in the Bible as one book, the production of one mind at sundry times and in divers manners.

An understanding of this story requires a timeline. First, there was the conquest of the land. Moses had led them out of the land of Egypt to the edge of the promised land. He died and the leadership passed to Joshua. The story of the conquest is covered in the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. The second part of the timeline was the settling of the people under the theocracy, a system of government in which God ruled as king. This would continue until the first human king was chosen, about 1043 B.C.

The selection of a king ushered in the monarchy during which there were three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. The account of their reigns are found in 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles.

The study of Joshua is the study of the first era, the conquest of the land. The title of our study is in English simply Joshua. In Hebrew it is **YeHoshu**, which means "Jehovah saves." In the second century Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word is **Yesus**, the word for Jesus. Jesus means "savior" (Mt. 1:21). Joshua in the Old Testament is the name for Jesus in the New Testament. Joshua was the savior of Israel under God (Acts 7:45; Heb. 4:8).

The author of the book was Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. Intimate biographical details of Joshua's life are given from the very outset that only he could have known. Joshua 24:26 records that the general himself wrote out his own farewell charge as quoted in the first twenty-five verses of the chapter.

Evidently the book was composed at an early date. According to Joshua 9:27, the Gibeonites "unto this day" were "hewers of wood and drawers of water; around the tabernacle, even as Joshua had appointed them." This could no longer be said in the reign of Saul in that the Gibeonites were massacred (2 Sam. 21:1-9). The careful reader will, however, note evidence of later editorial work in the inclusion of events that could not have occurred until after Joshua's death. We read the notice of his death (24:29-30) and the statement that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who lived after" (24:31). This inspired supplementary material may have been supplied through Eleazar or his son Phinehas.

The biblical record of Joshua's life breaks naturally into two major periods. In the first part, as the servant and minister of Moses, he worked side by side as Moses' assistant through the long weary years of the Exodus. In Exodus, he also appears as a military leader against the Amelekites. He journeyed with Moses up Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:13). He was one of the two faithful spies sent into Canaan. In many ways, he had proven his ability and loyalty to Moses, and thus to God (Ex. 17:10; 23:13; 32:17; Num. 13:8, 16; 14:38). Just before Moses died, he selected, instructed, and commissioned Joshua to succeed him. According to Josephus, Joshua was forty years of age when Moses laid hands on him to appoint him to official service.

The second part, he worked was primarily as an administrator in partitioning the land. In Joshua 1:1-8:

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto

Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

The purpose of the book is stated in two verses: one at the end of the conquest and the other in the last section.

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war (Josh. 11:23).

And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein (Josh. 21:43).

The purpose of the entire book is to demonstrate the faithfulness of God in performing what He had promised to Abraham. This was crucial to Israel as a nation. Three things were necessary in constituting a nation. One, a common people; two, a common law, which they received at Sinai; and three, a common land, which they did not yet have, but which they would receive in Canaan. The book of Joshua records the possession of that common land.

The immediate theme of this great book is conquest and settlement. In a higher vein, it concerns the irresistible power of God through His people in overcoming the world and taking possession of their promised inheritance. God would be with them and fight for them, only as they maintained a perfect trust in His strength and permitted no sin of disobedience to break their covenant relationship with Him.

The structure of the book is as follows. The first twelve chapters deal with the conquest of the land. There are two subdivisions in these chapters. Chapters 1-5 are concerned primarily with preparation for conquering the land. Those preparations included the three days' pause, circumcision of those born

in the wilderness, observing the Passover on the 14th day of Nisan, sending spies into the land, and moving to the Jordan.

Chapters 6-12 chronicle the campaigns during which the land was conquered. There were three major military campaigns. That was a glorious time in the history of Israel. Even we who are not conversant with military strategy are impressed! Joshua went in with a comparatively small army to face a fierce, war-like, and well-trained people. It seems preposterous to suppose that a nation of a few years' existence was so soon to dispossess nations that had gained the country by conquest and were prepared to fight for every inch of territory by the most advanced methods of warfare. Joshua's first move was to divide and conquer; he cut the land in half (ch. 6-9). He took Jericho and Ai. He then went to the south (ch. 10), and then proceeded toward the north (ch. 11). The summary of this activity is given in chapter 12. By that time, the will of the Canaanites had been broken, the land taken. Only a few pockets of resistance remained.

Chapters 13-21 are consumed with the blessings and trials of distributing the land among the twelve tribes. Chapter 13 records the assignment of land to the two and-one-half tribes (Reuben and Gad and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh) who had requested settlement east of Jordan, as promised by Moses. The remaining nine and one-half tribes were to be given their territory west of the Jordan. Joshua, assisted by Eleazar, the high priest, made the assignments. During this long process, Caleb reminded Joshua of the promise of Moses and got permission to claim Hebron in southern Palestine, land of the giant sons of Anak.

Chapters 14-15 record the first tribe to receive assignment of land was Judah, the strongest of all the tribes. Judah was given the center position of the entire land. This significant position was given because Jerusalem and Bethlehem would be there, and out of Judah would come the Christ and His church.

Chapters 16-17 record the assignment of land to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and the other half-tribe of Manasseh. The remaining seven tribe assignments are recorded in chapters 18-19.

In all the allotments and assignments of land, no land provision was made for the tribe of Levi. Levi's tribe was to be supported by tithes of the cattle and agricultural produce of all the other tribes. In addition, each tribe was required to furnish cities as homes for the Levites. In those forty-eight cities were six cities of refuge. This is recorded in chapters 20-21.

The determination of the particular land area and locality of each tribe was determined by the casting of lots before the tabernacle. God made the determination while Joshua managed that solemn appeal to providence. How

much past history and future destiny may have been figured into who got what and where is known only to God.

The epilogue of the book of Joshua is in chapters 22-24. Gone were the days of slavery in Egypt, gone were the weary years of wilderness wanderings. Their spears were now turned into pruning hooks. The battles were over. But sadly, the struggles and problems were not over. There were real dangers ahead. Apostasy, decline, disorder, and demoralization would plunge them into the "Dark Ages" of Hebrew history.

In Joshua's great farewell address to the elders and leaders of the nation in Shechem, he warned them of the danger of gradual mingling with those who remained in the land. They had not yet conquered all of the territory occupied by the pagans. They were relaxing too soon; they were compromising instead of conquering. Enemies would soon be seen as neighbors, trade would lead to social relations, and social relations would lead to marriage. They would lose their identity and forfeit their mission as a holy nation, a purchased people. Joshua exhorted the elders and leaders to become very familiar with the Word of God. He called upon them to publicly pledge themselves to observe God's law.

Having led them into the land and through years of war and settlement, the time had come for the elderly Joshua to drop the mantle of responsibility onto their shoulders. Among his parting words were these:

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive-yards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:13-15).

Shortly after the convocation at Shechem, Joshua, now "old and well stricken in years" (110 years of age), came peacefully to the end of his days. He was buried in his home city of Timnath-Serah in Ephraim. Strong, wise, and true to the great trust committed to his care by God and His people, he and his had served the Lord. Surely his greatest epitaph is furnished by the Holy Spirit himself: "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua" (Josh. 24:31). A scribe of ancient times closed the story, "Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh."

Addendum

There are three major problems in the book of Joshua that should be addressed. One, the moral problem of the extermination of the Canaanites; two, the harlot Rahab; and three, the day the sun stood still. We shall address these in that order.

Extermination of the Canaanites (Josh. 1-12)

In describing the siege and destruction of Jericho, Joshua 6:21 states, "and they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." That was exactly what Moses had been told to do, and the instructions had been the same for Joshua.

Liberals and critics of all ages have attacked this war with a vengeance. "That is religion? I cannot serve a god who would order such." "Surely this is not the god of the New Testament, the god whom I love and serve." The question of biblical holy war is a matter of concern to all of us.

A holy war was an ordered conflict with religious overtones rather than strictly political motivation of defense or expansion. God Himself is described as a man of war (Ex. 15:3), and one of His familiar titles is "Lord of Hosts." It was God who led the armies of Israel into battle. Although the term "holy war" is not mentioned in the Old Testament, divinely sanctioned war is mentioned with great frequency. Early on in the scriptures, exact principles for all phases of warfare are addressed (1 Sam. 14; 1 Kgs. 20; Josh. 8). Israel was never to fear an enemy's horses and chariots because the outcome of the battle would not be determined by mere military strength but by faithfulness to God and His Word (Deut. 20).

In accord with the holy war concept, Moses had outlined Israel's foreign policy (Deut. 20:10-18). Outside Canaan, surrender terms were somewhat negotiable: the enemy was offered death or forced labor. However, within Canaan, nothing was to be spared. God had promised the patriarchs the land of Canaan by means of holy war.

War in Israel had, in many instances, become the province of the king. The conquest of Canaan was a return to war as it was in pre-monarchical days. Citizen soldiers (rather than professionals), God (the Divine Warrior), along with the angel of Jehovah (ch. 5), fought with a heavenly army equipped with weapons of hail, lightning, storm, and earthquake (Josh. 6:20). In Jericho, God caused the walls to fall; in the battle against the northern kings, He caused the hailstones to fall only upon the enemy, and He (Who else?) caused the sun to

stand still. War in Canaan was a divine-human enterprise, with the spoils dedicated to God.

There were several distinctive marks of holy war:

- the war began at God's initiative;
- God gave the commands; the people obeyed;
- the Godhead fought for Israel;
- the war had both a moral reason and purpose.

In Deuteronomy 9:5, God explained why He required extermination:

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A further reason that they were to "save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20:16) is stated in Deuteronomy 20:18. "That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should you sin against the Lord your God" (see Deut. 12:31; 18:9-12). The people of Canaan were so degenerate and so committed to evil that God could no longer abide them. Their cup of iniquity was now full (Gen. 15:16).

God judges nations as he does individuals. It was judgment pure and simple. God moved through Israel to judge Canaan for their polytheism, their brutality, and their immorality; the deadly contagion had to be removed. Joshua carried out the judgment of God.

The sword devoured for seven years; and during the whole of that time, Israel lost but one battle and only thirty-six men. The single defeat came not from without but from within. There was sin in the camp.

The Account of Rahab (Josh. 2)

Joshua 2 records several events that are both interesting and challenging. Two spies entered the strategic city of Jericho, finding lodging in the home of a woman named Rahab the harlot. She welcomed them into her house even though she knew from whence they came and why they were there. The king of Jericho learned of their coming and attempted to find them. Rahab hid the spies, denied that she knew them, denied that she knew where they were, and told the king's men that the spies were gone and could possibly be overtaken. Rahab told the king's men an outright lie to protect the men of God. She made a re-cord covenant with the enemies of her own nation. In doing so she jeopardized her own life. Why did she lie to her own people? Is it possible to condone Rahab's action? Is this a case of situation ethics?

Two references are given in the New Testament to Rahab's faith. (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). In Hebrews, she is commended for her faith; in James, she is held up as an example of being justified by works. Was she justified? How was she justified? There are at least two major points of discussion in facing this problem. One, Rahab simply, some say, chose the lesser of two evils in that anything she would do would be wrong. If she handed over the spies, that would be wrong. If she lied about the matter, that would be wrong. Two, in that day there was a war ethic and a peace ethic, and it is argued that this incident could be justified during wartime in that deception was expected and allowed. Examples are given of David's feigning madness and Joab's shedding "the blood of war in a time of peace" (1 Kgs. 2:5). Rahab's actions were justified, it is argued, because it was a time of war.

Rahab was justified, but not by the human reason, situation ethics arguments above. Listen to the Bible. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:31). And James 2:25, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?" Rahab is written in faith's hall of fame, not because she lied (a lie is never justified), but because she believed in God and in the ultimate triumph of God's people; and upon the basis of that faith, she was willing to run a great personal risk to support what she believed. Her faith was at the root of her actions (cf. the account of the unjust steward, Lk. 16:1-8; Acts 4:19-20). Rahab knew that God had some forty years prior delivered His people from Pharaoh and had promised to give them the land; she believed it and identified herself with Israel by the scarlet cord.

Rahab not only found a place among the Israelites, but also in the genealogy of Christ! (Mt. 1:5). Rahab, wife of Salmon, mother of Boaz, who married Ruth, from whose son, Obed, Jesse the father of David came, through whose line was born the Christ, the Savior of men. Rahab—the muddy, the defiled—was part of the fountainhead of the river of the water of life. Rahab is the only woman, besides Sarah, named in Hebrews 11. What a manifestation of grace, faith, and works!

The Day the Sun Stood Still and the Moon Stayed (Josh. 10)

During the southern campaign, the men of Gibeon called on Joshua to honor the treaty they had made with him and assist them in a war being waged by a confederation of five Amorite kings. (They were trying to force Gibeon to side with them again.) Joshua immediately gathered his forces, traveled all night, and at dawn made a surprise attack on the Amorite forces. God turned the battle into a rout. As the Amorites fled for their lives, God cast great

stones upon them. The Israelites continued to pursue the Amorites throughout the day. During the course of this pursuit, Joshua, realizing that they would need more daylight time to avenge themselves, prayed to God before all Israel:

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves of their enemies (Josh. 10:12-13).

God listened to the voice of a man, and the sun stayed in the midst of the sky. It delayed about a whole day. There was no day like that before or after.

The proper understanding of the "long day" passage (Josh. 10:12-14) remains a problem until this day. Many theories by skeptic and saint alike have been advanced. Some of them are:

1. Instead of asking for a lengthened day, Joshua prayed that the sun and moon would be dumb or silent, i.e., cease their normal "speech" of shining.
2. Joshua asked for the sun and moon to stand in opposition at dawn as a sign or good omen of victory.
3. The language should be treated as poetic (v. 12), not literal.
4. The sun and moon standing still was a miracle of refraction (v. 13).
5. God blacked out the sun rather than allowing its continued shining.
6. The entire solar system was stopped, thus making Joshua's day twenty-three hours, twenty minutes; the other forty minutes is found in 2 Kings 20:8-11, where the sun went ten degrees backward as a sign to Hezekiah that his life would be extended.

There are other speculations that could be considered, but most of them simply seek to explain away the miracle that was performed.

The facts of Joshua 10 are the facts that must determine the answer. Joshua prayed that the sun might stand still. It is quite certain that Joshua prayed for a prolongation of that day. Verse 13 states that the "sun did not hasten to set for an entire day." It is certain that Joshua understood that his prayer had been answered. The "sun stood still and the moon stayed." Beyond these points it is not possible or necessary for a believer to go. It is enough.

Miracles were not meant to be explained by men; they were to be believed. It is not necessary for man to explain a miracle before believing the miracle. It is our work to ascertain what the text actually states, but it is beyond our ability to explain everything God does.

The matter is so beautifully addressed by R. C. Trench in *Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament*. He would have us observe:

1. That it is not more remarkable that the bodies which God has set for signs in the heavens should obey Him to do man service than that any other creature should obey Him for the same purpose. (God is the master of the candles that He has lighted.)

2. It is not surprising that God should have retained the noon daylight to execute His own purpose. God had before broken in upon the ordinary course of nature. The fountains of the great deep had broken up at the deluge; fire had rained from heaven upon Sodom and her sister cities; and if we believe the words of Christ and his apostles, not all the terrors of the flood and the rain of fire combined will bear comparison with the tremendous realities which shall break upon the world when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. 1:7).

3. Joshua aimed at God's glory. Had he respected but the slaughter of the Amorites, he knew the hailstones would do that alone; but he desired that it might be known that the sun and moon, their gods, were servants to the God whom they should serve." 1921 McKamie Rd., McGregor, TX 76657

Outline of the Book

I. Conquest of the land, 1:1-12:24

- A. Joshua's divine commission, 1:1-9
- B. Preparations to cross Jordan; spies saved by Rahab, 1:10-2:24
- C. The crossing of the Jordan River, 3:1-4:24
- D. Circumcision at Gilgal, 5:1-15
- E. Capture of Jericho, the assurance of victory, 6:1-27
- F. Failure at Ai; the putting away of sin and triumph, 7:1-8:29
- G. The altar at Mount Ebal; the solemn reading of the law, 8:30-35
- H. The alliance with the crafty Gibeonites (the first entanglement with the world), 9:1-27
- I. Conquest of southern Canaan, the battle of Gibeon, 10:1-43
- J. Conquest of northern Canaan, 11:1-15
- K. Summary of Joshua's campaigns, 11:16-12:24

II. Dividing of the inheritance, 13:1-22:34

- A. Joshua's instructions concerning the division, 13:1-7
- B. Assignment to the eastern tribes, 13:8-33
- C. Assignment to the western tribes, 14:1-19:51
- D. Appointment of the cities of refuge, 20:1-9
- E. Appointment of the Levitical cities, 21:1-45
- F. Eastern tribes dismissed to their homes, 22:1-34

III. Joshua's final charge to Israel, 23:1-24:33

Bibliography

- Archer, Gleason L. **A Survey of Old Testament History**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976.
- Brenton, Sir Lancelot C. L. **The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1851.
- Edersheim, Alfred. **The History of Israel and Judah**. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Henry, Matthew. **Commentary on the Whole Bible**. New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. **Commentary on the Old Testament and the New Testament**. Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans.
- Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. **Commentary on the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Lockyer, Herbert. **All the Men of the Bible**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- Lockyer, Herbert. **All the Women of the Bible**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Meyer, F. B. **Joshua and the Land of Promise**. London: Morgan and Scott.
- Spencer, A. D. M., and Joseph S. Exell. **The Pulpit Commentary**. Virginia: MacDonald.
- Tenny, Merrill C. **The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1976.

The Work of the Judges

by Michael Fox

The book of Judges is a compelling book and represents a crucial time in the history of the nation of Israel. Until recently, I viewed the book of Judges as nothing more than a tragic segue between the triumphant conquest of Canaan and the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. In reality, however, the book of Judges chronicles the struggle of Israel upon the death of Joshua to remain faithful to the law of Moses; while through the imperfections of the judges themselves the book demonstrates the ultimate necessity of a heavenly judge to deliver men from the oppression of sin.

The book of Judges can be divided into three main sections, as shown on the accompanying chart: Outline of the Book of Judges (p. 150). The first section is the General Introduction to the book, spanning Judges 1:1-3:6. This passage lays the foundation for what is to follow by establishing its historical context.

The Work of the Judges, comprising the body of the book, is found in Judges 3:7-16:31. This lengthy passage documents the work of the several judges.

You will notice that the list of judges in this survey is limited to those individuals mentioned in the book of Judges. First Samuel refers to Eli (1 Sam. 4:18) and Samuel (1 Sam. 7:15) as judges, but these men are beyond the scope of this study. Eli was, of course, a priest and a judge. Samuel, a tremendous figure in the Old Testament, was in the unique position of being the last of the judges and the first of the great prophets. I have also excluded Abimelech from the list of judges. Some scholars recognize him as a judge; others do not. I prefer not to include him because Abimelech, who appears following the story of Gideon and, incidentally, was one of Gideon's sons, was more of a usurper to the throne of Israel than he was a divinely appointed judge. With these few caveats, the accompanying survey provides a rather comprehensive overview of the work of the judges.

Some of the judges worked simultaneously, though in different regions. As we will discover shortly, there was not a great deal of cohesion and coordination between the twelve tribes during the time of the judges. The work of the first several judges through Jair likely occurred more or less in their order of appearance in the book. However, the work of the last several judges listed in the book, beginning with Jephthah and continuing through Samson, likely overlapped.

Outline of the Book of Judges

General Introduction	1:1-3:6
The Work of the Judges	3:7-16:31
Oppression of Mesopotamia	
Judge Othniel	3:7-11
Oppression of Moab	
Judge Ehud	3:12-20
Oppression of Philistia	
Judge Shamgar	3:31
Oppression of Canaan	
Judge Deborah	4:1-5:31
Oppression of Midian	
Judge Gideon	6:1-8:32
Judge Tola	10:1-2
Judge Jair	10:3-5
<i>General Introduction to the Oppression of Ammon and Philistia</i>	10:6-16
Oppression of Ammon	
Judge Jephthah	10:17-12:7
Judge Ibzan	12:8-10
Judge Elon	12:11-12
Judge Abdon	12:13-15
Oppression of Philistia	
Judge Samson	13:1-16:31
Appendix: "Every man did what was right in his own eyes"	17-21
Religious Decline of Israel	17:1-18:31
Moral and Civil Decline of Israel	19:1-21:25

The third section of the book, Judges 17-21, is an Appendix to the book, and it can logically be entitled "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." This statement appears twice in the book of Judges—at the beginning and at the end of this section (Jgs. 17:6; 21:25). This section, though it appears at the conclusion of the book of Judges, is in reality a preface to the book; it establishes the cultural climate of the book of Judges.

General Introduction to the Book of Judges **"They Did Not Drive Them Out Completely"**

Even the casual reader of Old Testament history perceives that the land of Canaan during the time of the judges was very different from that pictured in the book of Joshua. Following Joshua's death, Israel had no national leader for the first time in its young history. Further, whereas in the book of Joshua the people of the land were united in holy warfare, during the era of the judges the people were dispersed and disunited. The tribes shared little interaction. They seem to have lost their identity as a nation and, certainly, their shared passion to drive the Canaanites from the land.

According to the first chapter of the book of Judges, the people rallied after Joshua's death, and Judah, in particular, continued their conquest of Canaan. But the other tribes, and soon Judah as well, appear to have been content to have ignored the last "pockets of resistance" and indeed, in some instances, welcomed or at least tolerated the Canaanites as neighbors. In Judges 1:27-33, Scripture records:

But Manasseh did not take possession of Bethshean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. And it came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Accho, or the inhabitants of Zidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob. So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, or the inhabitants of Bethanath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and Bethanath became forced labor for them.

Why did Israel fail to drive the Canaanites from the land completely? The answer can be found in Joshua 23:1-14, a passage that features a promise God made to Israel. This is the first portion of Joshua's impassioned speech to the people not long before his death, the speech that would ultimately end with his stirring declaration, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Scripture says:

Now it came about after many days, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years. And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has been fighting for you. See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun. And the Lord your God, He shall thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you. Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, in order that you may not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day. For the Lord has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you. So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the Lord your God. For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the Lord your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you."

Israel's failure to remove the Canaanites from the land had nothing to do with a lack of desire or motivation. Rather, success in driving the Canaanites from the land was a blessing from God contingent upon their obedience to the Law of Moses. Again and again, throughout the four centuries of the period of the judges, the people of Israel proved disobedient to the law; consequently they forfeited God's promise of deliverance. God's warning to Joshua became

a reality: the nations of Canaan that remained in the land of promise became "a snare and a trap" to Israel.

Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger. So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed (Jgs. 2:11-15).

It must have been a demoralizing time to be an Israelite. Consider, as an example, the oppression of the Midianites during the time of the judge Gideon. The Midianites apparently never conquered the land *per se*. They simply made the Israelites objects of continual plunder. At harvest time, the Midianites rode in like schoolyard bullies and took everything. In fact, when Gideon was called to judge Israel, he was separating the wheat harvest in the place where they pressed the grapes in an effort to conceal himself from the ever-present eyes of the enemy. The people lived in terror of plunder. This continued for seven or eight years, until Israel acknowledged responsibility for their circumstances and repented.

Body of the Book of Judges: The Work of the Judges

Who were the judges and what was the nature of their divine assignment? The judges were not, as we might mistakenly assume from their title, civil magistrates. Rather, judges were men—and in one case a woman—appointed by God to deliver Israel from their oppressors once they repented of their disobedience.

Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do as their fathers. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them (Jgs. 2:16-18).

The judges, then, were those military leaders whom God used to fulfill His original promise to Joshua—the promise to “thrust” the nations out before Israel when Israel renewed their faithfulness to God (Josh. 23:5). Unfortunately, the faithfulness of Israel usually failed with the death of the judge, and before long the oppression began anew.

But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.” So the Lord allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua (Jgs. 2:19-23).

In the book of Judges, we observe a familiar pattern: a repeated cycle of (1) sin, (2) servitude, (3) sorrow and supplication, and (4) salvation. This pattern initially appears in the record of Othniel (Jgs. 3:7-11), the first judge:

Sin: “And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and the Ashteroth” (v. 7).

Servitude: “Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years” (v. 8).

Sorrow and Supplication: “And when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord” (v. 9).

Salvation: “The Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel son of Kenaz died” (vv. 9-11).

This pattern is evident not only in the record of the life and times of Othniel, but every other judge as well. And indeed this pattern also recurs in the fickle lives of God’s people today. Like the people who lived during the days of the judges, we sin and prove ourselves unfaithful to God. We sin, often owing to the influence of those with whom we surround ourselves. And our sin often results in disturbing consequences that prove oppressive. Solomon once wrote, “His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held

with the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22). Like the people who lived during the days of the judges, we have sold ourselves into servitude for the cost of our sin. And finally, when the consequences of our sin trouble us sufficiently, we lift our eyes heavenward in repentance and cry out for deliverance. And, unfortunately, all too often, like the people who lived during the days of the judges, the cycle eventually begins anew.

While there are several wonderful stories to be found among the exploits of the judges, few are as familiar and intriguing as that of Samson. The life of Samson serves as a bridge between the books of Judges and 1 Samuel. Samson and Eli the priest (featured in the first few chapters of 1 Samuel) were most likely contemporaries.

Samson was a child of promise, the son of Manoah and his wife, of the tribe of the Danites. He was born during a period of Philistinian oppression. When the angel of the Lord foretold of Samson's birth, he declared to the mother-to-be:

Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines (Jgs. 13:3-5).

There are two interesting observations I would like to share about Samson at the outset. The first regards the character of Samson's parents. The Israelites were in a period of servitude when Samson was born. This implies, based on the pattern we discovered earlier, that Israel had once again succumbed to sin. Yet, by all accounts, Samson's parents appear to have been good, humble, common people dedicated to serving the God of Israel. Manoah and his wife offer quiet testimony that there were men and women who, even during the period of the judges, remained faithful to the God of their fathers. The sweet story of Ruth, which also takes place in the time of the judges, affords similar evidence. In fact, it is encouraging to remember that throughout the history of God's people in the Old Testament and beyond, there always appears to be a faithful remnant prepared for God's service.

Second, Samson was destined from the beginning to be a unique child, a Nazarite "from the womb." A Nazarite was one who pledged a vow before God and agreed to certain conditions for the term of the vow. According to Numbers 6, these conditions included: abstaining from wine, strong drink, vinegar, and grapes; allowing the hair to grow uncut throughout the days of the vow; and not coming in contact with the dead. Interestingly, when the an-

gel repeated these conditions to Samson's mother, he neglected to mention the prohibition against touching the dead. In view of Samson's subsequent terrorizing of the Philistines, we can assume this prohibition was lifted in his case. It may be difficult for us to appreciate, but Samson was consecrated to God's service by a Nazarite vow, not just for a time, but for his entire life. Even his mother was commanded to abstain from wine while carrying Samson in her womb!

Our purpose will only allow the briefest survey of Samson's tempestuous life. In honor of Samson's vow, God blessed the judge with tremendous strength to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. His legendary exploits, detailed in Judges 13-16, have filled us with wonder since we were children. However, from the beginning Samson's strength of body was hindered by his weakness of character. When just a young man, Samson traveled to Timnath and soon was attracted to a Philistine woman. Imagine! Like a number of distracted young men since, Samson went home to his godly parents and demanded:

"I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me" (Jgs. 14:2-3).

Scripture does append this footnote to Samson's demand: "His father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines" (Jgs. 14:4). However, it would be a mistake to assume that Samson's pursuit of the young Philistine woman met with God's approval. In reality, God in His wisdom and mercy often uses the weaknesses and failures of His people to accomplish His purpose. In fact, throughout the history of Judges, God used the wars initiated by the judges to "test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly)" (Jgs. 3:1-2).

Samson's desire for the woman of Timnah is an early example—the first of many—of his lack of self-control. Yet, in spite of his occasional moral ineptitude, Samson wreaked havoc upon the Philistines. One interesting confrontation is found in Judges 15. Samson, betrayed by his father-in-law, destroyed the Philistines' grain, vineyards, and groves at harvest time. In retaliation, the Philistines murdered Samson's wife and father-in-law. Samson responded in revenge by striking the Philistines "ruthlessly with a great slaughter" (v. 8). Following the slaughter, the Philistines marched against

Judah, who cowardly surrendered Samson to the enemy. This incident demonstrates, first, the tribe's lack of unity and purpose during this time and, second, Samson's independence in his role as a judge.

The curtain closed on Samson's life in striking fashion. You know the story; you have likely known it since childhood. Samson was seduced into betraying the secret of his strength to Delilah the temptress. Children mistakenly assume Samson's hair possessed some magical property—when he was shaven, he lost his strength. Of course, that is not the case. When Samson allowed his hair to be cut, he compromised his Nazarite vow, and God withdrew His blessing. Samson was enslaved. His eyes were removed. He was sentenced to grind corn. But like a lot of us, when he reached bottom, he started looking upward and inward. He was blind, but he began to see more clearly than ever before. As he ground the corn, his hair began to grow; he renewed his vow to God. Since Samson's capture, the Philistines had felt safe, and perhaps had grown complacent. They dedicated a great feast to their god Dagon. After several days of drunken revelry, they decided to bring out Samson, the humiliated warrior, to entertain them. Samson must have looked horrible. The crowds, numbering in the thousands, cheered as he was chained between two of the pillars in the temple. They had no idea that God had rewarded Samson's repentance with renewed strength. The Philistines had brought Samson out to entertain them, and the man of God brought down the house. With a prayer on his lips, he pulled on those magnificent columns. The building rumbled as it lost its support. Tons of debris fell upon Samson and his captors. In a startling conclusion to a tempestuous life, "the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life" (Jgs. 16:30).

Two final observations from Samson's life deserve our attention. First, although Samson is not biblically recognized as a type or shadow of Jesus, there are striking comparisons: both were conceived following the prophetic proclamation of an angel; both were born under unusual circumstances; both were commissioned by heaven to deliver people from oppression; both were rejected by the very people whom they sought to deliver and indeed handed over to the enemy; both sacrificed themselves in death for the redemption of the people. Although he often appeared to be morally destitute, Samson in many respects prefigured the Christ. And, for that matter, all of the judges demonstrated, both through their weakness and their strength, the ultimate need for a heavenly deliverer to redeem men and women, not from political oppression, but from the oppression of sin. Second, it is encouraging to those of us who share Samson's tender humanity that, in retrospect, he was eulogized with other imperfect judges as heroes of faith:

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight (men of whom the world was not worthy) (Heb. 11:32-39).

Appendix to the Book of Judges

"Every man did what was right in his own eyes."

Judges 17-21 forms an intriguing, but disturbing, appendix to the book of Judges. Although this passage appears at the end, it is in reality a preface to the book. According to Judges 20:28, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was the high priest of Israel at the time of the incidents described in this lengthy passage. This knowledge helps us establish the historical context of this appendix, for we know that Phinehas followed his father Eleazar as high priest at the close of the book of Joshua (Josh. 22).

This appendix features two stories that illustrate the cultural decline in Israel following the death of Joshua. Conscientious people find these two stories troubling; but, remember, their inclusion in Scripture does not imply God's approval of the actions taken by His people. They merely manifest Israel's religious and moral state during the days of the judges. The passage begins and concludes with this thematic statement: "Every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Jgs. 17:6; 21:25).

The religious decline of Israel (Jgs. 17:1-18:31)

Before we proceed, let us make a few preliminary observations of Israel's religious state at the time of the judges. First, we know that Phinehas was the high priest at the commencement of the book of Judges, and Eli served in the office at its close; but in the nearly four centuries of history represented in the book, there is no mention of any intervening high priests. Second, the tabernacle—so central to Israel's previous history—is mentioned only in passing in the book of Judges (Jgs. 18:31; 20:27). Third, there is evidence of idolatry even in the worship offered by the judges. For example, Gideon was a gallant judge and, by all accounts, a humble man. He was earnest in his conviction to serve God: Gideon's first act as judge was to destroy the idolatrous altar in his hometown. (Incidentally, his own people reacted by attempting to kill him.) Yet, at the end of the story of Gideon, he fashions for himself an idolatrous ephod!

Having made these observations, notice the first story featured in the appendix. The religious decline of Israel is illustrated by the story of Micah, a man of Ephraim and a Levite. Micah was apparently a wealthy man. In his home, he fashioned a shrine featuring an ephod and household idols. One day Micah met a Levite and, in exchange for the promise of a healthy salary, commissioned the Levite to become his personal priest. Upon reflection, one might wonder, as scattered as the Israelites were at this time, if the Israelites were paying their obligatory tithes to the Levites. Was Micah's "priest" tempted to compromise his integrity in order to provide for himself? These are intriguing questions, but questions for which we have no answer. One more detail about Micah's Levite merits observation: the majority of modern versions identify the Levite as a member of the tribe of Manasseh (Jgs. 18:30). Many scholars agree, however, that the Hebrew text was altered by the Jews. Ancient versions suggest he was a grandson of Moses. Scholars theorize the Jews were ashamed that a grandson of Moses would compromise the integrity of the priesthood, so they altered the text to conceal the Levite's identity!

The moral and civil decline of Israel (Jgs. 19:1-21:25)

This is the story of a man, an Israelite, who was travelling in the company of his concubine. As the shades of evening closed upon them, they stopped at Gibeah of Benjamin for the night. That night the men of Gibeah brutally raped and murdered the man's concubine. The traveler was so incensed—there is no way to phrase this delicately—he cut the dead woman into small pieces and sent a portion of her to every tribe of Israel. The other tribes were enraged at their Benjamite brethren. The men of Israel united with one purpose—a rarity in the days of the judges—and fell upon Benjamin. The tribe was virtually destroyed. The story of this incident is tragic: the immorality, the brutality of the crime, the civil war that erupted between the tribes. This story is demonstrative of the reasons why the days of the judges are referred to as the "Dark Ages" of Israel.

Conclusion

If there is one underlying lesson from the book of Judges to be learned by contemporary Christians, it is this: the danger of complacency and compromise. The people of Israel during the days of the Judges neglected God's law. They settled comfortably in the land of promise. Their enemies became their neighbors. They socialized. They engaged in business. Their sons and daughters intermarried. They adopted their religious customs. Israel did not have strong, consistent leadership to rally the people in obedience to God's Word. Soon, there was little distinction between the people of God and the Canaan-

ites. Remember Paul's warning, "These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the age have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). *P.O. Box 9144, Auburn, CA 95604*

Ruth

by Wayne Fussell

Benjamin Franklin was once ridiculed in Paris for his defense of the Bible. Mr. Franklin was determined to find out just how much the scoffers had read the Bible. He announced one day to a learned group that he had run across a story of ancient times that greatly impressed him and he would like the opinion of the group. They agreed and it was arranged for him to read the story to an assembly of scholars. Franklin read the book of Ruth. When he finished, the scholars were so enthusiastic they asked him to put it into print. To this he replied, "It is already in print. It is part of the Bible you ridicule."

In the entire range of biography, there is no literary work comparable to the idyllic simplicity, tenderness, and beauty of the story of Ruth. There are only two books out of the sixty-six books of the Bible named after women, Esther and Ruth. Both have enchanted readers through the ages. Jews have a special regard for both books. Esther is read at the Feast of Purim and Ruth is read at the Feast of Pentecost annually.

It is interesting to note that since ancient times "Ruth" has been one of the favorite names for girls. Elsdon C. Smith, in his compilation of the first one hundred names in America, places "Ruth" seventh in the list. He says that almost one and one-half million girls and women bear this name. No doubt, it is because of the exalted character of this great lady. Goethe labeled this book, "the loveliest, complete work on a small scale." MacArthur writes: "What Venus is to statuary and the Mona Lisa is to paintings, Ruth is to literature." Willard W. Winter remarks, "The book Ruth is tucked into the Canon of the Old Testament in a spot where it is like a breath of fresh air in a room which has become heavy with strong odors" (p. 578). Ruth is truly a rare literary gem that can be read in about fifteen minutes.

Ruth is an inspired historical short story. It is also a beautiful love story. Ruth is not the conventional man-woman kind of love story (although it includes that); it is a love story of a much broader sense. It is a story of many good people who love and care for each other; and behind, beneath, and encircling it all, is the love of God. In Ruth, love and concern are everywhere. There is not an unkind person or villain in the book. The characters are ordinary people showing love to family members and even to strangers.

In this superb narrative, we meet some unforgettable characters like Naomi, a grieving widow who looks after her daughters-in-law. We meet Ruth, who leaves home and risks safety to care for Naomi, her mother-in-law.

We are introduced to Boaz, who shows kindness to the foreigner. Ruth, and eventually marries her. And then, behind the scenes, guiding and protecting, we see God whose love is stronger and broader than many would ever suspect.

The book of Ruth is indisputably a "short story." It occupies only four chapters in the Bible. In the first five verses, the author moves quickly and directly into his story. He sets the scene, introduces two or three main characters, and sets up the problem. In the remaining verses, he shows us about the characters' personalities, leads us to identify with them, moves the plot along, and hints at the possibility of a happy ending.

The Author

Jewish tradition credits Samuel as being the author. This is plausible since Samuel did not die until after he anointed David as King (1 Sam. 16:6-13). David is mentioned in the lineage of Ruth (Ruth 4:17, 22). However, there is neither internal nor external evidence proving the identity of the author. Most commentators say the author is unknown, but many lean to Samuel.

Date of Writing

It is argued that since David is mentioned in the book and not Solomon, the book was written shortly before or during the reign of David. David reigned from 1011-971 B.C. Nelson's Bible Dictionary places the date of the book around 990 B.C. Willard Winter puts the date at 1015 B.C.

The Setting

The first verse of the book sets the time of the story: "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled . . ." (Ruth 1:1). The judges ruled from about 1370-1041 B.C. These were terrible times in Israel when God's people were on a virtual spiritual roller coaster. At times, they were worshiping God according to His will; at other times, they engaged in idolatry and every evil practice. More than once, the book of Judges declares that "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jgs. 17:6; 21:25). That was their standard of authority. The story covers about twelve years: ten years in Moab (1:1-18); several months in Boaz's field (1:19-2:23); one day in Bethlehem and one night on the threshing floor (3:1-18); and about a year in Bethlehem (4:1-22).

The story begins with a series of tragedies. First, there was a famine in Bethlehem. This famine is not mentioned in the book of Judges. MacArthur believes the famine was during the judgeship of Jair, who ruled from 1126-1105 B.C. (Jgs. 10:3-5). The famine was so severe that the family of Elimelech decided to move to Moab where food was more plentiful. Then another

misfortune struck the family: the father, Elimelech, died, leaving his wife and two sons. The sons married, but they soon died also. This left three widows with no means of support. The younger women could return to their families, but Naomi could only hope for help from relatives back in Bethlehem. Therefore, she prepared to return to her native land. She allowed her daughters-in-law to accompany her for a time, but stopped short of allowing them to go all the way. She paused and pled with Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab. She knew the problems they would have as Moabites in Canaan. She stressed that there was little chance of their finding husbands.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me (Ruth 1:8-13).

What a moment that was for those three widows as they stood at the parting of the ways. No doubt they had a deep love for one another. Orpah finally made the decision to return to Moab to live with her family.

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law (Ruth 1:14-15).

Ruth then made that notable statement of love and devotion that has been quoted often at weddings to declare undying love:

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

In this statement, we see a depth of love in Ruth that is unfathomable. Alexander Whyte considered the depth of this love in this statement:

Ruth's love for her dead husband's aged mother is as pure as gold and as strong as death. Many waters cannot quench Ruth's love. And

her confession of her love, when she is constrained to confess it, is the most beautiful confession of love in all the world.

Ruth's statement reflects the purest and most unselfish form of devotion. This is especially true when we remember that Naomi was probably more than twice the age of Ruth. And then, proverbially, it is not supposed to be easy to love your mother-in-law. In this age of strained relationships, broken homes, and loveless lives, it is refreshing to contemplate this charming picture of loyal devotion of a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law.

Ruth in Canaan

The record reads, "When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem" (Ruth 1:18-19). The trip to Canaan was between fifty and seventy-five miles—a short trip for us today. But to these two widows, in those far-off days when they had little or no transportation, it was quite a journey on foot. Naomi and Ruth descended from an altitude in Moab of 4500 feet to the Jordan valley, and then ascended 3750 feet through the hills of Judea to Bethlehem. The trip was dangerous and took several days.

Naomi's return to Bethlehem caused quite a stir. Quickly it passed from lip to lip that the well-known, beautiful, and pleasant lady who left ten years before was back. "And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?" (Ruth 1:19). Why did they ask this question? Was there a radical change in her appearance? Without doubt, her friends found it hard to believe that this was the beautiful woman who left them ten years earlier. Then she was clothed well; now she is clad in poor and sorrowful dress. Her brow is wrinkled and her back is bent. At her side is a foreigner to share her fate. Could this be Naomi?

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? (Ruth 1:20-21).

"Naomi" means "pleasantness"; "Mara" means "bitterness." Naomi had suffered bitter times. Once she was "full," having everything; now she is "empty," having nothing. In effect, she is saying, "The pleasantness and joy of life are over for me, my dear ones have passed away, bitterness and sadness are now my lot." With what a pessimistic outlook she enters her homeland! She blamed her misfortune on the Lord. How very human!

Ruth, the Humble Gleaner

Ruth was poor, but unashamed. She asked her mother-in-law to permit her to glean in the fields that they might eat.

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech (Ruth 2:2-3).

The character of Ruth comes out strongly here. She does not hesitate to face hard work to provide for Naomi and herself, nor is she too proud to condescend to a work that might seem humiliating. We see energy, honesty, and loyalty beautifully exhibited by this lovely young lady. There was a law that the poor were allowed to "glean" what the reapers left (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21). Ruth had the good fortune to glean in the field of Boaz, the good and wealthy kinsman of her father-in-law. The writer says, "her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." In the margin of my Bible it has "hap happened," suggesting that it just so happened. Or did it? Was there an Unseen Hand here? I am persuaded so. There is no such thing as "luck" in God's great scheme of things. God's providence was at work.

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house (Ruth 2:4-7).

We see something of the character of the wealthy and powerful Boaz. He was not the slave-driver type. He had a kind and friendly rapport with his servants that was displayed in the greeting, "The Lord be with thee." His servants were more than servants to him—they shared mutual respect for one another.

Then Ruth caught his eye. He said, "Who is this damsel?" Nothing is said about the appearance of Ruth, but most commentators choose to believe she was a beautiful young lady. Later, we will hear Naomi tell Ruth to adorn herself so as to attract Boaz. A good report is given by the steward to Boaz. He tells who she is and the diligence with which she had worked all day.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust (Ruth 2:8-12).

What a testimony to the reputation of this young woman! She was industrious, loyal, and godly. She had placed herself under the "wings" of the Almighty—and it showed.

Boaz now made provisions for Ruth's future gleanings. He told her to glean only in his field and to work alongside his female servants. He made sure no man "touched" her in a hostile or immoral manner. He instructed his reapers to purposely drop extra sheaves for Ruth's benefit. She was to eat at his table alongside his workers. By evening, she had gathered "an ephah of barley," equal to "three pecks and three pints. It was almost a bushel" (Winter, p. 604). This is considerably more than a day's supply of grain. Ruth was thrilled. She rushed home to report her good fortune to Naomi.

And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed. And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen (Ruth 2:18-20).

Notice how Naomi's pessimistic attitude is becoming more positive. Naomi knew that good things were happening and better things were to come.

Ruth gleaned the fields of Boaz until the harvest was over. Barley harvest began about mid-April, and wheat harvest extended to mid-June. Harvest began right after Passover and usually coincided with the seven weeks of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks.

"Rags to Riches"

As Naomi said, it turned out that Boaz was a near kinsman, and he could befriend Mahlon, Elimelech's son, and the husband of Ruth. There was a pervading law of Israel regarding the preservation of families. The Levirate Law stated that when a husband died without children, the nearest brother-in-law might be called upon to perform the duties of husband and raise up seed for the deceased (Deut. 25:5-6). In Ruth's case, there was no brother-in-law. Elimelech and Naomi's sons were dead. Thus, the nearest kinsman could be called upon to act as "redeemer" for the unfortunate. Boaz was a near kinsman, but not the nearest. In Naomi's mind, Boaz was the likely one for Ruth; so a plan was conceived to arrange for Boaz to fulfill the Levirate Law for Ruth.

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do." So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative." Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning." So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it." And

when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city (Ruth 3:1-15, NKJV).

This was quite an elaborate plan, but it worked. It is plain that God also had a hand in it. Please take note of the delicacy with which the author tells the story. He is telling a love story of two very honorable people, Ruth and Boaz. Nothing improper or immoral was done, and Boaz wanted no stain on his or her reputation. She waited until just before dawn to leave. He did not want her traveling at night; neither did he want their honor to be compromised.

When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi said,

Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day (Ruth 3:16-18, NKJV).

How right she was! She knew the integrity of this man. There was one difficulty in the plan. Boaz informed Ruth that he was not the nearest kinsman and that the nearest kinsman must be given first refusal. Early the next morning, he appeared at the "gate" and assembled the necessary ten town elders. This is where legal issues were settled. The nearer kinsman arrived and the proposal was made. Boaz announced that Naomi's land was up for sale. The nearer kinsman had the right and obligation of the land and Naomi's care. The man agreed. Then Boaz laid the bombshell on him that the deal included Ruth. He would have to support Naomi and Ruth and have a son by Ruth. According to the law, that son would eventually inherit the land. At this point, the man reconsidered. He reasoned that the land would not do his present children any good. Thus, the man relinquished his rights to Boaz and Boaz gladly accepted.

Boaz and Ruth married. What a happy union it was. A son was born and his birth was credited to Mahlon, the deceased son of Naomi and Elimelech. Naomi now had a family and a descendant to carry on for their family. The son's name was Obed, whose name appears in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:5). He was the grandfather of King David. "Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David" (Ruth 4:22). Ruth had an important part to play in biblical history. In addition to being a great lady, she was an ancestor of Jesus.

Purposes and Lessons of Ruth

Some say the purpose of the book of Ruth is to give a biographical sketch of the righteous ancestors of David and then of Christ Himself. Zerr writes:

The special use of the story is to show the reader a connecting link in the chain of Christ's ancestors. So in the conclusion of the book the

writer goes back to the generations starting with Judah and brings them down to David who became the famous ancestor of Christ through two of his sons, Nathan and Solomon. One of these sons produced the line that came down to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as recorded in Luke 3. The other, Solomon, produced the line that came down to Joseph, the husband of Mary (p. 386).

In Ruth 4:18-21, the writer mentions ten generations. This representative genealogy spans nine centuries from Perez (1885 B.C.) to David (1040 B.C.). The first five (Perez to Nahshon) cover the patriarchal times to the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings. Salmon to David cover Joshua's lifetime and the judges to the monarchy. The list does not include every son. "Son" in the genealogical list can mean simply a descendant. "The purpose of a family record was not necessarily to include every generation, but rather to establish incontestable succession by way of the more notable ancestors" (MacArthur).

Going back to Perez establishes that David's lineage extends further back through Judah (Gen. 49:8-12), Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17), and Isaac (Gen. 26:24), to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Thus, the book of Ruth serves a very important purpose in establishing the lineage of David and also Jesus.

One interesting side note: Salmon was the husband of Rahab the harlot, according to Matthew 1:5. It has been suggested that Salmon might have been one of the two spies befriended by Rahab and that he ended up marrying her. That would be quite a story! The record says, "Salmon begot Boaz." MacArthur notes: "Since Matthew 1:5 lists Rahab the harlot, who lived ca. 1425-1350 B.C. as Salmon's wife, it thus indicates that some generations have been selectively omitted between Salmon and Boaz (ca. 1160-1090 B.C.)."

There are several purposes which may be served by this beautiful little book. Some feel the main thrust of the book is to break down barriers of national and racial prejudice. Ruth is called the "Moabitess" often in the book. There seems to be special stress on this fact. It shows that God cared about the Gentiles even in the time when the Jews were His chosen people. Here is a Gentile woman who appears in the lineage of Jesus the Savior of the world. The book surely shows the hand of God in the affairs of men and women. God brought Ruth to precisely the right field where she could meet Boaz. The book of Ruth proves that God cares about and uses women in carrying out His divine plan. It emphasizes the benefit of loyalty, honesty, integrity, diligence, and trust. It presents an example of steadfast, dutiful godliness.

Someone has suggested the book proposes some powerful challenges for the dedicated Christian today:

- Following the Lord takes definite choices.
- Following the Lord often means leaving behind things that were once dear.

- Following the Lord demands constant discipline.
- Following the Lord offers incredible rewards.

Conclusion

Everyone loves a success story. The story of Ruth is unquestionably a success story. It is a "rags to riches" story. It is an incredible love story. But above all, it is a powerful narrative that reveals the wonderful providence of God. It assuredly proves that "all things work together for good" for the one who serves God (Rom. 8:28). *6126 Land O' Trees, Shreveport, LA 71119*

Bibliography

- Clarke, Adam. **Clarke's Commentary**. New York: Abingdon Press.
- DeHoff, George W. **DeHoff's Commentary**. Murfreesboro, Tenn.: DeHoff Publications, 1977.
- Ellicott, Charles. **John Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume II**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.
- Henry, Matthew. **Matthew Henry's Commentary**. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1845.
- Jamieson, Robert. **Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: A Commentary**. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 1802.
- Lockyer, Herbert, Sr. **Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary**. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.
- Lockyer, Herbert. **The Women of the Bible**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.
- MacArthur, John. **The MacArthur Study Bible**. Nashville: Word Bibles, 1997.
- Morison, James. **The Pulpit Commentary**. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- Unger, Merrill F. **The New Unger's Bible Dictionary**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988.
- Winter, Willard W. **Bible Study Textbook Series**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1969.
- Zerr, E. M. **Bible Commentary**. Marion, Ind.: Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1947.

Social Life in Israel

(Judges to the United Kingdom)

by Richard Bunner

When asked to do a presentation on the social life in early Israel, I thought, "This won't be hard at all." Volumes have been written on this subject, and my job would simply be to condense the material available into a manageable size. Then I learned that a specific period was under consideration, namely the transition from the period of the judges to the United Kingdom. Suddenly my task became more demanding because there are no volumes of literature that focus on this period. We will begin our study with a brief synopsis of Samuel's life and then proceed to a consideration of Israelite social life during this period.

Samuel

A study of the man Samuel is important for our Old Testament survey. No matter how one would categorize him, he truly was a great man. He may have been the second most influential man in all of Old Testament history. He is the bridge between the period of the judges and the United Kingdom. Consider the following facts.

Do you know what Sarah, Rebecca, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, and Elizabeth had in common? All were barren; all prayed to God; all were blessed with special children in God's plan. Samuel was born to Hannah. Hannah promised to dedicate her son to God's service before he was ever conceived, and she kept her promise.

Three of the children who are mentioned above were consecrated from conception under a Nazirite vow that was to last all of their lives. They were Samson (Jgs. 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11), and John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15).

It is fitting that the book of Samuel follows the books of Judges and Ruth since Samuel was the last of the judges in Israel (1 Sam. 7:15). As a judge, he ruled in Israel, led military campaigns, and reconciled the lives of the Israelites to God. He was a contemporary of Samson who also was a judge in Israel. This is especially interesting since both men share the characteristics mentioned above. The similarities seem to end here though as their lives take different courses.

Samuel was called to be a prophet. The account of his call in 1 Samuel 3 is a favorite story of many. Here we read, "In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions." Deborah the prophetess and two un-

named prophets (Jgs. 6:8; 1 Sam 2:27) are the only prophets mentioned during the entire period of the judges. God's revelations were also scarce. But from this time forward the prophetic office would play an important role in the lives of the people of Israel. The Israelites recognized this as the beginning of a prophetic era. Thus, we read passages from the New Testament, "After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13:20), and "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24).

Although 1 Samuel 1:1 says that Elkanah, the father of Samuel, was an Ephraimite, we understand that he was actually of the tribe of Levi. He lived in a town in Ephraim that had been allotted to the Levites (see Josh. 21:20-21; 1 Ch. 6:22-26). This explains how Samuel was allowed to minister at the Tabernacle and then later take on priestly functions when Eli's house fell apart. Psalm 99:6 groups Samuel with Moses and Aaron as great intermediaries between God and Israel. In Jeremiah 15:1, the Lord credits Moses and Samuel as being the most influential intercessors that ever stood before Him.

Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel, and years later he would anoint David, "the man after God's own heart," as the second monarch over God's people.

It gives us great pleasure to see Samuel's name recorded in Hebrews 11. He, who tirelessly labored all of his life and served unceasingly to teach God's people holiness and righteousness, has been credited as being faithful. We applaud him as a man who walked by faith and is an example for all.

The Geography of Palestine

In order for us to understand the life of the Hebrew people, we must first have some understanding of the geography of the land in which they lived. We can clearly distinguish at least nine characteristics of the land of Palestine:

1. The coastal plains, especially of Sharon and Philistia;
2. The mountainous backbone of western Palestine, distinguished in the Bible by locality as the "hill country" of Galilee, Ephraim, or Judah (Josh. 20:7);
3. The "lowland" (shephela) or the foothills between the Philistine plain and the elevated Judean plateau (Josh. 11:16);
4. The "South" (Negeb, "the dry"), which is the gradual descent of the Judean plateau into the desert;
5. The "wilderness," the dry, rounded hills on the east of the Judean plateau, descending in three great terraces to the Jordan valley below;
6. The Jordan valley, the deep depression known as the Arabah, running from Mt. Hermon to the Gulf of Akabah;

7. The great plateau of Bashan, Moab, and Edom, climbing very abruptly on the western side, but edging off into the desert;
8. The plain of Esdraelon, which breaks the continuity of the mountain range of western Palestine;
9. The three mountains, Mt. Hermon, Mt. Carmel, and Mt. Gerizim.

These closely knit plains, valleys, plateaus, gorges, and mountains afforded, on the one hand, a wonderful variety of climate and product; and fashioned, on the other, many little pockets of land, each capable of supporting a group of people who were secluded enough to be able to develop in their own individual way (Sanders, Frank Knight, *History of the Hebrews*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914).

The Rechabites, who, at the command of their ancestor, preserved their desert asceticism for two and a half centuries (Jer. 35:1-10), were no anomaly. All kinds of people could live and grow side by side in Palestine. The conditions fostered independence rather than imitation. This explains the slowness of the actual conquest and the long continuance of such foes as the Jebusites at Jerusalem, who maintained their independence until the days of David's kingdom.

As the period of the judges draws to a close, the Hebrews have become well-established in their permanent homes, mainly on the hills. They were in four rather distinct sections. A little wedge of Canaanitish cities still intervened between the southern tribes of Judah and Simeon and the central tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. The plain of Esdraelon divided the central tribes from those in the north, Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, Asher, and Dan. The cities that had once made a hostile zone of defense had been captured or weakened, yet the plain remained a natural barrier. The fourth group, Reuben and Gad, or Gilead, occupied the country east of the Jordan. This four-fold distinction continued as long as the Hebrews did. In New Testament times the divisions were called Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea.

It is generally conceded that the book of 1 Samuel and the book of Judges overlap in their history. Jephthah probably ruled while Samuel was a young man, and Samson may even have been born after Samuel was born. The attacks that had been led by the various nations surrounding Israel had diminished considerably with the exception of the Philistines who had begun to show their strength and aggressiveness. The Israelites were either very democratic and for this reason hesitated to acknowledge one permanent leader, or they were very independent and enjoyed their unique arrangement in the land. They showed, however, that they cherished a sense of unity and could unite when a need arose. As the Philistines became a greater threat, the desire and need for a coalition among the tribes became greater.

Jacob's family had gradually made a transition from nomadic shepherds to a sophisticated agricultural society. This change from pastoral to agricultural life opened a new and enticing world of experience to the Hebrews. The Canaanite nations represented a higher stage of social efficiency, and this had a powerful influence on the Israelites. Gradually the twelve tribes began conforming to the world around them in their lifestyle and thinking.

While Israel believed in Jehovah, it appears they also recognized other deities. Sometimes they were very loyal to the Lord; at other times they compromised their faith and served idols. Even at the times they were faithful, it seems that they had difficulty knowing how to serve Him. Thus, we read of sanctuaries at Dan (Jgs. 18:30), Ophrah (Jgs. 8:27), Mizpah (Jgs. 11:11), Bethel (Jgs. 20:18), and Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:3).

The Tent of Meeting had been erected in Shiloh in Joshua's day (Josh. 18:1). Shiloh, along with Nob (1 Sam. 21:1), was probably destroyed shortly after the death of Eli (Jer. 7:12-15; Ps. 78:60-61). These were critical days for the religion that had been delivered at Sinai. If false religion and worldliness did not overcome God's people, ignorance of His will would.

A Short Story

[The following short story is offered as a means to illustrate what life in Israel was like during the pre-monarchial period.]

Ira slowly rose up from the tree where he had been resting. He had decided this morning to graze his sheep near the headwaters of the Aijalon. A couple of other herdsmen were nearby, but for the most part it was quiet and peaceful today. The Philistine armies had apparently moved out of the area for the time being. Of course, the war was over. The Danite Samson was dead, Hophni and Phineas the priests had been killed, Shiloh had been devastated beyond recognition, and the Ark—well who knew for sure. All sorts of stories were being circulated about the Ark of God. Apparently though the Ark was safe in the town of Kiriath Jearim. The Tent of Meeting now sat in a little community called Nob, but it was no longer a tent of "Meeting." Obviously the Lord was not pleased with Israel. Ira sighed, he had lost two sons to war. He wondered, "Perhaps the Lord was not pleased with him either." These thoughts continued to run through his mind as he called to his flock and began walking back into the hills near Beth-horon.¹

¹ There are two towns of this name, distinguished on account of their situation as "Beth-horon the upper," and "Beth-horon the nether." They both lay on the southern border of Ephraim (Josh

Ira was an Ephraimite. He had lived here in the hill country of Canaan all of his life. His wife's name was Shoshana. Shoshana had agreed to marry Ira on the condition that she would be the only woman in his life. He had never regretted his decision. God had blessed them with three sons and two daughters. Ira and Shoshana lived on a small farm near Beth-horon the upper. When the Philistines started pushing into the region Ira considered moving toward Ramah. But Ramah was in Benjamin, and besides that, this homestead had been in Ira's family since the conquest. If God made the sun stand still in order for His people to possess the land, Ira was not going to give it up that easily. He and his family had determined to stay there. It did bother Ira that Canaanites were living in the land. They even had shops set up in the market places in the towns. Ira refused to deal with them. He was determined that his family would not associate with the uncircumcised heathens of the land.

Suddenly Ira's deep thoughts were interrupted by the cries of a familiar voice, "Papa, Papa, guess who's here. Samuel the Seer has come to visit." The youngest joy of his life, Eva, who was barely six years old, was bounding towards her father excitedly spilling her message and jumping into his arms. "Papa, Samuel has come, and he has someone with him." Ira smiled and gave his daughter a big hug. "Where is he?" "At the vineyard, talking with Benaiah."

Benaiah was Ira's youngest son, his only son now. He would soon be twenty. He had quietly shouldered the burden of the loss of his older brothers and picked up the slack. Ira was proud of his son.

"Blessed is the man of God who comes to visit me," said Ira as he approached the vineyard where three figures sat resting in the shade. The three arose at the greeting. Ira and Samuel embraced one another. Ira had known Samuel since he was a little boy living with Eli the priest at Shiloh. The whole family had great respect and admiration for him. It was Samuel who had persuaded Ira that the teraphims in his house should be destroyed. It had been Samuel who had renewed their faith in the Lord. He had even helped them to write passages of the Torah on their gateposts and doorposts. "And who is this with you?" asked Ira as he looked at the young man beside him.

"Beryel ben Mishel from Dan." The young man stretched forth his hand to greet Ira, "Samuel has told me so many good things about you." The distinct northern accent sounded strange to Ira's ears. Dan was the most northern city in Israel. The people there had built their own sanctuary. They were idolatrous and did not keep the Law. Ira wondered about these things as he shook the

16:3, 5) close to the territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:13-14, *Kitto's Biblical Encyclopedia*, Kitto, John. 3rd ed., 1866).

hand of Samuel's companion. "There are faithful men throughout all of Israel yet," said Samuel.

Ira turned, half ashamed that the seer had understood what he was thinking. "Come," he said, "I'm sure Shoshana has prepared our supper by now. We can visit over the meal." Slowly they made their way past the fig trees and the pen where the sheep had been corralled for the night. The aroma of the roast lamb was beckoning them.

That evening after supper Ira and Samuel excused themselves and went walking. They didn't walk far, however, because this particular region was difficult and dangerous. The hills were steep, the paths were narrow, and one could fall to his death if he stumbled in the darkness. Ira felt secure from thieves and robbers.

"You want to ask me something," Ira's voice broke the stillness of the night.

"And you are very perceptive," replied Samuel. Samuel loved Ira and his family. These kind of people were few and far between in Israel. "I'm starting a school—a school for prophets. I want Benaiah to come with me and to study and prepare himself."

Ira's eyes strained to catch the visage of the seer in the darkness. His long hair and full beard made him look much older than he really was. Samuel was a Nazirite.

"Benaiah is a good son, is becoming a good man, but he hasn't been called."

"I'm calling him," replied Samuel. "We need young men dedicated to the Lord who will go out to our people and teach them and encourage them to follow the Lord."

"But Benaiah is a farmer, not a prophet or teacher."

"He can learn to proclaim God's message. Ira, we need men like Benaiah who fear the Lord. Look what has happened to Shiloh. God is displeased with Israel. If our people do not repent and turn to the Lord, the punishment will become even more severe. You and your family will not be able to escape the punishment if our people are not called to repentance."

Ira groped vainly for a response. "Maybe Benaiah won't want to go."

"I've already talked with him today in the vineyard. He waits to receive your blessing to go," replied Samuel.

"Then so be it," answered Ira. Each of his children had been dedicated to the Lord when they came into this world. If God could use them in some spe-

cial way, Ira could not oppose it. He wondered if perhaps Benaiah were talking with his mother about this at this very moment. Shoshana always seemed to know what was happening when he would talk with her. She was a source of strength to Ira.

"I have another matter to discuss with you also," said Samuel, "one of a different nature." Ira waited silently for the man of God to continue. "Your daughter Aria is of a marriageable age. Young Beryel is a good man."

"But he is a Danite," muttered Ira.

"He is an Israelite first. He comes from a good family. They have not bowed the knee to Canaanite gods. His parents are aging, and they do not want their son to marry a woman who would not fear the Lord."

Ira felt troubled. Samuel had all of the right answers. He and Shoshana had often talked at night about the problem of finding mates for their children. A few of their neighbors were at best lukewarm for the Lord; many of them were steeped in idolatrous practices that disgusted Ira. "If Aria would have him, the boy must live here," said Ira, still not fully convinced in his own mind.

"The Law allows for a beena marriage," said Samuel. "'A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife.' I believe he is willing to do that. Speak with Shoshana tonight. If you are willing, we can ask Aria tomorrow."²

Ira placed his arm around the prophet's shoulder as they turned to walk toward the house, "Samuel ben Elkanah, you are a bold man. You come here to ask me for a son, and, in turn, you then offer me one in his place."

Samuel smiled. The future of Israel rested in such families as this. God was showing him the good scattered here and there. United they would become a mighty people.

Concluding Comments

The preceding story is meant to be a fictional historical narrative. Except for Samuel, the characters have been made up. The story portrays to us the atmosphere of the times. Ira was an exceptional Israelite because he did not

² There were two forms of marriage among the Hebrews: (1) where the husband becomes a part of the wife's tribe, (2) where the wife becomes a part of the husband's tribe. In the beena marriage the husband may be definitely incorporated into his wife's tribe. The wife meets her husband on equal terms; children belong to her tribe, and descent is reckoned on the mother's side.

serve idols, but he was not flawless. We can always find a few faithful servants of God throughout Israelite history. At this time, we are looking at the prejudice, distrust, and jealousy existing among the tribes. Ira would rather live in the shadows of death from Philistine armies than to move into a city of Benjamin where it was safer. The only way that he would accept Beryel as a son-in-law was for Beryel to become a part of the tribe of Ephraim.

The beena marriage was not uncommon at this period, but the baal marriage was already in practice in some areas and would become the norm during the monarchy. In the baal marriage, the wife takes on the identity of her husband's tribe and is expected to go with her husband to his father's house.

Samuel worked tirelessly to break down the barriers that existed between the tribes and to unite them. He became the most powerful man in Israel, guiding the people in domestic matters and leading them in political and military maneuvers. The school of the prophets, or "sons of the prophets," developed no doubt under the direction of Samuel. These men were not blessed with any prophetic gifts, but were simply sent out to the people with a message of repentance and righteousness. These were the turning years for Israel. Under Samuel's leadership, God was going to mold this diverse group of people into a mighty nation. *Route 6, Box 313B, Fairmont, WV 26554*

The Reign of Saul

by Bennie Cryer

The tribal confederacy of Israel served the nation of Israel 350-450 years after the death of Joshua (1493 B.C.). After his death, the people failed to do two things as far as leadership was concerned: (1) they did not choose a national leader like they had with Moses and Joshua, and (2) they did not choose counselors to take the places of the elders of Joshua's council (Jgs. 2:7-10). As a result, Judges 21:25 describes their dangerous situation, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own sight."

In fact, in three other places, Judges 17:6; 18:1; and 19:1, the Judges' author makes this same statement. Each time this phrase is used it describes a bad situation. Another time, in Judges 18:7, the word "magistrate" is used in place of "king."

Since there was no one to stop them from doing shameful and sinful things, the Israelites found themselves forsaking God and being oppressed by their enemies (Jgs. 2:10-15). In reality, they had forsaken God and were being punished. When their punishment became greater than they could bear, God would raise up a leader (Jgs. 2:16), or the people would select one to deliver them from the hands of their enemies (Jgs. 11:5-6). These men were called "judges." The word "judges" is used to describe these deliverers and not in the ordinary sense of one who hears and decides cases in a legal court. Samuel, a prophet and a priest, was the last of the judges.

Samuel's Role in the Transition

Samuel elevated the work of a judge to a much higher level than any of his predecessors. He was a judge, served the people as their High Priest, and also was used by God as a prophet to the Israelites. His work was so extensive and his power so great that the word "king" could aptly be applied to him. Under him the twelve tribes were more united than at any time since Joshua. However, in his old age he appointed his two sons as judges in Beer-sheba (1 Sam. 8:1-3). Though Samuel was a godly man who had given them good examples in faithfulness to God and the people, "his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. 8:3).

As a result of the corruption of Samuel's sons and outside pressure from Israel's enemies (especially from the Ammonites and Philistines, 9:16; 12:12), the elders of Israel asked Samuel to give them a king: "Behold, thou art old,

and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5).

Reaction to the People's Request

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord (1 Sam. 8:6).

Why did Samuel react in this way? He was a prophet and surely knew the various places in the Scriptures that had prophesied Israel would eventually have a king to rule over them. This was hinted at in Genesis 17:6 when God made a covenant with Abraham: "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee." Of course, more nations that had kings came out of the loins of Abraham than just Israel. But could Israel not be included in this covenant? She was according to Deuteronomy 17:14-15:

When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me—like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee: which is not thy brother.

Could any statement be clearer about Israel's having a king to rule over her in the future? Why could Samuel not accept the idea of appointing a king over the people of God as fulfillment of this prophecy? Instead, he was displeased.

In anger, God seemed to select Saul as the king of Israel, according to Hosea 13:9-11:

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.

By forsaking God and His ways the Israelites had gotten themselves into the severe predicaments that finally caused them to cry out for a king. It seems that God and Samuel were displeased with their request for at least the following reasons:

- Samuel was being rejected as Israel's leader though he had served them faithfully all of his life. His pride must have caused him to feel this rejection keenly.

- The people were not wanting a king like God wanted. They wanted one like the nations around them had.
- This was just another example of their rejecting God's kingship over their lives and wanting to be like the people of the world.

This same spirit had been manifested by the people when Gideon delivered them from the Midianites in Judges 8:22-23:

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

The problem in the days of Samuel was this: when the elders requested the appointment of a king to rule over them, there was no Gideon among them to uphold the Lord's rule. They wanted a king in order to be like the nations around them.

The Request Granted by God

Although God and Samuel both knew that the people's request was not best for them, God instructed Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:9).

Samuel immediately began to attend to this divine commission. Though he had a heavy heart over their rejection of him, he must have had some delight in warning them what the kind of king they wanted would expect and exact of them. Like so many whose wants stem solely from selfish desires, the elders of Israel forgot to inspect the other side of the coin. They knew what they expected from a king; but they had not considered what that king would expect of them. Samuel delivered stern warnings in 1 Samuel 8:10-18. James E. Smith, in **The Books of History**, summarizes Samuel's warnings in this way.

- (1) conscription for military service (vv. 11-12);
- (2) seizure of private property (v. 14);
- (3) the *corvée*, a kind of labor tax (vv. 12, 16);
- (4) impressment of persons into royal service (vv. 13, 16);
- (5) heavy (ten percent) taxation (vv. 15, 17).

To these five, Samuel added a final warning concerning their service to this king they were demanding. He would be so severe in his dealings with them that:

Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles (1 Sam. 8:18-20).

God then authorized Samuel to "make them a king." When the elders heard that their request had been granted, Samuel sent them back to their cities.

Saul Is Chosen

The elders were willing to let Samuel and God choose their king. Saul would eventually be chosen and that he was God's choice is indicated in 1 Samuel 9:17, "And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall rule over my people."

Many things happened before this selection that I believe will be valuable for us to consider. The Apostle Paul covered all of this information in his sermon in Pisidian Antioch in just a few seconds:

And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years, And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king (Acts 13:21-22).

Perhaps you would be happy if I were as brief as Paul. However, I need to give details that Paul did not consider necessary to state. I will use each thought he gave about this matter merely as my outline. I read many books on this subject and no better outline was found. We will first deal with God's selection of Saul as king.

The details of how Saul was chosen are found in 1 Samuel 9-10. It is a very interesting and sometimes amusing story of how a man went out in search of his father's asses, failed in his search, but found, much to his surprise, a kingship.

Kish, a Benjamite, had lost his asses. These were very valuable animals to the Jewish people. *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary* states:

The most noble and honorable amongst the Jews were wont to be mounted on asses. With us the asses a symbol of stubbornness and stupidity, while in the East it is especially remarkable for its patience, gentleness, intelligence, meek submission and great power of endurance . . . The ass was the animal of peace, as the horse was the animal of war; hence the appropriateness of Christ in his triumphal entry riding on an ass.

Even the humble and poor families had their own ass or asses and, while they were used as beasts of burden and other domestic purposes, they often became the family pet and were treated as such. They were a valuable part of a family estate. Because of this, Kish sent his son, Saul, in search of the family asses that had become lost. In 9:3-5, the trail of Saul and the servant is followed. They went through five districts without finding the lost animals. When they came to the fifth district called the land of Zuph, Saul decided to go back home thinking that his father might consider them lost also. In verse 6 Saul's servant said:

Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

Samuel stayed in the city of Ramah. This was a high place because an altar was there on which Samuel could offer sacrifices. This city was not quite twenty miles from Saul's home. He did not seem to know much about Samuel, which might cast some light on Saul's spiritual development and interest. His servant did know "the man of God" was in the city, but neither of them knew where to find him. Saul was hesitant to pay a visit to the prophet Samuel because he seemed to have no gift he thought suitable to give the Seer. It seems to have been the custom for the people to give the Seer a gift when they came seeking information from him.

Samuel was not really interested in accumulating wealth. He certainly was not like his sons who "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (9:3). Nor was he like those leaders in Israel described in Micah 3:11, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money." In fact, in Samuel's address to Israel, he could boldly challenge them about his impeccability in his dealings with them.

Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you (1 Sam. 12:3).

No one could bring a charge against Samuel in such matters. Why then did Saul desire to take this prophet a gift? It was the custom of that time and in that part of the world that when one approached a superior he always took a gift of some sort. And, of course, it has always been God's plan that those who minister in spiritual affairs should reap of the temporal blessings of those they serve (Gal. 6:6-8). Therefore, Saul thought it best to bring along a gift for the man of God. However, he did not have any food left for their provisions were

gone (9:7). We do not know whether Saul had any money with him. He does not mention it if he does. It is strange, though, that his father's servant would have money and he did not. I am going to put Saul in a bad light at this point. Some people like a cheap religion. They like the benefits of religion, but they are perfectly willing to let somebody else pay for it. Consider their conversation and you can almost feel this attitude in Saul.

And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way . . . Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was (9:8, 10).

They did not know where to find Samuel when they neared Ramah. They learned from some young maidens that Samuel was indeed there and a sacrifice was to be made that very day within a short time. Everything was working out so well that when they entered the city there was Samuel coming toward them. However, Saul did not recognize him. Samuel even needed help from God in order to know that Saul was the man who would rule over Israel as king. Verse 17 states what happened:

And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people.

All of this was happening as Saul entered the city, probably through one of its gates. Since Saul did not recognize Samuel as the Seer for whom he was searching, he asked Samuel where the Seer's house was located.

It will do us good to consider Samuel's appearance and demeanor. Though he was the greatest man in Israel at the time, serving as their prophet, high priest, and leader, he must have looked like an ordinary man. I think if one of us today would meet the Pope as we entered a city, we would recognize him immediately because of his dress, his retinue, along with all the promotion that would have preceded him. Samuel was on the way to the high place to offer sacrifice and have a feast. Yet he was not recognizable to a stranger as anyone of importance, much less as the greatest man in Israel. Samuel knew that Saul was seeking him and not his house, so he answered:

I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? (vv. 19ff).

Saul's mind must have been put at ease when the information about the lost asses was given. They had already been found. But when Samuel in-

formed him that he fit all the qualifications of the king all of Israel was now desiring, Saul had something new to worry about. One minute he was searching for asses, the next minute he was informed that he would be the king. His humility, on hearing this, was profound. Matthew Henry's commentary notes that in Genesis 44:20 Benjamin was called "a little one." This small tribe of Benjamin was greatly diminished by the war of Gibeah. Saul states that he was not only a Benjamite, but that his family was the least family in that tribe (v. 21). If Saul could have kept this spirit he would have made a great king who would have pleased God and the people as well. He could not understand why Samuel was saying these things to him.

At the feast, Saul and his servant were placed in the chiefest place of all who were invited. Saul received a special cut of the meat that Samuel had already had the cook set aside just for this purpose. It is thought that this piece of meat was the right shoulder that God had designated as the portion of the sacrifice that belonged to the priest (Lev. 7:32-34). If so, Samuel had reserved his portion to give to Saul, perhaps indicating his willingness to be supplanted by Saul. At any rate, those noble persons who were bidden to this feast and who would ordinarily get to sit in the best seats saw Saul and his servant not only getting the best seats but also receiving the best portion of food. Could they sense that something big was about to happen?

After the feast, Samuel and Saul visited on the top of the house. We are not told what they talked about, but surely the seer must have told Saul about the desire of Israel and that God had selected him to be the first king. They then walked toward the outskirts of the city (v. 26) at which point Samuel instructed Saul to send his servant on ahead. Saul was to stay with Samuel to hear God's word.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? (10:1).

Thus, in a simple, private ceremony Samuel anointed Saul to be Israel's first king. In this act there are some great implications. The oil poured on him signified God had chosen him to be captain (ruler or prince) over Israel. He was now set aside for that purpose. The kiss indicated to Saul that Samuel would relinquish his position as ruler over the people, and that he himself accepted his appointment. Remember, Samuel felt the people were rejecting him in their desire for a king. The king was chosen and the prophet, with this kiss, says "I too accept" (see Ps. 2:12).

After this private coronation, Samuel told Saul three signs that he would see on his way home. The first would be two men at a particular place who would tell him his father's asses had been found and that his father was now

sorrowing after him. The second sign involved three men having three goats, three loaves of bread, and a bottle of wine. These three men would greet Saul and give him two loaves of bread. As a third and final sign, Saul would meet a company of prophets who would be prophesying. At that time, God would turn Saul into another man by having His Spirit come upon him. In 10:7, 9 Samuel said:

And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee . . . God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

This third sign gives us some things to consider. Saul began prophesying with the company of prophets. This indicated that the Spirit of God had come upon him, and this would be considered proof that God had chosen and accepted Saul as the king and was with him. Questions were asked by the people in verses 10-12 when they saw him prophesying with the prophets.

What is this that is come unto the son of Kish: Is Saul also among the prophets? And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

The father of the prophets was probably Samuel. The term seems to be used in the sense of instructor, although, according to Clarke's commentary, the Septuagint adds the words, "Is it not Kish." This was an affirmation that Samuel was the one responsible for Saul's being counted among the prophets. The proverb that came from this event, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" perhaps tells us something of Saul's past reputation. If the Hebrew people applied the proverb to a man who was bad but turned good, or to a bad man seen in association with good men, then it leads us to believe that Saul had not been the best he could have been. His association had certainly not been among the prophets before this time. And he had not been seen singing, praying, and teaching as he was doing now. But now he is a man with a new heart and new interests and, we might add, a new profession (although by his words and actions you would not have known it even if you had been one of his near relatives, such as the one who asked him about these matters). Saul had been selected and anointed privately, but now it was time to make this known publicly (1 Sam. 10:17-27).

Shortly after these events Samuel gathered the people of Israel to a town called Mizpeh, not too many miles from the city of Jerusalem. There he reminded them of what God had done for His people and that they had rejected God by requesting a king like the nations around them. The choice of the king was to be by lots that God was controlling. The people were to pass by according to tribe. Out of the twelve tribes, Benjamin was chosen. Then the

families of Benjamin passed by, and the family of Matri was chosen. Saul was a member of this Matrite clan, and he was next chosen. However, Saul was still so timid and meek that he had hidden himself and could not be found. They had to ask the Lord where he was and they were directed to look among "the stuff." Other translations call this stuff "baggage," or "equipment" that probably belonged to some of the great numbers of people who had assembled. In 10:24, the simple ceremony and acceptance of Saul is concisely stated:

And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said. God save the king.

I must here insert a statement from Clarke's commentary concerning the phrase the people shouted, namely, "God save the king": "There is no such word here; no, nor in the whole Bible; nor is it countenanced by any of the versions!" The translations I looked in all rendered this, "Long live the king." This constituted their acceptance of Saul as king so far as the record shows. There was no public anointing of Saul at this time. That anointing would come later. Samuel then told them the manner of the kingdom, wrote it in a book, and stored it before the Lord. Every man then went to his own house. Saul also went to his home in Gibeah along with a band of men the Lord had touched. There was another group called "the children of Belial" who despised Saul and rejected him as their deliverer. They brought him no presents. Saul, however, did not immediately deal with them. He kept silent about the matter, but it would be brought up again in the future.

Samuel had told the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen." Perhaps we ought also to take a look at this man who was to reign as the first king of Israel. Saul exactly fit the description of a king like the nations had. According to 9:2, a Benjamite by the name of Kish

had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

Instead of "goodly" and "goodlier," other translations have "handsome." Since he was a choice young man and was so tall, he would be a king that the people would easily accept. They cared not if he were head and shoulders above the others in spirituality. They were not concerned if he had a beautiful inner man. Their concern was his physical strength and beauty. This, they thought, qualified him to lead them against their enemies. There seems to have been a constant struggle between the tribes of Judah and Ephraim over who was the most powerful and who should rule the people. A king from the tribe

of Benjamin would be an ideal choice since it was one of the smallest tribes and was situated between the borders of the two tribes wanting the rule. Saul described himself in this manner in 9:21 (see 1 Sam. 15:49-51 and 1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39 on Saul's family):

Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

This attitude is what caused Samuel to say the following words to Saul after he had disobeyed God regarding the Amalekites in 15:17:

When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?

At that time Saul had lost the very characteristic that caused God and Samuel to choose him to be king over Israel.

Saul Reigns as King

Saul had returned to his own home and had taken up the menial chores of agriculture that most folks of that time were engaged in. He had no kingly palace in which to live. He still had to go into the fields and bring the family's herd back to safety. As far as we can tell he did not look or act like a king. But all of that was about to change.

Saul at Jabesh-gilead

The Ammonites, long-time oppressors of Israel descended from the younger daughter of Lot, had a king named Nahash who took his army westward and besieged the city of Jabesh-gilead. This city was in the area assigned to the eastern half of land given to Manasseh's descendants. The citizens were willing to submit to Nahash, but Nahash would have none of that. He would only make a covenant with them if they would permit him to thrust out their right eyes. This act was designed to bring disgrace upon all Israel. The elders pleaded for seven more days so they could go to all the borders of Israel to try to find a man that would save them. Nahash, evidently believing that Israel was still weak, in great disarray, and without an effective national leader, granted them the seven extra days. Besides, what could the citizens of this city do in seven days? Could they really go to all of Israel requesting help and manage to acquire it in such short time? In 11:4 we are told that the messengers came to Gibeah where Saul lived. Here was their king. Their thoughts were, "We wanted a king for such a time as this (12:12), now let us see if he can help us."

When the people of Gibeah heard the terrible news they began to weep. Saul heard this weeping when he was coming in from the field and asked, "What aileth the people that they weep?" Upon hearing the reason for all this sorrow, Saul immediately began to show that he deserved to be appointed king of Israel.

And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of the messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent (vv. 6-7).

Could the sounding of a trumpet have been more effective than Saul's action? Probably not. Here was a message delivered in such a manner the people could understand it. There were 330,000 men who responded to this call. As a result of this great show of soldiers the following message was sent back to Jabesh-gilead (and they even assisted Saul and his army with a deceptive message of their own to Nahash).

And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, Tomorrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, Tomorrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you (vv. 9-10).

Nahash must have slept peacefully that night believing that victory was in his hands. However, Saul and his army came in the midst of Nahash's army in the morning watch and killed the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Saul's victory was so complete the surviving Ammonites were scattered so that there were not two of them together.

Saul must have been highly elated over this victory. Decades earlier, four hundred women from Jabesh-gilead had been provided to the men of Benjamin for wives because the number of women among the Benjamites had been so depleted by civil war (Jgs. 20; see also the vow of 21:1, 16). Saul had probably descended from one of these women. Now he had helped them. Saul depended on God during this battle against the Ammonites. In 11:7, he attached Samuel's name to his in the call to arms. Saul was still little in his own sight, but what would this great victory do to him?

His good spirit continued for awhile. In 11:12-15, the people remembered the children of Belial who despised Saul as a king and did not recognize him with presents.

And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel (vv. 12-13).

Public Confirmation of Saul's Position

Saul had now so impressed the people that Samuel decided it was time to make Saul king in a public way. Recall that earlier Samuel had privately anointed Saul as the king of Israel. Then later God had chosen him as king by lot with most of the people responding in favor of this action. Now it was time to renew or repair the kingdom by gathering the people to Gilgal, which was a city rich in sacred traditions.

And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly (v. 15).

It seems that Samuel closed out this great meeting with a blistering sermon. By way of introduction (12:1-5), he stated how he had listened to the people and given them a king. He had been among them since he was a child and now he was old. He had not defrauded them in any way. The people declared his integrity. In verses 6-12, he rehearsed the "righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers." Though God protected and blessed them, they forgot God and found themselves in the hands of their enemies. But God was merciful to them and raised up men to deliver them to safety. The people would admit they had sinned against God but, though upon their deliverance they would promise to serve God, they would soon forget Him again and serve the idols of the nations around them. Now, he continued, when Nahash, king of the Ammonites, came against you, you asked for a king to rule over you "when the Lord your God was your king." Now you have that king, and as long as you and the king obey God and keep His commandments things will go well with you. If you and your king rebel against God and His commandments, then the hand of the Lord will "be against you, as it was against your fathers" (vv. 13-16). The next three verses record a miracle performed to confirm the words of Samuel as coming from God. It was the time of the year for them to harvest their wheat, which, according to Clarke's Commentary, would be the latter part of June or the first part of July. Rain did not occur at that time in that land. Samuel said:

Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of

the Lord, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel (vv. 16-18).

The people confessed their sins and asked Samuel to pray for them. He was required to do that as part of his priestly and prophetic office. All of this is recorded in verses 19-25. Samuel's answer was:

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way . . . But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king (vv. 23, 25).

With these promises and warnings, Samuel closed his address. King Saul and the people now knew well the path they were to walk in order to maintain the correct relationship with God and receive His blessings.

Saul's First Rebellion

Saul's forty-year reign was in its infancy, but he began to show great courage against the Philistines. He had three thousand soldiers, two thousand of them under his direct command and one thousand under the command of Jonathan, his son. The Philistines had encroached deeply into Israeli territory and a garrison of them had encamped in Geba. Jonathan was a man of faith, while Saul was a man who was fearful in the face of such a large force of Philistines. Jonathan led his men against the enemy and defeated them. All Israel heard about this victory, but so did the Philistines. When the enemy heard of their defeat at Geba, the Israelites were held in abomination, and the Philistines gathered a huge force at Michmash. When Saul's soldiers saw the large force of enemy warriors, they too became afraid and began to desert Saul. They hid in caves, rocks, thickets, high places, and pits. The ones who followed Saul were trembling.

Saul really wanted the blessings of God in the coming conflict with the Philistines, and Samuel had told him to wait seven days in Gilgal for him to come. The seventh day came, but Samuel did not come early in the day, and the people began to scatter. Saul was so concerned about this he ordered the burnt and peace offerings to be brought to him. Saul offered the burnt offering. Of course, Samuel showed up about that time, and Saul went out to meet him. "What hast thou done?" Samuel asked. In 13:12, Saul answered the prophet:

Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord

have established they kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.

Though Saul reigned long enough to complete forty years, this was the beginning of the end for his reign. There would be no dynasty for Saul's house. The battle against the Philistines was won by Jonathan and his armor bearer. Saul still showed his inability to reign by making a rash vow that any man who ate any food that day as they pursued the fleeing Philistines would die. Jonathan did not hear the vow and ate some of the honey that had fallen on the ground. Because he had routed the Philistines almost single handedly and given Israel a great victory, the people would not hear of Saul's having his son put to death. Saul had war with the Philistines throughout his reign and improved his army by taking the strong and valiant men from among the families of Israel just as Samuel had prophesied.

Saul's Second Rebellion

In chapter 15, Saul again showed his rebellious spirit. The Lord remembered what the Amalekites had done to the Israelites when they were traveling from Egypt toward the Promised Land. He instructed Samuel to tell Saul:

Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass (v. 3).

Saul gathered a great army and thoroughly defeated the Amalekites. But in rebellion, he and the people spared King Agag and the best of the animals. Although Saul told Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (v. 13), he had not obeyed. This caused God to say to Samuel,

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed the commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night (v. 11).

Samuel then taught Saul, the people of that time, and us today, an important lesson. As an excuse for his and the people's actions, Saul said that they had saved the good animals "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal." Samuel's answer to this was:

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (v. 22).

Variations of this great truth are found elsewhere in the Scriptures (Ps. 50:8-9; Micah 6:6-8; Mt. 5:24; 9:13; 12:7; Mk. 12:33, et al.). Saul did not recognize this truth and certainly did not obey it. Samuel informed him that God had rejected him from being king. As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the prophet's clothing and it tore. This is described in 15:27-28:

And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou.

Saul confessed he had sinned and desired Samuel to be with him that he might worship God. Samuel required Saul to bring him King Agag. Samuel then proceeded to hew Agag into pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. After this event, Samuel did not come to see Saul anymore until the day of his death, but "nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (v. 35).

David Anointed as King

Saul's kingship began its decline in about the third year of his reign (1093 B.C.) when he offered the sacrifice that only Samuel or a priest had the right to offer. He bravely fought the enemies of God's people and delivered the Israelites out of their hands during the next fourteen years. It was about 1079 B.C. when he disobeyed God regarding the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15). Chapter 16 begins about 1063 B.C. Samuel had been mourning Saul for about sixteen years. Saul was still serving as king though he had been rejected by God. One day God said to Samuel:

How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

We should notice the contrast in this verse and in the one where the elders requested Samuel to appoint a king over them. They had told Samuel in 8:5, "make us a king." But now God told the prophet, "I have provided me a king." The next king would be God's choice according to the way he saw a man. We learn this in 16:7:

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen. In 16:12-13, Samuel anointed David as king as he had anointed Saul some thirty-two years before.

And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward . .
. But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

Conflict Between David and Saul

From that day forward David's star rose higher and higher while Saul's star was sadly declining in brightness. The two kings (Saul did not now know about David's anointing) were brought together because of the evil spirit that was plaguing Saul. David was a musician and his playing an instrument soothed Saul's troubled spirit. David was also a mighty man of war. He slew Goliath, and while Saul was slaying thousands of the enemy, David was slaying ten thousand. The people loved him, and this enraged Saul to such an extent that he tried to kill David on more than one occasion. David fled for his life.

Two things bound Saul's family and David together in an inextricable manner. First, Jonathan, Saul's son, and David became close friends (18:1-4). Based on this friendship, David promised to show kindness to Jonathan's house forever (20:14-15). Second, Saul gave Michal, his daughter, to David as a wife for a dowry consisting of one hundred foreskins of Philistines. This was not a magnanimous act on Saul's part. In fact, it was a treacherous act, for Saul expected David to be killed by the Philistines in his quest for the dowry.

In 19:6 Saul had sworn to his son Jonathan, "As the Lord liveth, he [David] shall not be slain." However, Saul was now such a base man with the evil spirit controlling him that even an oath to his son did not deter him from trying to kill David. In chapter 24, David had an opportunity to kill Saul, but he would not and would not let his men kill the Lord's anointed. Upon Saul's finding out that David had spared his life again, he said to David in 24:19-22:

Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware unto Saul.

Saul knew the spirit David had and that David would keep his vow even though Saul had not kept his and would in fact continue trying to kill David.

Saul's Third Rebellion and Death

About 1060 B.C., some thirty-five years after Samuel had anointed Saul as king, the old prophet died. "And all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah" (25:1). It is thought that Samuel was about ninety-eight years of age. He had served God, the Israelites, and especially Saul and David well.

However, Saul was not through with Samuel. He had suffered much because there was no prophet to tell him what to do on various occasions and God's Spirit was not with him. The Philistines gathered their armies against Saul. He was afraid and began to inquire of the Lord. But "the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (28:6).

When evil men get in trouble and they know they cannot have the blessings of God, they often turn to the occult. Saul did. Although he had tried in the past to get rid of everyone who practiced witchcraft, he commanded his servants to find a woman who had a familiar spirit. He knew such people were impostors and deceivers, yet, in his despair, he consulted the witch of Endor who lived near Saul's encampment. He requested her to conjure up Samuel. Through the power of God, not the power of the witch, Samuel appeared. After wanting to know and finding out why Saul had bothered him, Samuel told him what was going to happen to him and Israel, none of which was good. In 28:17-19, Samuel's words are recorded:

And the Lord hath done to him as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David: Because thou obeydest not the voice of the Lord, nor executest his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

The next day in Mount Gilboa, the Philistines killed Saul's three sons, and Saul himself was wounded critically by archers. Fearing to fall into the hands of the enemy while still alive, he commanded his armor bearer to finish his life. The armor bearer would not do it. Saul then took a sword and fell upon it. The armor bearer then fell upon his own sword and followed his master in death.

I do not know what the Philistines would have done to Saul's body had they found him while he was still alive. We do know what they did when they found the dead bodies of him and his sons—they cut off Saul's head and circulated it through their temples. His body was hung on the wall of Beth-shan.

Because of the kindness Saul had shown the citizens of Jabesh-gilead (see chapter 11), they traveled all night and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall, came back to Jabesh, burned their bodies, buried their bones, and fasted seven days showing their respect for their fallen king.

If Saul had conducted himself befitting one chosen of God, the kingdom would have stayed in the family of Saul. Abner, the captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth and proclaimed him king in place of his father Saul (2 Sam. 2:8-10). Judah proclaimed David as their king. Abner was the driving force behind Ishbosheth. Abner later committed a trespass against one of Saul's concubines and Ishbosheth rebuked him. Abner, whether guilty or not, did not take this rebuke kindly. He left Ishbosheth and went to David's side. Ishbosheth's new captains assassinated him. They brought the news to David, along with the head of Ishbosheth, hoping for a reward. However, David had the captains killed. So ended the reign of the house of Saul (1055 B.C.). He was an illustration of the truth found in Proverbs 27:24, "For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations."

Saul's Legacy

The people who have written about Saul see him in many different lights. Jan P. Fokkelman attributed to Saul the dignity and high seriousness of a tragic hero. He acknowledged that Saul's own weaknesses made him the subject of Samuel's ire and God's rejection.

Saul is innocently caught in the inner conflict of an ambiguous prophet (Samuel), who appears to accede to the pressing demand of the people for a new form of government, a monarchy, but who in his heart resists. For this, Saul must pay dearly. He is in effect a plaything of forces beyond his control—the demand of the people for a king and the theocratic party's natural resistance to the rejection of its own ruling authority . . . He has taken into his own hands the initiative to meet his end and in so doing has accepted his fate in an exceptional way. He has embraced his doom by executing the divine judgment himself, with his own sword. The choice, carried out in horrifying desolation, is this . . . Israel's first king, a truly tragic hero, is dead.

L. Daniel Hawks pictures Saul as the sacrifice that appeased God's anger because the people had rejected God as their king and Samuel as their judge. The people confessed they had sinned, and Samuel promised that God would not abandon His people. What caused this change in God's feelings toward the people? Hawk believes Saul was, as it were, a sacrificial lamb that satisfied the wrath of God. When Saul took his own life, this completed the sacrifice

and paved the way for the dynasty that would rise out of Judah. This would be a divinely established dynasty. Saul, according to Hawk, is merely a victim.

Kenneth I. Cohen presented an entirely different view. He writes that King Saul was a bungler from the beginning.

Even in moments of apparent triumph, Saul's background, character, and deeds bear the seeds of his destruction. Saul's tendency to failure in his later career has been widely recognized. In fact, his lineage and his first act as king presage his later calamities . . . Israel's first king is portrayed as a hapless fool thrust into the kingship as God punishes his people for demanding a monarchy.

I personally believe that Saul could have made a good king had he trusted in God, followed His directions, and worked with Samuel the prophet. It seems that even when he became king he was still acting under the spirit of the age that preceded the monarchy, namely, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." *1439 San Rocco Cir., Stockton, CA 95207*

Bibliography

- Clarke, Adam, LL.D, F.S.A. **Clarke's Commentary**. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.
- Cohen, Kenneth I. "King Saul as a Bungler from the Beginning," **Bible Review**, October 1994.
- Fokkelman, Jan P. "Saul and David: Crossed Fates," **Bible Review**, June 1989.
- Hawk, L. Daniel. "Saul As Sacrifice—The Tragedy of Israel's First Monarch," **Bible Review**, December 1998.
- Henry, Matthew. **Matthew Henry Commentary**.
- Peloubet, F. N., D.D. **Peloubet's Bible Dictionary**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Smith, James E. **The Books of History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995.

The Reign of David

by Ron Courter

We are almost embarrassed to begin our study of the reign of David with an old saying you have heard often, "No Bible story is an island." When we think of the Old Testament and what is found therein, it just fits so well, especially when you think of the United Kingdom and its three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. When I think of the reign of David, the saying cries for attention. The point is:

1. When you learn of the island, that is the individual stories within the story, you have truth; a beneficial aid to your spirit's wellbeing; but possibly not always the full reason why the Holy Spirit put the account there.
2. When you begin to understand why the island is there and where in the sea God placed it, you probably have the greater anchor for the soul and the meat of the Word.

The reign of David can unfold for us innumerable truths and principles for spiritual reflection. David's faith, sin, repentance, and woes due to sin are worthy of every moment of reflection the Bible student can give it. But we dare not forget, just as the island is part of a great sea, so it is with David. We will attempt to explore the island (the story of David's reign), but hopefully along the way we can note its placement in the greater sea of events.

David Made King

And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed by ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them (2 Sam. 2:4-7).

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league

with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-3).

First Chronicles 11:1-3 adds one small, telling fact to Israel's anointing of David that we all know; yet, let us hear it from the Chronicles: "And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel" (v. 3b). Now some things need to be mentioned about these readings:

1. A period of approximately seven years is found between Judah's anointing David king and Israel's anointing David king. They were years of intrigue, hostility, wars without and within, and assassination of no less than Ishbosheth, the son of Saul (2 Sam. 4:5-8). These assassins, Rechab and Baanah, delivered the head to David at Hebron.

Behold the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed . . . As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron" (2 Sam. 4:8b-12a).

2. There were battles in this civil war that tainted the houses of Israel with intense grief. Once, at the pool of Gibeon, a battle began between Abner and Joab's men that the Bible describes as a very sore (fierce) battle. It became a running battle and in the process Abner killed Asahel.

And the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah... Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother (2 Sam. 2:24b-27).

Abner and Joab's words that began this battle led to 380 souls never gracing the homes of their families anymore. The Bible reads, "Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (2 Sam. 3:1).

3. David had six sons born to him while in Hebron and several of these lads certainly played a role in the grief of David's latter years (1 Chron. 3:1-5).

4. The reign of David cannot truly be told without going back before the day in Hebron when he was anointed king, first by Judah, and then years later by the men of Israel. We must realize this is more than just the story of a king struggling for political power and the unity of a carnal people—the events leading up to this reign emphasize its uniqueness and demonstrate both the faith of David and the faithfulness of God.
5. The Bible says, "David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 5:4-5; see also 1 Kgs. 2:10-11; 1 Chron. 3:4; 29:26-30).

A Glimpse of the Years Before

The writer of 1 Chronicles says, "And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel" (11:3b). Samuel's anointing of David for the kingship prior to Israel's anointing him king takes us back well over twenty years (not Judah's anointing) into the teenage years of David. The Bible reads, "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons" (1 Sam. 16:1).

1. This anointing was anticipated in the Scriptures when Samuel spoke of Saul's rejection "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee" (1 Sam. 13:14).
2. The actual anointing was done rather covertly due to the tension between Saul and Samuel, which was not a covert matter (1 Sam. 16:1-3).
3. Samuel previewed all of the boys who were present without success, even though the first one he laid eyes on he was confident was the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 16:6). No doubt Eliab looked like another Saul in appearance to Samuel, but God was going to finish a lesson begun by the people's desire for things like the world's ideals. Recall Saul was a man of striking appearance, which is not wrong, but people tend to forget this in making unbiased judgment.

Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7b).

This does not mean outward appearance in life has no significance, as some people try to prove from this verse. What it does mean is God wants more than external physical appearance in those chosen by Him. David certainly was not a person of unfair appearance (1 Sam. 16:12). On the contrary, he was probably of striking stature. The idea of not looking on countenance as one continues through the Bible tends to warn against making judgment due to men's position. Evidently, Saul's armor was not out of question for David to wear against Goliath, but rejected due to the unfamiliarity of such by David.

"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep" (1 Sam. 16:11a). Samuel insisted on his immediate presence. When David appeared, the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:12b-13a).

I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him (Ps. 89:20).

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel (2 Sam. 7:8b).

David's Family

Boaz and Ruth were the parents of Obed (Ruth 4:13-17).

Obed was the father of Jesse (Ruth 4:17).

Jesse was the father of David (Ruth 4:17).

Jesse the Bethlehemite had eight sons (1 Sam. 16:1; 17:12).

Jesse's sons (1 Chron. 2: 13-17) included:

1. Eliab
2. Abinadab
3. Shimma
4. Nethaneel
5. Raddai
6. Ozem
7. David

Jesse's daughters included Zeruiah and Abigail (1 Chron. 2:16).

1. Zeruiah's sons were Abishai, Joab and Asahel (1 Chron. 2:16).

2. Abigail's son was Amasa (1 Chron. 2:17).

- a. It is significant that it is noted Amasa's father was Jether the Ish-meelite.
- b. It is significant that the Bible says, "And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son, whose

name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother" (2 Sam. 17:25).

The Rejected and the Anointed—A Turbulent Tie

The narrative given of Saul and David's relationship before David's reign is too extensive for detailed coverage since our topic is the reign of David. But since it is intriguing and demonstrates some of David's better features, while making an absolute display of the faithfulness of God and His hand of providence, let us simply note some events of significance. It also reveals David's human side with some implied weaknesses.

David's preparation ironically began under the hand and in the court of the king he would replace. Saul, so to speak, had no mentor in the way of a king, but David did. God's hand of preparation appears so often (to human perception) to be filled with irony and paradox. Typically, the circumstances do not appear to be ideal, and frequently heavy burdens are part of the preparation period.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth (Lam. 3:27).

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8).

From Friendship to Hostility (1 Sam. 16:14-18:30)

1. Saul and David's first dealings (1 Sam. 16:17-23).
 - a. "Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me."
 - b. "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing."
 - c. "Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep."
 - d. "David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."
2. The valley of Elah and Goliath (1 Sam. 17:15-58).
 - a. "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"
 - b. "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."
 - c. David was a young lad of experience, seasoned in responsibility and had faith in God.
 - d. Prepare, so you can have the comfort of your own weapons. "I cannot go with these: for I have not proved them. And David put them off him."

- e. Faith is the proper object—the true God alone. “But I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hands.”
 - f. “And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.”
3. Jonathan and David’s Friendship (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 23:16-18)
- a. “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David.”
 - b. “And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father . . . wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?”
 - c. Jonathan was not moved with envy or jealousy toward David. He recognized David’s character and God’s will regarding the throne. It was Saul in his anger who said, “For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.” Jonathan’s reply to this outburst was David’s innocence.
 - d. When the two met for the last time, Jonathan declared, “Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.”
 - e. The alleged charge of homosexuality in this friendship calls for a response. “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26). Many seem quick to forget both were married, both had children, and David committed adultery. The most telling factor though is the following point. The Revisionist view of the Scriptures claims that the condemnation of the New Testament regarding homosexuality is due to homosexuals’ pursuing heterosexual acts, since that would be unnatural. This highly imaginative argument would certainly prove too much, for it would condemn the very men introduced by them or justify the very behavior they condemn by their interpretation of other passages.
4. Saul becomes hostile toward David.
- a. “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward (1 Sam. 18:9).” He attempted to kill David with the javelin (1 Sam. 18:11). There was a period of reprieve, but the stage was set for hostility (1 Sam. 19:7, 10).

- b. The pendulum began a critical swing, which only cultivated more hardness and sin on Saul's part. "He was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." They sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Here in the Hebrew is probably a comparison of no significance that ends up very significant.
- c. The contrast became clear and filled with dread. "And Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul." "And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them."
- d. Saul plotted the death of David by offering the hand of his daughters in marriage for a dowry that could lead to his death by the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:17-27).
- e. "And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually" (1 Sam. 18:29). Even the princes of the Philistines perceived that David was superior in behavior to the other servants of Saul (1 Sam. 18:30). "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants that they should kill David" (1 Sam. 19:1)
- f. The hostilities of Saul became common knowledge and began to have a devastating affect on himself and others. This led to David's leaving the boundaries of Israel, and when within the boundaries of Saul's domain, to a series of escapes from Saul's pursuit. These stories are highly enlightening regarding Saul's and David's characters, but we must largely bypass them due to the need to examine the reign of David.

Flights and Escapes (1 Sam. 18:8-27:12)

- 1. David goes to Samuel at Ramah (1 Sam. 19:18-24)
 - a. The divine message here seems to have been lost both on Saul and David.
 - b. Three groups of messengers from Saul and Saul himself went to take David and in the end only ended up prophesying.
 - c. It would appear this event made it very clear that the rejected would be rejected and the anointed would be king. Recall this was not the first of such encounters for Saul (1 Sam. 10:9-13).
 - d. The phrase ('Is Saul also among the prophets?') had been and continued to be a proverb of skepticism regarding qualifications for a position or work.

2. David flees the boundaries of Saul's authority and goes to Achish, king of Gath (1 Sam. 20:1-21:15).
 - a. Jonathan shots the arrows of warning.
 - b. The events at Nob between David and Ahimelech that led to tragedy.
 - c. David's flight from Saul's abnormal behavior only leads to his feigning abnormal behavior. "And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard."
 - d. One of the great difficulties in reading the Old Testament is determining what behavior was done from faith and what was done from human weakness. It is somewhat parallel to the problem of discerning what was permitted, but not condoned. It appears David was fleeing when he should not have left the boundaries of Saul's domain. This eventually led to the death of the priests and David's feigning madness. Throughout David's life and reign, it appears that when he responded from human weakness, despair, and pain, this led to events in his life that probably would never have had to occur if he would have responded in a more faithful way to God's will.
3. David goes to Adullam and the people begin to take sides in the struggle of Saul and David (1 Sam. 22:1-5).
 - a. David made preparation for his family's care in Moab.
 - b. Gad the prophet spoke to David of returning to the land of Judah.
 - c. This movement back into Judah prepared the way for a series of encounters between Saul and David, but it is in retrospect letting God's providential hand work for the reign of David as king. Because our attention should be placed upon the reign of David, we will not detail the events, but any study of David's life calls for a study of them. They are:
 - 1) The forest of Hareth (1 Sam. 22:5-23:14).
 - 2) The wilderness of Ziph (1 Sam. 23:15-29).
 - 3) The wilderness of Engedi (1 Sam. 24:1-22).
 - 4) The wilderness of Paran (1 Sam. 25:1-44).
 - 5) The Ziphites report David at the hill of Hachilah (1 Sam. 26:1-25).
4. The fact that David did not take the life of Saul, even when in the presence of his fellows, elevated David's character and manifested his faith and patience for the Lord to fulfill His promise in His own way. David's devotion to the LORD, his faith, his respect, and his love should be not overlooked in these trials (1 Sam. 24:12-15; 26:8-11).

Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him

accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods (1 Sam. 26:19).

The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation (1 Sam. 26:23,24).

5. David again fled the boundaries of Saul's authority and returned to King Achish of Gath. It would appear David's action here may not be out of the strength of faith, but out of weakness (1 Sam. 27:1—2 Sam. 2:1). Fields, in writing about this, states there was no necessity and concludes it was evil. This period involved lying, the killing of many not in position to hinder the Philistine influence in critical areas, and almost brought him to war with own people. Fields concludes, "David's act almost certainly delayed his acceptance as king over ALL Israel for seven years" (Fields, p. 453).

And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand (1 Sam. 27:1).

6. Achish gave David the city of Ziklag from which David functioned until the death of Saul. During this period it is evident that the popularity of David was rising in the eyes of the people and the reign of Saul was declining. Note 1 Chronicles 12:1-2, 16, 18, 22.

Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war...even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin . . . And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David . . . Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace to thy helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band . . . For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.

7. Few events can fuel one's thinking more than the very last days of Saul and the last days of David prior to his becoming king. One can imagine David rustling about in his tent, trying to determine how to handle the fact

that he appears to be on the threshold of fighting against his own. How the heart of David must have pounded when the princes of the Philistines sternly told Achish, "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?"

While this was happening, Saul was seeking help from the very source he had cut off in Israel, because the Lord answered him not. He plodded through the night in disguise, and on the utter brink of exhaustion received the message of his death and of his sons.

Then ponder in those final days and hours the situation of these two men—David's overcoming an internal crisis, pursuing the Amalekites, assured from heaven he would overtake them and recover all; while on the other hand, Saul's being pursued in battle, being overtaken, and losing all.

8. David learned that Saul and Jonathan were dead and the army of Israel was in disarray. He and his fellows mourned, wept, and fasted until evening at the news. The young messenger was killed for his exaggeration for gain. "When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings" (2 Sam. 4:10).

An Observation: The Providential Hand

The reality of providence is so striking when you examine a life like the life of David, but woe to them that would, at the instance of a given earthly event, say, "Here you plainly see the hand of providence." Our faith in the providence of God is founded on the testimony of the Scriptures, not our personal uninspired interpretation of some isolated event in our lives. In fact, when you read through the life of David, note how many times people attribute things to the hand of God that were proven not to be. When David passed Bahurim that day when Absalom led the rebellion, Shimei was quite certain that the LORD was returning the blood of the house of Saul on his head. When David could have taken the life of Saul in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, David's men were sure this was the hour of providence (1 Sam. 24:4). Then hear Abishai say in a camp that had been put under by a divine anesthetic, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee." This testimony of the Scriptures regarding providence is absolutely without tremor, even when we account for the fact that lives such as David's were chosen within the framework of hav-

ing the redemptive plan unfolded; while today, we are in the contextual setting that it is already unfolded. It is ironic, and yet so enlightening, to look back over the life of a David and see the prudent hand of divine management. The providential hand brought the people to the point of being of one mind in accepting David as king. Do you realize how difficult that would have been in the carnal Israel of that day? Consider, for a moment, some of the earthly events that helped to weave the rope of providence, but by themselves as mere threads could never be seen without the final event. For example:

- Saul's foolish and excessive behavior,
- Jonathan's friendship,
- David's fearful time with Achish,
- David's brethren rallying around him,
- David's activities from Ziklag into the southland (although we are not sure if David should have gone to Achish),
- Ziklag as David's known abode where men could freely gather with him.

Why have we said this? No child of the Scriptures should ever doubt the hand of providence does bring all to its appropriate end, because the testimony of the Scriptures leaves no room for doubt. But to try to improve the testimony of the Scriptures with personal threads of uninspired interpretations of providence will not lead to more confidence in the providential hand or better decisions for the faith. To the contrary, such can lead to subjective conclusions that do not aid the maturity of one's faith or to wise decisions in the church.

The Reigning David

We are not surprised David's reign moved forward with success, although external forces were feeling strong and sure and internal feeling had the country shattered. We see enough of his early life to see that the principles of leadership were cultivated in his early experiences. For example:

1. He knew what it was to be under authority and responsible (1 Sam. 16:11; 17:15).
2. He had cultivated a strong faith in God, seasoned from the experiences of life, not founded on mere yearnings of youthful immaturity wanting to do some great things. His faith was not a statement of the immature dreams of youth seeking greatness (1 Sam. 17:31-39; 45-47). His faith did not quake at great odds, for it was not simply in himself, but in one greater than he.
3. He had learned that not everyone would understand one's decisions, and manifested in his decisions a determination not to be influenced by every

voice. Evidently, he had learned how to handle criticism and rejection (1 Sam. 17:28-30; 24:4-7; 26:8; 18:19).

4. He established his reputation on sound behavior (1 Sam. 18:5, 14, 30) and was a man of humility (1 Sam. 18:18, 23, 26-27; 24:14).

Let the man who desires the office of the bishop sit down with tablet and pen in hand reading the life of Saul and David, contrasting their understanding of position, their attitude regarding position, and the building of a reputation of spiritual content. They will have taken a proper step in educating themselves regarding many of the things essential to the overseeing of the flock in a sensible way. Furthermore, they will better understand how people's perceptions are to be formed by one being esteemed in love for their work's sake.

The Early Years and the Internal Struggle

1. The anticipated reign of David was now to become a reality with the death of Saul. Finally, it was determined how Saul would die, as David had said to Abishai on the sleep-drugged hill of Hachilah, "As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish."

As David's reign dawns into reality, the mind is quick to hear a number of voices from the past that anticipated this hour of fulfillment.

The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou (Samuel, 1 Sam. 15:28).

Arise, anoint him: for this is he (the LORD, 1 Sam. 16:12).

Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel (Jonathan, 1 Sam. 23:17).

And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand (Saul, 1 Sam. 24:20).

And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel (Abigail, 1 Sam. 25:30).

And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David (Samuel after his death, 1 Sam. 28:17).

Then the spirit came upon Amasai . . . Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and

peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee (Amasai by the Spirit, 1 Chron. 12:18).

2. David's attitude toward the anointed of the LORD and the circumstances about him as he stood on the threshold of his reign are worthy of our attention. These can be assessed briefly in the following events.
 - a. The Amalekite messenger who talked too much, but would no longer do so (2 Sam. 1:14-16; 4:10; Lk. 19:22).
 - b. The song of lamenting reveals much about David's attitude toward the anointed of the LORD, his friends, his people, and the enemies of Israel (2 Sam. 1:19-27).
 - c. The humanity of David might well have cried out, "Now it is mine to act." But we see a very critical factor of attitude in the words of 2 Samuel 2:1:

And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

- 1) It is hard to say what all we could glean from David's life story by simply trying to glean when he inquired of the LORD and when he did not. Could this not be said of any life? Truly, it is the difference of heaven.
 - 2) One of the most significant factors in David's years of waiting or his years on the throne is the stark contrast between Saul without divine counsel (1 Sam. 28:6) and David with divine counsel (1 Sam. 23:6, 9, 12).
 - 3) One can exist without divine counsel, but no man can live without it (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 29:18; Jn. 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 1:3).
 - 4) What an interesting spectacle to stop on the threshold of the anticipated reign of David and consider how it all is viewed terrestrially and celestially—how on the one hand we have all the human animosity or good will of fleshly Israel, and on the other hand the magnificence scope of Genesis 3:15 being seen a little more clearly. This Bible story is not an island without a sea. Indeed, David's reign will certainly not be without challenge from without or from within.
3. David was anointed king over the house of Judah at Hebron (1 Sam. 2:3-7).
 4. Abner made Ishbosheth king at Mahanaim (1 Sam. 2:8-11).

5. The move of the capital from Gibeah to Mahanaim probably tells us much about the Philistine strength west of the Jordan River and north of Hebron at that time. It also placed some geographical distance between David and Ishbosheth. Although the house of Judah had anointed David, his reign was far from being firmly established and free to shore up the eroded kingdom.
6. Gradually, as with the period of waiting for the throne, David began to strengthen his reigning hand. "Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (2 Sam. 3:1). This period has many intriguing events and stories of consequence which must be left for the reader to explore. In passing, be sure to ponder the following:
 - a. The battle at Gibeon and Asahel's death (2 Sam. 2:12-32).
 - b. The Rizpah affair (2 Sam. 3:6-8).
 - c. Abner's role and admission (2 Sam. 3:10, 18).
 - d. The Michal affair (2 Sam. 3:14-16).
 - e. David's words regarding the sons of Zeruiah. "And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness (2 Sam. 3:39)."
7. Ishbosheth was assassinated and David was then anointed king over all Israel (2 Sam. 4:4:1-5:5; 1 Chron. 11:3; 12:23-40). In passing, be sure to ponder the following:
 - a. David's response to Rechab and Baanah (2 Sam. 4:9-12).
 - b. David's support and his becoming king (1 Chron. 12:23-40). Let us hear the words of Israel as they negotiate with David to become king:

Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh . . . When Saul was king over us, thou, wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel . . . So all the elders of Israel came to the king of Hebron: and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

Hear the Psalmist:

He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Ps. 78:70-72).

David Reigns in Triumph with an Undivided Hand

1. A capital city to settle the nation physically (2 Sam. 5:6-12; 1 Chron. 11:4-9; 14:1-2).
 - a. A city with no political snags, as the Jebusites possessed it (2 Sam. 5:6; 1 Chron. 11:4).
 - b. A city of natural fortifications (2 Sam. 5:6).
 - c. Joab's honor (2 Sam. 5:8; 1 Chron. 11:6).
2. The defeat of the Philistines to settle the nation physically (2 Sam. 5:17-25; 1 Chron. 14:8-17).
 - a. Recall the defeat of Saul (1 Sam. 31).
 - b. The Philistines realized it was time to keep David from strengthening his hand and prepared in the valley of Rephedin (2 Sam. 5:17-18). This was the valley where David's thirst caused a most unusual happening. Consider David's thinking (2 Sam. 23:13-17; 1 Chron. 11:15-19).
 - c. David inquired of the LORD regarding the battles (2 Sam. 5:19). One must think how unsure this time would have been in the early reign of David. One might well think the Philistines had the right strategy, but they were picking on the wrong foe.
 - d. The threshing in the mulberry trees and the Philistines beaten from Geba unto Gazer (2 Sam. 5:24-25).
3. The bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem to settle the nation's place of Holy Habitation (2 Sam. 6:1-23; 1 Chron. 13:1-14; 15:1-29; 16:1-42).
 - a. The Ark had been left at Kirjath-jearim for some seventy years and now was faced with a journey of some ten miles (1 Sam. 4:1-7:2). The short journey was tragic and with great difficulty, but it was the stigma of those seventy years that was the real problem. It is difficult to produce a healthy harvest on an eroded faith.
 - b. Reverencing the God of heaven without obedience is not possible (2 Sam. 6:1-11).
 - c. The Ark was moved according to the Word of God (2 Sam. 6:11-19; Ps. 105).
 - d. The Michal affair is a sad story (1 Sam. 18:20; 2 Sam. 6:20-22). The question is not immodesty.
 - e. There was much done in the way of organizing religious service with the ark in its new home.

4. David scored a number of military victories, giving security and gaining territory, while continuing to organize his administration (2 Sam. 8:1-18; 1 Chron. 18:1-17).
 - a. Philistines
 - b. Moabites
 - c. Zobah (2 Sam. 8:4). Do not miss the lesson of the hamstrung horses (Deut. 17:16). Also, note the expansion of David's borders to the Euphrates (v. 3).
 - d. Syrians
 - e. Edomites. Do not forget the Jacob-Esau prophecies.
 - f. David's established reputation
 - g. His officers in charge are noted.
5. David desired to build the LORD a house. Bible reader, please spend much time here (2 Sam. 7:1-29; 1 Chron. 17:1-27).
 - a. David's attitude (2 Sam. 5:11-12). Compare this with the Gentile kings of the book of Daniel (Dan. 4:28-30; 5:1-4).
 - b. The LORD said no. (2 Sam. 7:4-7; 2 Chron. 6:8-9; 1 Kg. 8:18-19).
 - 1) Did I ask for a house of cedar (1 Chron. 17:6; Ex. 25:8)?
 - 2) Thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight (1 Chron. 22:8; 28:3).
 - 3) I have permitted thee to do much already (2 Sam. 7:8-10).
 - 4) "The LORD will make thee an house" (2 Sam. 7:11).
 - c. When the LORD tells us no, we should always look at what He has already done or promises to do (2 Sam. 7:6-9; 8-17).
 - d. David's attitude again (2 Sam. 7:18-29).
6. The Prophecy (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14; see also, Ps. 89; Jer. 23:5-6; Lk. 1:31-33; Rom. 1:4; Rev. 3:7; 22:16)

We began this study with a crude illustration—no Bible story is an island. This great prophecy is much of the sea the island (David's reign) sets in. Our enlightenment takes a gigantic leap in the pursuit of the redemptive plan, for we have a promise that in Bible status is like unto the word of God to Abraham of future blessing. The Messiah will be of the seed of David.

- a. Your son will build the house for me.
- b. Your household will be a ruling dynasty among the people of God.
- c. Your throne is going to be forever.

This last part of the promise captures the continuation of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and its counterparts unto this time. Now we have a hint why the divided kingdom's history will be so critical. Now we have understanding to help us appreciate how critical the time of Daniel was in the

redemptive plan. Now we have the hint of how different the kingdom would be after the restoration from captivity. Thank God for islands, for they are there to permit us a place from which to observe more of the sea. Learn everything you can from an island, but try always to remember that in the Word of God, it resides in the context of a larger sea. An island also takes on new light when you examine the sea.

7. David's lingering love for the sake of Jonathan's friendship (2 Sam. 9:1-13).
 - a. Remember 1 Samuel 20:15.
 - b. Ziba and Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:2-11).
 - c. Mephibosheth's father and grandfather were killed in battle when the boy was five years of age (2 Sam. 4:4).
 - d. David's kindness and security on the throne is demonstrated by this event. The story probably does not strike us with its full impact, for we do not live in a time of experiencing how ruling families were dealt with by new ruling families. Also, the story will take on more meaning when we walk over the top of Mt. Olivet in despair due to Absalom's rage.
8. War with an old enemy, the Ammonites, and their mercenaries.(2 Sam. 10:1-11:1; 12:26-31; 1 Chron. 19:1-20:3).
 - a. Be kind to mourners, lest more mourning follows (2 Sam. 10:1-5).
 - b. Mebedah—Joab's words of faith and courage (2 Sam. 10:12).
 - c. Helam—the Syrians, war begets war (2 Sam. 10:15-19).
 - d. Rabbah—the Ammonites again and their chief city (2 Sam. 12:26-31; 20:1-3).

David's Family and Children

It is easy to forget until you immerse yourself in the life of a king like David how much of life is a family affair. Up to this point in the story of David's reign, family matters have been somewhat quiet, except for those pesky relatives born of Zeruiah. But it is time to note David's family for they will no longer be a quiet part of the story.

1. The sons born at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:2-5; 1 Chron. 3:1-4).
 - a. Ammon—firstborn by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess.
 - b. Chileab—second born by Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.
 - c. Absalom—third born by Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur. (Recall where Absalom fled after killing Amnon and recall where David's father and mother stayed when David was fleeing from Saul).
 - d. Adonijah—fourth born by Haggith.

- e. Shephataih—fifth born by Abital.
- f. Ithream—sixth born by Eglah.

Note three of these lads carefully, for they will be tightly woven into the tragedies of David's latter years in his reign. They are Ammon, Absalom and Adonijah.

And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David (2 Sam. 5:13).

2. The sons born at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:13-16; 1 Chronicles 3:5-7).
 - a. Recall the first died.
 - b. Shammuah
 - c. Shobab
 - d. Nathan
 - e. Solomon
 - f. Ibhar
 - g. Elishua
 - h. Nepheg
 - i. Japhia
 - j. Elishama
 - k. Eliada
 - l. Eliphalet

And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel (1 Chron. 3:5).

Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam (2 Sam. 11:3)?

Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite (2 Sam. 23:34).

And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor (2 Sam. 15:12). [If this Eliam is the same in these passages, then there is an intriguing possibility that David's counselor was Bathsheba's grandfather.]

The listing in 1 Chronicles reads, after the four born in Jerusalem of Bathsheba, Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphalet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphalet. It also reads, "These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister (1 Chron. 3:9)." 2 Chronicles 11:18 reads interestingly, "And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife."

Interestingly, the children born first at Hebron were the primary source of so much of David's later grief. The possible influence of family even in later years probably could not be more emphasized than in reading between the

lines of 1 Kings 2:13. "And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon."

The Rest of the Story

David's reign had been one stunning success after another after patiently waiting for years for its fulfillment by God's hand. But the latter part of David's reign proved to be fraught with difficulty, sorrow and tragedy. The battlefields of life are not always where they appear to be, and this was so true for David. David was far from the apparent battlefields of Israel; in fact, he was at home. Nevertheless, a battle arose and he lost. Although he obtained forgiveness through the mercy of the Lord, he would never be free of the consequence of this lost battle, at least while in the flesh. When you think of the events, you want to say, "Say it ain't so." But the events did happen and what other truths are learned because they did happen must be our solace. In many ways it is like reading the book of 1 Corinthians with its difficulties—but consider what we learn from its pages; or even more, the terrible woes of the book of Revelation—but consider what it does for us.

It may be well, before entering the corridor of woe in David's reign, to be reminded of David's successes and triumphs without any meandering stuck in between to cloud the vision. Therefore, we will use Fields' chart of David's triumph to review his successes.

- The gracious reception of Abner (2 Sam. 3),
 - Goodwill to Ish-Bosheth and execution of his killers (2 Sam. 4),
 - David became king over all Israel (2 Sam. 5),
 - The capture of Jerusalem and the new capital (2 Sam. 6),
 - The victories over the Philistines (2 Sam. 5),
 - The Ark brought to Jerusalem and its significance (2 Sam. 6),
 - The temple servants appointed and organized (1 Chron. 15-16),
 - The organization of the priests and Levites (1 Chron. 23-24),
 - The promise to establish his throne forever (2 Sam. 7),
 - The defeat of the surrounding nations (2 Sam. 8),
 - The remembrance of Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9),
 - The remembrance of respect toward the Ammonites (2 Sam. 10),
 - The battles and the victories over Ammonites (2 Sam. 10).
1. David's adulteress act with Bathsheba and sore decisions to hide the sin (2 Sam. 11:1-27).
 - a. Oh, what we see in life, but, then dare not look at (2 Sam. 11:1-5; Mt. 5:27-28; Jas. 1:13-16).

- b. Uriah's nobility suffered in the hands of the sinful (2 Sam. 11:6-27).
 - c. Look what sin does, David. Don't you remember your feelings (those Psalms you wrote of them) when Saul labored to try and put you in harm's way (2 Sam. 11:14-24)?
 - d. "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD." (Deut. 27:24b; 2 Sam. 11:27; Heb. 4:13).
2. David then experienced a prophecy of another sort (2 Sam. 12:1-25).
- a. The LORD sent Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1).
 - b. Thou art the man (2 Sam. 12:7).
 - c. You despised the commandment of the LORD (2 Sam. 12:9).
 - d. Now your reign of woes will begin (2 Sam. 12:10-11).

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun (2 Sam. 12:9-12).
 - e. David recognized his sin and the LORD was gracious (2 Sam. 12:13-14; Ps. 51; 6; 32; 38; Rom. 4:7-8; 2 Cor. 7: 9-10; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1-2).

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Sam. 12:13-14).
 - f. A child was born. "... and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him ... and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD" (2 Sam. 12:24-25).
 - 1) Is there a story more touching, more enlightening than the saga of this righteous man, his sin, his forgiveness, and the consequences?
 - 2) Is there a story that better tells of the holiness of God, His faithfulness to the redemptive plan and His mercy?
 - 3) Is there a story that better outlines the principle of "saved by faith?"

- 4) Is there a story that better tells the life of most of us than this story?
- 5) Consider how much of the Bible has been written about David.

Remember the island and the sea? Let us consider the sea of our illustration for a moment. While we usually look at the story of David's faithfulness and mostly his unfaithfulness and its consequences, there is another side to this story. This story reveals the faithfulness of God to His wonderful redemptive plan. It behooves us to reflect more on the faithfulness of God than what we typically do. This can be done without diminishing the necessary faithfulness of man.

The faithfulness of God is needed for the encouragement of the saints. Until the church gets this side of the story, we will continue to struggle with sin even more than necessary. It may very well be there are still far too many members of the Lord's body that do not realize God is on their side. Therefore, the disposition not to sin is weakened, just as the young child who blunders the worst when he feels the gnawing eyes of a constantly disgusted parent's watching his every move. Finally, in despair, he runs away from it all, for it is in his perception that circumstances have become too much to bear.

Misunderstand us not. The Bible gives a continuous woeful account of man and sin, but also a continuous joyful account of a God who has been faithful and will continue to be faithful through the most dire straits to see the fullness of His redemptive plan fulfilled in the church. In fact, if the latter is not so, there would have been no need for the Holy Spirit to publish the book. As a member of the Lord's church, I am a part of this truth, joy, and universal battle.

3. David, your reign will not be without personal woe and tragedy (2 Sam. 13:1-39).
 - a. Incest. Tamar and Ammon (remember who they were and the story takes on more meaning, 2 Sam. 13:1-20).
 - 1) Ammon. First born of Hebron sons, the son of Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess.
 - 2) Absalom. Third born of Hebron sons, the son of Maach.
 - 3) "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister (2 Sam. 13:4).
 - b. David's reaction (2 Sam. 13:21).
 - c. Jonadab, an interesting figure in passing, also a relative (2 Sam. 13:3-5; 30-36).
 - d. Hatred and murder (2 Sam. 13:22-29).
 - e. Absalom flees (2 Sam. 13:37-39).
 - f. Ponder David's dilemma here and the indecisiveness that permitted the seeds of fury to grow.

4. Absalom's return and his rebellion (2 Sam. 14:1-18:33).
 - a. Joab's plot for the long absent Absalom to return (2 Sam. 14:1-18).
 - b. David sees the hand of another in the woman's story (2 Sam. 19-22).
 - c. Joab brings Absalom to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 14:23-24).
 - d. Absalom's efforts to see his father and for reconciliation (2 Sam. 14:25-33).
 - e. Absalom begins his rather overt and full campaign of rebellion for the throne of his father. (If you want to learn how to run for office, study Absalom's campaign, 2 Sam. 15:1-6).
 - f. Absalom launches the coup (2 Sam. 15:7-12).
5. David flees Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:13-37).
 - a. Read the fleeing and just sit quietly and ponder the event in human feelings and the promises regarding David.
 - b. The hour of crisis uncovers the loyalties, as nothing else can do. Dare we suggest 1 Corinthians 11:19 as a passage to summarize the host of people we meet in this hour of crisis? Dare we ponder Daniel 11:32-35, even though it is not a specific reference, but has a likeness of thought?
 - c. The king's servants (2 Sam. 15:15-18).
 - d. Ittai (2 Sam. 15:19-22).
 - e. The condition of the people (2 Sam. 15:23).
 - f. The priest and the Ark (2 Sam. 15:24-26, 29).
 - g. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.
 - h. The forming of the DIA (David's Intelligence Agency) – (2 Sam. 15:27-28).
 - i. David's condition (2 Sam. 30,31).
 - j. Ahithophel turns to Absalom (2 Sam. 15:31).
 - k. Hushai, the rest of the DIA (2 Sam. 15:32-36).
 - l. Ziba again, but where is Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 16:1-4)?
 - m. Shimei, a relative of Saul and a view of providence that is tainted (2 Sam. 16:5-8).
 - n. A typical Abishai' response (2 Sam. 16:9-14).
 - 1) David's response (2 Sam. 16:11-12).
 - 2) David still knew where trust must be placed.

6. Absalom in power and the critical counsel how to sustain it (2 Sam. 16:15).
 - a. The critical moment of Hushai's greeting Absalom (2 Sam. 16:16-19).
 - b. Ahithophel moved in order to insure that all realize this is a total division and consolidate loyalty (2 Sam. 16:20-23).
 - c. Hushai and Ahithophel battled by counsel (2 Sam. 17:1-14).
 - d. The DIA at work and the support of others (2 Sam. 17:15-29).
 - e. The battle (2 Sam. 18:1-16).
 - 1) David's words about his son (2 Sam. 18:5).
 - 2) Absalom's end by none other than Joab (2 Sam. 18:9-18).
 - f. David's grief for his son and Joab's rebuke (2 Sam. 18:19-19:8).
7. David's restoration (2 Sam. 19:9-43).
 - a. Judah met the king (2 Sam. 19:15).
 - b. The people of interest on the way back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 19:16-39).
 - c. The condition of the people (2 Sam. 19:40-42).
8. Sheba's rebellion (2 Sam. 20:1-22).
 - a. Israel in rebellion (2 Sam. 20:1,2).
 - b. David care of the tainted concubines and Amasa to gather the men of Judah (2 Sam. 20:3-5).
 - c. David's wisdom (2 Sam. 20:6).
 - d. Joab and Amasa's deadly meeting (2 Sam. 20:7-13; 19:13).
 - e. A wise woman saved a city (2 Sam. 20:14-23).
9. A review of David's administration (2 Sam. 20:23-26). David labored to hold together a fractured nation and prepared for the transition of the next king and the building of the temple.

The Latter Years of David's Reign

1. The Gibeonite affair (2 Sam. 21:1-14).
 - a. The consequence of Saul's sin (2 Sam. 21:1-6).
 - b. Rizpah again. What an interesting afternoon it would be to sit and talk with you over a cup of tea (2 Sam. 21:8-11).
2. The sin of numbers. A question of faith and/or a matter of pride (2 Sam. 24:1-25; 1 Chron. 21:1-22:1).
 - a. David's order (2 Sam. 24:1).
 - b. Joab's protest (2 Sam. 24:2-4).
 - c. David's heart smote him (2 Sam. 24:10; 1 Sam. 14:6; Lev. 26:3-8).
 - d. The LORD's message (2 Sam. 24:12,13).

- e. David's response (2 Sam. 24:14; 1 Chron. 21:13).
 - f. David's appeal. "... Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done: let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24:17).
 - g. The threshing floor, sacrifices that cost, and the future site of the temple. "... Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:18-25).
- 3. A psalm of praise (2 Sam. 22:1-51).
 - 4. A final psalm (2 Sam. 23:1-7).
 - 5. A few good men (2 Sam. 21:15-22; 23:8-39; 1 Chron. 11:10-47; 20:4-8).
 - 6. David did much toward preparing for the way of the kingdom throughout his years.
 - a. Preparing to build the temple (1 Chron. 22:2-23:1).
 - b. Structuring the people for work and order (1 Chron. 23:2-27:31).

David's final days

- 1. He faced another rebellion (1 Kings 1:5-10)
 - a. Adonijah pursued the throne (1 Kgs. 1:5).
 - b. David overlooked the campaign (1 Kgs. 1:6).
 - c. Joab and Abiathar, the military and the priest allied themselves with Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1:7).
 - d. All were not with Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1:8).
 - e. The party everyone denied attending (1 Kgs. 1:9, 41-49).
 - 1) Nathan the wise, wise prophet (1 Kgs. 1:10-27). "Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"
 - 2) David is still a man of action (1 Kgs. 1:28-40).

"Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah (vv. 28-35).
- 3) Adonijah's plight (1 Kgs. 1:50-53; 2:13-25).

2. The charge to Israel and to Solomon and David's prayer (1 Chron. 28:1-29:25).
3. He was elderly and stricken (1 Kgs. 1:1-4).
4. Finishing some unfinished business (1 Kgs. 2:1-9).
 - a. David and Solomon's discussion of David's death and Solomon's duty (1 Kgs. 2:1-4).
 - b. Joab (1 Kgs. 2:5-6).
 - c. Barzillai the Gileadite (1 Kgs. 2:7).
 - d. Shimei (1 Kgs. 2:8-9).
5. David's Death (1 Kgs. 2:10-12; 1 Chron. 29:26-30)

For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption (Acts 13:36).

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute sin (Rom. 4:6-8).

In closing, David's son later said,

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit (Eccl. 7:8).

7120 Banks St., Waterford, MI 48327

Bibliography

- Crockett, W. D. *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964.
- Ellicott, C. J. *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.
- Fields, W. *Old Testament History*. Joplin: College Press Publishing, 1996.
- Hailey, H. *Hailey's Comments, Volume 1*. Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1985.
- Pledge, C. *Getting Acquainted with the Old Testament*. Memphis: Pledge Publications.
- Smith, J. *The Books of History*. Joplin: College Press Publishing, 1995.
- Waldron, B. & S. *Give Us a King*. Athens: Bob Waldron.

The Reign of Solomon

(1 Kgs. 1-11; 2 Chron. 1-9)

by Carl Johnson

In the first century, Josephus refers to the Hebrew Bible, which consists of the same content we now have in thirty-nine Old Testament books, as being arranged into only twenty-two books (Against Apion, p. 609). The five books of Moses, for example, were regarded as one book—"the Book of the Law of Moses." Similarly, the two volumes of Samuel were considered one book, as were the two books of Kings. The compilers of the Septuagint (LXX), however, observed a more or less topical arrangement and brought both Samuel and Kings together as books of "kingdoms" (*basileion*) and then subdivided each of them so as to form four books of "kingdoms" (Archer, p. 270). 1 and 2 Samuel were called 1 and 2 Kingdoms, and 1 and 2 Kings were called 3 and 4 Kingdoms. It was Jerome's Latin Vulgate that eventually dropped the term "books of kingdoms" and employing the Hebrew Bible's division between Samuel and Kings, came out with the titles 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, which are almost universally accepted today.

In view of the subject matter contained in 1 and 2 Kings, the title is a most appropriate one. The books contain a record of the careers of the kings of Israel and Judah from the time of Solomon (970 B.C.) to the downfall of the Jewish monarchy at the hands of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.

Author

Like most of the Old Testament historical books, the identity of the author of the books of Kings remains uncertain. The Jewish tradition preserved in the Babylonian Talmud attributes the books of Kings to Jeremiah the prophet. This association may be based on the fact that in many cases there is a marked resemblance between the language of Kings and of Jeremiah (e.g., Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24-25). Smith's Dictionary of the Bible says:

As regards the authorship of these books, but little difficulty presents itself. The Jewish tradition which ascribes them to Jeremiah, is borne out by the strongest internal evidence, in addition to that of the language (Vol. II, p. 1551).

J. Hammond says another consideration in support of Jeremiah's being the author of Kings is the striking omission

... of all mention of the prophet Jeremiah in the Books of Kings--an omission easily accounted for if he was the author of those Books,

but difficult to explain on any other supposition. Modesty would very naturally lead the historian to omit all mention of the share he himself had taken in the transactions of his time, especially as it was recorded at length elsewhere. But the part of Jeremiah sustained in the closing scenes of the history of the kingdom of Judah was one of so much importance that it is hard to conceive any impartial, not to say pious or theocratic historian, completely ignoring both his name and his work (p. vi).

There are numerous arguments, however, against Jeremiah's being the author of Kings. Keil and Delitzsch say, "The author was a prophet living in the Babylonian exile, though not the prophet Jeremiah, as the earlier theologians down to Havernick have assumed" (p. 11). Two of the most forceful arguments are: (1) if Jeremiah compiled these histories, he would have been eighty-six or eighty-seven years of age, and (2) it is very probable that the books of Kings were finished and published in Babylon, while Jeremiah spent the concluding years of his life in Egypt.

The many and equally influential arguments for and against Jeremiah's authorship of the Kings leaves this writer with a sense of uncertainty. I must agree with Professor Rawlinson's fair and cautious conclusion, "Though Jeremiah's authorship appears, all things considered, to be highly probable, we must admit that it has not been proved, and is, therefore, to some extent, uncertain" (Hammond, p. viii).

Deuteronomistic History?

An alternative theory of the authorship of Kings is that it is the product of the so-called Deuteronomistic School. According to this view, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings all had the same author, or authors, and form a single historical work. This theory is based on the conclusions of liberal critics who ignore the concept of inspiration in their efforts to identify the original sources of the Scriptures. These critics have concluded that these five books must be the single literary product of one author/editor or one group of authors/editors because they have found materials in them that are strikingly similar. The opening of Judges, for example, largely parallels the content of Joshua 1-11. Furthermore, the same basic theological theme seems to pervade all the books, and the same "editorial influences" identified in the book of Deuteronomy seem to be present in the other four books.

It is true that the theological attitude of Deuteronomy frequently emerges in the moral judgments of 1 and 2 Kings. The reason for this identical theology, however, is because the author of Kings is dealing with tenets of covenant teaching central to Hebrew theology from the time of Moses. (The same is true of the Deuteronomistic influences that have been noted in the books

of Samuel and Judges. Obviously, the authors of these earlier works were familiar with Deuteronomy as well as the rest of the Torah, and considered it to be authoritative because they were given by the inspired author Moses [Archer, p. 279]).

While acknowledging the similarities between Deuteronomy and Kings, Hill and Walton point out that "notable variances between Deuteronomy and Kings on points of thematic emphasis and style abound (e.g., Deuteronomy is hortatory or sermonic narrative and prescriptive whereas Kings is formulaic historical narrative and evaluative)" (p. 203).

It becomes increasingly clear that the highly speculative Deuteronomistic History theory is plagued with many problems. Inconsistencies and contradictions among its proponents abound, and it should not be considered as a credible explanation of the authorship of the books of Kings, or any other book in the Old Testament.

It is obvious that prior written sources were available to the author of Kings, coming from as early a period as the reign of Solomon. The author makes reference to three specific sources used in assembling the "covenant history" of Israel's monarchies. The "Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 Kgs. 11:41), the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (mentioned seventeen times, e.g., 1 Kgs. 14:19), and the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (mentioned fifteen times, e.g., 1 Kgs. 15:23) are all named as resources the reader might consult for verification or further information. These documents were probably official court histories kept by royal scribes (cf. 2 Sam. 8:16; 20:24-25).

All of the books of the Old Testament, however, as well as the New Testament, were ultimately authored by God Himself, although mediated through human agencies who wrote down His truth under His infallible guidance (cf. Gal. 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:20). The inspired apostles regarded the intention of the Divine Author of the Hebrew scriptures as the important thing; the intent of the human author was merely a subordinate matter. It is entirely possible the human author of the Old Testament prophecy did not understand the full significance of what he was writing, although his actual words expressed the purpose of the Divine Author who inspired him (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

Date Written

Scholars are not in complete agreement as to the date the books of Kings were written. Hill and Walton conclude the books were probably composed in Palestine sometime between the fall of Jerusalem (587-586 B.C.) and the decree of King Cyrus of Persia that permitted the Hebrews to return to their

homeland (539 B.C.). They also believe Kings could have been composed in two stages with most of the history of Hebrew kingship being completed between the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian reprisal for the assassination of the governor Gedaliah (a third deportation in 582 or 581 B.C., which was described in the first historical appendix, 2 Kgs. 25:22-26 and Jer. 52:30). They speculate that the final edition of the work may have been published sometime after the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Evil-Merodach (ca. 562/561 B.C., reported in the second historical appendix, 2 Kgs. 25:27-30), and suggest 550 B.C. as a reasonable date for completing the books of Kings (p. 204).

Archer believes the final composition of Kings is to be dated after the fall of Jerusalem, probably in the early Exile. Yet, he believes it is possible that only the final chapter comes from Exilic times, "inasmuch as the frequently recurring phrase 'unto this day' throughout the book indicates unmistakably a pre-Exilic perspective (p. 277).

Hammond argues, however, that the date of the composition of the books of Kings must have taken place during the latter part of the Babylonian captivity, somewhere between 561 B.C. and 538 B.C. He reasons that Kings could not have been completed before 561 B.C., for that is the year of the accession of Evil-Merodach, whose kindly treatment of Jehoiachin, "in the year that he began to reign," is the last event mentioned in the history. He argues further that Kings could not have been completed after 538 B.C., the date of the return under Zerubbabel, as it is quite inconceivable the historian would have omitted an event of such profound importance, and one which had such a direct bearing on the purpose for which the history was written—to trace the fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:12-16, in the fortunes of David's house—had that event occurred at the time when he wrote. Hammond feels he can safely assign 538 B.C. as the minimum date for the composition of the work (pp. iv-v).

Given the available evidence, we do best to assign the books of Kings to the sixth century B.C. I agree with Keil who says that about the only things we can say with certainty is that the books of Kings were composed in the "second half of the Babylonian captivity, and before its close, since they bring the history down to that time, and yet contain no allusion to the deliverance of the people out of Babylon" (p. 11).

Historical Background

The Kings history surveys the Israelite "Golden Age" of the united empire under King Solomon, the split of the monarchy during the reign of Rehoboam, and the ups and downs of the political and religious fortunes of the divided

kingdoms of Israel and Judah until their collapse. Israelite interaction with the surrounding foreign powers is also integrated into the Kings account.

Two historical footnotes are attached to the end of 2 Kings. The first (25:22-26) recounts King Nebuchadnezzar's appointment of Gedaliah as the governor of Judah and Gedaliah's assassination by a group of Jewish conspirators led by one Ishmael sometime between 586 and 582 B.C. The second (25:27-30) records the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar (March 562/561 B.C.).

Archeological Evidence

Archeology has made significant contributions to the illumination and substantiation of the biblical record in 1-2 Kings. Specific discoveries include the unearthing of sites associated with the periods of both the united and the divided Hebrew monarchies (e.g., Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, Samaria, Beersheba, Arad, Lachish, and Dan). At Megiddo archeologists have uncovered the ruins of Solomon's stables where approximately 450 horses were quartered (Flanders, p. 254).

Two other outstanding archeological finds relating to the Kings account are the famous Siloam Inscription commemorating the completion of Hezekiah's water tunnel (cf. 2 Kgs. 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:2-4) and the Babylonian "prison-ration" tablets, dated to 595 and 570 B.C., which mention daily food-stuff allotments for exiled King Jehoiachin of Judah and his entourage (2 Kgs. 25:27).

A recent blockbuster report in *Biblical Archaeology Review* announces private London collector Shlomo Moussaieff has found a pottery fragment that some scholars have dated as early as the ninth century B.C. that appears to be a receipt for a donation of three silver shekels to King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The 13 words of ancient Hebrew on the piece of pottery read:

Pursuant to the order to you of Ashyahu the King to give by the hand of Zecharyahu silver of Tarshish to the House (or Temple) of Yahweh. Three shekels (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, p. 29).

Scholars believe that note, written in ink, is an invoice or a receipt for a donation to the temple, later destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians as they forced its people into captivity.

After laboratory tests of the pottery shard and analysis of the ancient Hebrew scribe's handwriting, experts conclude the fragment must have come from sometime in the ninth through the seventh centuries B.C., making it the oldest extra-biblical mention of King Solomon's temple ever discovered.

Prior to this find, the earliest and only mention of the temple apart from Biblical texts was found on a pottery shard excavated at Arad, Israel, that was dated to the sixth century B.C.

Purpose and Message

The most obvious purpose of the Kings narrative is to complete the written history of Hebrew kingship as a sequel to the books of Samuel.

The history of the Hebrew nation is told through the lives of the Israelite and Judean kings as representatives of the nation, because the fortunes of the king and the plight of the people were entwined. Rebellion and disobedience in the form of idolatry and social injustice on the part of the king brought divine retribution on the nation in several forms, including oppression by the surrounding hostile powers, overthrow of the royal dynasties, and ultimately exile into foreign lands. Conversely, the blessing of God's favor in the form of peace, security, prosperity, and deliverance from foes rested upon the people of God when the king was obedient to the law of Moses or instituted religious and social reforms after repentance and revival.

Hammond adds:

Writing during the captivity, he would teach his countrymen how all the miseries which had come upon them, miseries which had culminated in the destruction of their temple, the overthrow of their monarchy, and their own transportation from the land of their forefathers, were the judgments of God upon their sins and the fruits of the national apostasy. He would trace too the fulfillment, through successive generations, of the great promise of 2 Sam. 7:12-16, the charter of the house of David, on which promise indeed the history is a continuous and striking commentary. True to his mission as the Divine ambassador, he would teach them everywhere to see the finger of God in their nation's history, and by the record of incontrovertible facts, and especially by showing the fulfillment of the promises and threatenings of the Law, he would preach a return to the faith and morals of a purer age, and would urge his contemporaries, living in exile with him, to cling faithfully to the covenant made by God through Moses, and to honor steadfastly the one true God (IV).

The Books of Chronicles

Like Samuel and Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book. The text was divided into two books when the original Hebrew was translated into Greek.

There is much material in Chronicles that is parallel to that in the books of Samuel and Kings. There are, however, some important differences. Kings

tells about both the northern and southern kingdoms. Chronicles tells only about the Kingdom of Judah and mentions the northern kingdom only when its history directly involves Judah. Since Chronicles dwells upon the history of Judah and mentions Israel only incidentally, the primary source of the material for this survey is taken from the account in 1 Kings.

Kings has a prophetic emphasis. Chronicles has a priestly emphasis, telling of the worship and temple activities of such men as David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, etc. Chronicles shows the priestly interest in genealogies. (The genealogies are important, since the Messiah was to come from the family of Abraham and David.)

Chronicles presents the optimistic and brighter side of Judah's history, omitting such dark events as David's taking Bathsheba and Absalom's rebellion.

Chronicles covers a longer time span than do the books of Samuel and Kings, beginning with Adam and carrying the history down to the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return from Babylonian captivity. The genealogies in the book even go further forward in history than that, telling of several generations of people who lived after the Babylonian captivity (1 Chron. 3:19-24). Thus, Chronicles brings us down to about 420 B.C. to the time of the writing of the last Old Testament book.

Ezra, the scribe and priest who came back from Babylonian captivity, is thought to be the author and compiler of Chronicles. The last paragraph of 2 Chronicles is continued at the start of Ezra's book and is incomplete in Chronicles. Ezra doubtless used the old temple records as sources of the genealogies in Chronicles.

The Reign of Solomon **(1 Kgs. 1:1-11:43; 2 Chron. 1-9)**

The familiar words of Jesus, "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Mt. 6:29), referring to the natural beauty of the lilies of the field, show how the name of Solomon came to be the symbol of the wealth and glory of the empire. No other king of Israel, not even David himself, ascended a higher pinnacle of worldly splendor. Solomon's vast building program, his fabulous wealth and large harem, his far-flung commercial enterprises, his up-to-date military program, his patronage of wisdom and the arts, all were admired with wide-eyed wonder by his own subjects and such visitors as the Queen of Sheba, who had come from afar.

David's Final Arrangements (1 Kgs. 1:1-2:11)

The date of Solomon's accession as sole king can be fixed with precision to the year 970 B.C. Jewish tradition makes him eighteen years old at this epoch which agrees with the date of the Scripture narrative (Smith, p. 523). He reigned forty years, or more precisely, thirty-nine years and a half, the sum of his own and his father David's reign being eighty years.

The close of the reign of David came rapidly. Not long before the end, he summoned his son Solomon and gave over to him all the supplies he had gathered for building the temple, including even the detailed plans for its arrangement and construction. By this act, he showed his preference as to his successor.

The accession of Solomon to the throne, however, was more the result of palace intrigue than charismatic selection or inheritance. As David neared death and his strong grasp on the kingdom loosened, two parties within the palace began to vie for control, one party being led by Adonijah.

The three oldest sons of David were dead, so Adonijah, the fourth son, selected a strong bodyguard, won the support of the high priest Abiathar (David's counsel since the days of Adullain), and Joab (long David's strong-arm man), and then launched his program to usurp the throne. He came very near succeeding, but was thwarted by Nathan and Bathsheba. Upon the advice of Nathan, Bathsheba appeared before the king, told him of the plot, and reminded him of his promise that Solomon would succeed him. Zadok and Benaiah were hastily ordered, with Nathan, to proclaim publicly Solomon as king. When the new king was seated on his throne, the shouting of the people was heard by Adonijah and his conspirators. Adonijah hurriedly prostrated himself before the new king, promised absolute obedience, and begged for mercy. Solomon spared his life at this time, but later was forced to order his death.

In a solemn assembly before he died, David exhorted the new king to be faithful to Jehovah. With great sacrifices, Solomon was anointed for the second time and publicly accepted as the new ruler of Israel. With the announced decision of his father, Solomon was publicly proclaimed "ruler over Israel and over Judah."

David left an enviable heritage to his son. Solomon assumed the direction of the nation at the time of its greatest material prosperity and splendor. The kingdom extended from Mesopotamia to Egypt, comprising some fifty thousand square miles of territory—the largest in its history. The people were united and at peace with each other and with surrounding nations.

Early in his reign, Solomon was forced to deal most severely with leaders who threatened his position as king. Adonijah, who earlier had been mercifully spared by Solomon, soon became involved in another scheme that Solomon perceived as threatening (1 Kgs. 2:17). The safe course seemed to be to get rid of this troublemaker, so Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute Adonijah (1 Kgs. 2:25). At the same time, he determined to eliminate the cruel and unscrupulous Joab, who had been guilty of so many murders and had caused much grief for David (1 Kgs. 2:34). If this seems heartless and brutal, we should remember that Solomon was dealing with dangerous and unprincipled men and that the safety of his throne was at stake.

Solomon's Auspicious Beginning

The first act of Solomon's foreign policy must have been a very startling one to most Israelites. Solomon decided to strengthen his throne by making foreign alliances—a move that marked a great difference of spirit between the new monarchy and the ancient theocracy. He made an alliance with Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and took his daughter to be his wife (1 Kgs. 3:1). Solomon's behavior was a flagrant breach of the teachings of the law (Lev. 18:3), and although his sin passed unpunished for the time, this marriage was the first step toward Solomon's fall into idolatry.

Early in his reign, Solomon went to Gibeon ("high places"), six miles north of Jerusalem, with a large assembly, to offer sacrifices. God appeared to the king at night and said, "Ask what shall I give thee?" (1 Kgs. 3:5; 2 Chron. 1:1-13). The young king, as yet humble in heart and confessing himself as a little child in comparison to the great work committed him in governing and judging the people, did not ask for riches, long life, honor, or the death of his enemies. Rather, he requested an understanding heart to judge the people and to discriminate between good and evil.

The request, as expressed in Solomon's own words, does not seem to have so high a meaning as we often assign to it. Solomon did not ask for profound spiritual wisdom, as personified in his father David, which would teach him to know God and his own heart. Solomon's prayer is for practical sagacity, clear intelligence, quick discernment, to see the right from the wrong amid the mazes of duplicity and doubt that beset the judge, especially among an Oriental people (Smith and Fields, p. 525). Solomon's request pleased God, however, who promised him, not only that for which he asked, but also riches, honor, and length of days, if he would walk in the steps of his father David. This was an auspicious beginning for any king (1 Kgs. 3:5-15; 2 Chron. 1:7-13).

Solomon's Government

In general, Solomon used the same plan of organization for his government as David, except the cabinet was enlarged and more departments were added. He created the offices of court chamberlain and superintendent of slaves. The country was divided into twelve districts, nine west of the Jordan and three east of the river. A supply officer was placed over each of these districts with the responsibility of providing regular supplies for the king's court, one district for each month of the year (1 Kgs. 4:7-19). The daily amount of these provisions indicates the size and growing luxury of the court. Each day Solomon needed 150 bushels of fine flour, 300 bushels of coarsely-ground flour, ten grain-fed cattle, twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, as well as deer, gazelles, and geese (1 Kgs. 4:21-24, CEV). As the years passed, Solomon's court life reached a standard of luxury and extravagance unheard of in all Israel's history. This expansion necessitated an ever-increasing number of officials on government pay. For example, it required many men to take care of his "four thousand stalls of horses" (2 Chron. 9:25; "forty thousand stalls" are mentioned in 1 Kgs. 4:26; however, four thousand seems to agree better with the other numbers given here, viz. 1400 chariots).

Outside Jerusalem, Solomon built "chariot cities" and other fortifications at Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor, and elsewhere (1 Kgs. 9:15-19). A large fleet of horse-drawn chariots enabled him to protect his land and to control the trade routes over which wealth poured into his kingdom from Phoenicia, Egypt, Arabia, and other parts of the world (1 Kgs. 4:26; 9:10; 10:26). Solomon's traders purchased chariots from Egypt and ranged far up into Cilicia (Kue), located in old Hittite country, to import horses. Solomon was such a clever "horse dealer" that his agents exported horses and chariots to other nations at a handsome profit (1 Kgs. 10:28-29) (Anderson, p. 153).

Although the international situation offered little threat, Solomon "modernized" his army. While he never fought a major campaign, he maintained a strong fighting force including fourteen hundred war chariots and twelve thousand horsemen (1 Kgs. 10:26), setting "at naught the law against maintaining a force of cavalry" (Smith, p. 526).

The commerce with Egypt also supplied linen yarn, which was made a royal monopoly. As the result of this and other commerce, silver and gold were said to be as stones at Jerusalem, and the cedars of Lebanon as abundant as the sycamore, the common timber of Palestine (2 Chron. 1:14-17).

Solomon's Personal Qualities

All the magnificence of Solomon's empire was transcended by the personal qualities of Solomon himself. The Scriptures give us no specific description of his personal appearance as it does with Saul, David, Absalom, and Adonijah; but the wonderful impression he made upon all who came near him leads some scholars to believe Solomon must have exhibited a charismatic presence. Smith summarizes from the Scriptures the qualities that could have been used to determine personal attractiveness in Solomon's time:

Whatever higher mystic meaning may be latent in Psalm 45 or the Song of Songs, we are all but compelled to think of them as having had, at least, a historical starting point. They tell us of one who was, in the eyes of the men of his own time, "fairer than the children of men," the face "bright and ruddy" as his father's (Song 5:10; 1 Sam. 17:42); bushy locks, dark as the raven's wing, yet not without a golden glow, the eyes soft as "the eyes of doves," the countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars," "the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely" (Song 5:9-16). Add to this all gifts of a noble, far-reaching intellect, large and ready sympathies, a playful and genial humor, the lips "full of grace," the soul "anointed" as "with the oil of gladness" (Ps. 45), and we may form some notion of what the king was like in this dawn of his golden prime (pp. 526-527).

Solomon had a remarkable knowledge of the natural world, plants, and animals, as his proverbs demonstrate (1 Kgs. 4:32-33). He had a keen understanding of human nature as his famous decision in the case of the two mothers claiming the same child illustrates (1 Kgs. 3:16-28).

Solomon also must have been an entertaining conversationalist, quick at repartee and gifted with a sense of wit. He was a keen observer of human life and knew well the folly of sin and wickedness, and the wisdom of prudence and virtue.

Solomon was especially gifted in phrasing proverbs. "He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five" (1 Kgs. 4:32). His 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs probably contain nearly all of his written poetry and instruction. The rest of his teachings probably were done orally, which was the chief method of instruction in his time and long afterwards.

The tents of the patriarchs and the abodes of their descendants witnessed many an hour when the ancient father would discourse to his descendants on the lessons of his experience and the traditions handed down by his fathers; and such we conceive to have been the converse held by Solomon in the midst of his splendid court, only on a much grander scale and covering a much wider field. Thus, amid

the public life of an Eastern monarch, not in the seclusion of the retired student, he poured out the knowledge which attracted the subjects of other kings from all nations of the earth, to hear for themselves that wisdom the fame of which had reached them in their distant countries (1 Kgs. 4:34) (Smith, p. 528).

A careful examination of Solomon's entire career, however, leads one to question his wisdom. If wisdom means the courage to practice his own precepts, he failed notably. The latter years of his life witnessed the violation of many of the principles of wisdom that he so eloquently proclaimed.

Construction of the Temple

The most remarkable accomplishment of Solomon's reign was his construction program. Thanks to the favorable international situation, Solomon was able to concentrate on an ambitious twenty-year building program. Since the author of Kings regards the building of the temple as the most important enterprise in this program, he gives a large amount of space to a description of its erection, design, and furnishings (1 Kgs. 5-7).

The temple was located on a ridge above (north of) the site of the old city of David, on ground David had purchased for an altar (2 Sam. 24:18-25)—probably the very spot marked by the sacred rock which today is enclosed by the Mosque of Omar, otherwise known as the Dome of the Rock. The temple was built following the pattern of the tabernacle, doubling its dimensions. It was actually modest in size (about 90x30x45 feet), but for its time, it was a great architectural achievement.

The building of the temple was an ambitious venture involving much planning, manpower, and securing of materials. Since Solomon had no skilled architects and builders in his own kingdom, he made a deal with Hiram, King of Tyre, to provide skilled workers and materials such as cedar timber, gold, silver, bronze, and other metals for the temple's construction. To pay Hiram for these materials, Solomon provided all the grain Hiram needed for his household, including 125,000 bushels of wheat and about 1100 gallons of pure olive oil each year (1 Kgs. 5:9-11). Later, Solomon also gave Hiram twenty towns in Galilee as payment for his help in building the temple and the palace complex (1 Kgs. 9:11). Hiram called the towns "Cabul," viewing them as worthless.

The workers cut the cedar in the forests of Lebanon, floated it down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa, then took it overland up the mountains to Jerusalem. Stone workers took the stone from quarries near Jerusalem, cut and fit each stone, and then moved them to the site of the new edifice. All this work necessitated large numbers of workmen. There were thirty thousand

men employed in cutting the cedar, ten thousand working each third month, eighty thousand cutters of stone and seventy thousand ordinary workmen, besides a large number of superintendents (1 Kgs. 5:13-18). All the materials were carefully prepared beforehand so that when they were assembled, the great building was put up "without the noise of hammer" (1 Kgs. 6:7).

The temple was built in rectangular form facing east. A wall was built around the temple forming an inner court called the "Court of the Priests" (2 Chron. 4:9). The outer court was called the "Great Court" (2 Chron. 4:9). The temple itself consisted of three general sections: the Porch, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies.

The Porch was some fifteen feet deep, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. It contained two richly ornamented pillars named "Jachin" and "Boaz" (1 Kgs. 7:21). The word "Jachin" means "He will establish" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, p. 467), and probably meant that God will preserve and protect the new temple. The word "Boaz" means "In strength" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, p. 127), and "in Him," meaning "in God," was its strength.

The Holy Place was thirty feet wide, forty-five feet high, and sixty feet long. It was made of hewn stone, with cedar wainscoting and overlaid with gold. This room contained the Golden Altar of Incense, the Tables of Shewbread, and the ten Golden Candlesticks.

The Holy of Holies on the west end was a perfect cube thirty feet in height, length, and width. It was separated from the Holy Place by a beautiful and expensive veil. The Holy of Holies contained the Ark and the huge cherubim. This room symbolized the presence of the Holy God, Jehovah. It was to be entered only once each year and that by the high priest, who, after elaborate ablutions, entered on the Day of Atonement to atone for the sins of the people.

An upper house was built on top of the Holy of Holies, apparently so the ceiling will be level with the rest of the temple (2 Chron. 3:9; 1 Chron. 28:11).

It is possible that the chambers of the priests, which were three stories high, were on either side of the courts.

Dedication of the Temple

When the building was complete, Solomon orchestrated an elaborate program of dedication. He invited the priests, the Levites, and the leaders of all twelve tribes; and from his elevated brass chair, he presided over the ceremonies. The Ark was brought in and placed in the Holy of Holies as a cloud filled the house to hide the presence of God (1 Kgs. 8:1-11; 2 Chron. 5). King Solomon blessed the great crowd of worshipers and then related the history of the building of this magnificent temple. Standing before the altar, Solomon of-

ferred his long prayer of dedication (1 Kgs. 8:23-61), revealing an admirable spirit of devotion in his heart. He concluded his prayer with the words:

That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else. Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day (1 Kgs. 8:60-61).

The dedication lasted seven days and was followed by the Feast of Tabernacles which was lengthened to two weeks (instead of the usual one week).

God was pleased with the temple and Solomon's prayer and promised to watch over the temple as long as Solomon and the people were faithful to Him (1 Kgs. 9:1-9; 2 Chron. 7:11-22).

Other Phases of Solomon's Building Program

The temple was splendidly ornate, but was probably no more elaborate than Solomon's other buildings. The king's palace, built near the temple, must have been costly since it required thirteen years to build, as compared to seven years for the construction of the temple.

The palace complex consisted of five structures (1 Kgs. 7:1-12). Beginning at the south the first building was the "house of the forest of Lebanon," so named because of the forty-five cedar pillars which supported the upper part. Its dimensions measured 150 x 75 x 45, and served as treasury, armory, and courtroom, as well as residence for the regal harem.

Next to this was a hall (75 x 45) which probably was an ante-room to the throne hall where distinguished guests were received (Hester, p. 192-193).

The throne room was exceptionally ornate and beautiful. The throne itself was made of carved ivory overlaid with gold. A stairway of six steps, with six standing lions at each end, led to the throne.

Next in order was the king's own palace. It was exceptionally large so as to accommodate the large number in his family, and was the last word in beauty and grandeur. Adjoining his own palace was the special apartment or residence for his Egyptian wife, Pharaoh's daughter. Apparently, Solomon viewed her as being too important to be grouped with the women of the harem; therefore, he provided her with her own residence (1 Kgs. 7:1-12).

Solomon's Commercial Enterprises

In Solomon's reign, we see another development in the life of the Hebrew people. He entered upon vast commercial enterprises with a number of nations. Some of this trade was probably handled by caravans of camels, but the

most significant was his maritime enterprises. Some of this was done on the Mediterranean Sea through an alliance with Hiram of Tyre. His ships went as far west as Spain, bringing back great stores of silver. Most of his maritime trade was through the seaport of Ezion-Geber at the head of the Gulf of Akabah. From here, his ships sailed through the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean and then east in three year trips (1 Kgs. 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21). One authority stated that on one trip, his ships return with a cargo of gold alone valued at \$12,000,000 (Hester, p. 193). Other imports from the East included silver, sandalwood, precious stones, ivory, and (adding to his magnificence the whims of luxury) apes and peacocks (1 Kgs. 9:26-28; 10:22; 2 Chron. 8:17-18; Eccl. 2:4-6). Archaeologists have recently found an old silver mine in Abyssinia, ancient Ethiopia, which they believe was used by Solomon as a source of silver for his kingdom.

It is impossible to say how much wealth came into Solomon's hands through these commercial activities. One scholar has estimated the yearly total at more than \$100,000,000 (Hester, p. 193). He also secured vast amounts through tribute exacted from surrounding peoples, as well as the heavy burden of taxes imposed upon his own people.

The accumulation of such wealth, together with the luxurious life of the court resulting from it, brought about a deplorable condition in Solomon's kingdom. Perhaps unconsciously, Solomon became a typical Oriental despot. In his egotism, he lost sight of the rights and welfare of his people. At last, the exact situation Samuel predicted, but which the people demanded, developed. They had a wealthy and famous kingdom, but at a terrible price! (Hester, p. 194).

Solomon's Sins

The years of Solomon's reign brought a change, not only in the character of his government, but also in the ideals and the conduct of the king himself. Toward the end, luxury enslaved him and left him restless and unsatisfied. Surrounded by untold wealth and acclaimed as the world's wisest man, he came to the end of his days a pathetic figure. He describes his own condition in Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity."

Solomon's great sin was losing his devotion to God. In direct violation of Exodus 34:11-16 and Deuteronomy 17:17, Solomon brought into his court many wives and concubines from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and many other lands. These foreign wives made their demands on the time and attention of the king. He provided for them, not only the usual courtesies of his court, but also the facilities for enjoying their own national rites, which meant the worship of their idols. Consequently, Jerusalem became the scene of worship of

pagan idols and heathen gods, including the very temple area itself. Solomon's own religious convictions were dulled by this practice, and eventually he gave idolatry his approval and engaged in it himself. This was the sin that proved fatal to Solomon. God's covenant with David was all that saved Solomon from the same fate as Saul (1 Kgs. 11:9-13).

Solomon's Demise

Some years before the death of Solomon, the outlines of failure and disaster could be discerned. His own people, weary of the heavy burden of taxes for the support of his luxurious court, grew restless and finally rebellious. The surrounding nations who had been oppressed for so long began to gather their forces for rebellion. The collapse of his kingdom came from three directions. Hadad in Edom organized a revolt aimed at cutting off Solomon's trade from the Gulf of Akabah. In the north, Rezon, a Syrian, seized Damascus, endangering Solomon's holdings from that area. The most serious uprising, however, came from among his own people. Jeroboam of Ephraim, whom Solomon employed as a collector of taxes, was informed by the prophet Ahijah that he was to become king of the ten northern tribes (1 Kgs. 11:26-40). Jeroboam learned that Solomon was infuriated at hearing of the prophecy and fled to Egypt where he remained until after Solomon's death.

Solomon's kingdom, while appearing outwardly unified and strong, was, in reality, honeycombed with weaknesses that were to issue in fatal division soon after Solomon's death.

History says nothing about Solomon's repenting or of God's warnings and chastisements having had any effect upon him. We have in the book of Ecclesiastes, however, a review of the whole experience of his life based upon the recognition of the fear of God. After a reign of forty years, "Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, his father."

Assessment of Solomon

The reign of Solomon is a study in dramatic contrasts. In his early years, he displayed great religious integrity. He was later swept off his feet, however, by wealth, fame, and sensuality.

Solomon unquestionably led the United Kingdom to unparalleled heights of material prosperity. Natural resources were developed on an extensive scale. He was a great builder, having made Jerusalem one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world. However, these significant material achievements by the king were made at enormous sacrifice to the common man. Immediate luxuries were bought at the price of lasting prosperity. Enam-

oured with dreams of splendor, Solomon designed fiscal policies with only one end—produce enough income to pay the bill. More often than not, these policies operated to the detriment of long-range fiscal growth for the nation.

During Solomon's reign, there was no war. He had a well-organized army, but he led no battles and was able to keep the peace throughout his entire administration. After completing the temple, however, he appears to have done very little to promote the religious life of his people. There is no record of his contacting any prophet in all the years of his reign. Hester is right when he says, "Here was a man who might have done infinitely better, one who knew what was right but who lacked the strength to measure up to it in his own behavior" (pp. 195-196).

Thus, the age of Solomon is another chapter in the conflict between faith and culture, between God and the gods—a conflict that can be traced throughout Israel's history as a nation in Canaan. It was not God's intention that Israel should become a great nation as other nations measured greatness; rather—as affirmed in Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs. 8:51-53)—Israel was to be separate from other nations by her covenant calling. From the very first, Israel's covenant accented God's uncompromising, "jealous" demand for absolute allegiance. But it was difficult to maintain faithfulness to the Mosaic tradition in the cultural cross currents of Canaan, where the gods of the Fertile Crescent made an irresistible claim upon men's lives (Anderson, p. 159). *1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820*

Bibliography

- Anderson, Bernhard W. **Understanding the Old Testament**. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966.
- Archer, Gleason L., Jr. **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964.
- Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. **The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon**. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Flanders, Henry Jackson, Robert Wilson Crapps and David Anthony Smith. **People of the Covenant, An Introduction to the Old Testament**. 2nd ed. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973.
- Hammond, J. **The Pulpit Commentary Vol. V**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962.

- Hester, H.I. **The Heart of Hebrew History**. Liberty, Missouri: The Quality Press, Inc., 1962.
- Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton. **A Survey of the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Josephus, Flavius. **The Works of Josephus**. Translated by William Whiston. Lynn, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982.
- Keil, C.F. and Frank Delitzsch. **Commentary on the Old Testament**. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975.
- Shanks, Hershel. "Three Shekels for the Lord." **Biblical Archaeology Review**. (November/December 1997 Vol.23 No.6).
- Smith, William and Wilbur Fields. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1970.
- The Holy Bible. **Contemporary English Version**. New York: American Bible Society, 1995.

An Introduction to the Divided Kingdom

by Jim Crouch

In about 931 B.C., following the death of Solomon, the Israelite nation divided into two separate nations: Israel and Judah. This event, predicted by Ahijah the prophet to Jeroboam, forever changed the social, religious, and political makeup of Palestine and changed the course of Israel's history.

Relations between the strong tribe of Judah and the other tribes of Israel (especially Ephraim) had not been ideal for some time. This is evident on two occasions in the life of David. After Saul's death, the tribe of Judah eagerly accepted David as their king, while the northern tribes appointed their own ruler, Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 2:8-11). After Ishbosheth's death, the northern tribes made a covenant with David, formally accepting him as their king (2 Sam. 5:1-5). Later, after the death of Absalom, the northern tribes again threatened to divide the nation over a dispute with Judah concerning who would escort David back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 18-19). These events demonstrate that the bond between Judah and the other tribes was not strong, and that the thought of division was not new. Only through great care had David and Solomon managed to unite the tribes under a single political rule. Realizing this serves to emphasize the lack of wisdom displayed by Rehoboam in handling delicate negotiations with the northern tribes after Solomon's death.

Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, was intent on ruling the nation with an iron hand, much as his father had done. But he lacked the wise heart to go with the iron hand. Our story begins in Shechem, a territory of Ephraim, where all of Israel had gathered for the coronation of Rehoboam as Solomon's successor (to this point he had been accepted only in Judah).¹ However, the ceremony did not go as Rehoboam had planned.

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now

¹ In 2 Sam. 5:1-5, the tribes of Israel agreed to accept David as their king, though he had already reigned in Judah for more than seven years. Based on our text, one would assume that the appointment of king was regarded as Judah's responsibility, and the other tribes determined later, in official assembly, whether they would respect the appointment. The assembly also seems to have been a time of negotiation.

lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you" (2 Chron. 10:1-4).

When the northern tribes offered their allegiance in exchange for a lightening of labor and taxation, Rehoboam wisely took three days to consider the best course of action. The official advisers, realizing the delicate nature of the situation, suggested that he negotiate peaceful, friendly relations with the northern tribes in exchange for their loyalty (v. 7). Rehoboam, unsatisfied with this course of action, also sought the advice of his peers, who suggested that he threaten to increase the burdens of the people and thus frighten them into submission (vv. 10-11). Rehoboam chose the latter route. Evidently much to his surprise, the leaders of the northern tribes immediately revolted at such a threat, crying, "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" (1 Kgs. 12:16). Thus was consummated a most momentous event in Jewish history.

Snapshots of Judah and Israel

The division of 931 B.C. left the Israelite nation in a weakened condition and ushered in a bleak period in Israel's history. "The heroic age of the nation's beginnings had ended; the tragic age of its death struggle had not yet begun. It was, one might say, a time that witnessed as many events as any other, but so relatively few of lasting significance" (Bright, p. 229).

The Kingdom of Judah retained Jerusalem (the national capital), the temple (the religious center), and the dominant army. However, it lost two-thirds of its land (including the best farming land), three-fourths of its population and tax base, and the its access to the major trade centers of Phoenicia and Aram.

The Kingdom of Israel was superior in population, land and food resources, and trade access, yet it was deficient in central leadership politically, militarily, and religiously. Israel began its history in internal turmoil, with no capital, no government structure, no system in place for assessing and collecting taxes, no organized military, and no alliances with neighboring nations.

Neither nation was in a position to manage its own internal affairs effectively, much less to consider holding together the powerful, influential kingdom that had been organized by David and Solomon. Consequently, its power and influence disappeared overnight. The Aramean territories to the northeast could no longer be held. The Philistine cities (except for Gath) could no longer be held. Ammonite territories, once controlled by David (2 Sam.

12:30), could no longer be held. Moab could no longer be held.² And it is doubtful that Edom could be held.³ The dominant influence held over the region by united Israel dissipated, the flow of tribute money stopped, and the opportunities for revenue, at home or abroad, dwindled. As divided nations, Israel and Judah became second-rate states. Neither kingdom would ever enjoy the glory, wealth, and dominance the unified kingdom enjoyed under David and Solomon.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel existed for about two hundred years (931-722 B.C.) before being destroyed by the Assyrians. During most of this period, Samaria served as the national capital, and Dan and Bethel served as religious centers. The people of Israel were primarily rural and agricultural in their lifestyle, and the religion adopted was a mixture of Yahweh worship and Canaanite idolatry (syncretism). Throughout the course of its short but colorful history, idolatry and political unrest prevailed. A large percentage of this history took place during the lives and ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Wickedly colorful rulers such as Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, Ahaziah, and Jehu command the attention of the reader. Wonderful prophetic writings from Amos, Hosea, and Jonah focus on the political and spiritual state of the Northern Kingdom. Nineteen kings reigned in Israel, ten of which died of unnatural causes while in office (see chart). None of the rulers of the Northern Kingdom are characterized as "good" by the biblical writers, and none sought to dispense with the idolatrous religious practices begun by Jeroboam, the first northern ruler. Such wholesale rejection of divine instruction led to divine retribution and an early, complete demise of these northern tribes in 722 B.C.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah, consisting of the Levites and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin,⁴ existed uninterrupted for about three hundred fifty years (931-586 B.C.) before being overpowered by the conquering Babylonians.

² Since the Moabite Stone attributes domination of the land to Omri (ANET, pp. 320f), it must be assumed that Moab gained political freedom following the division and then lost it again under Omri's rule.

³ Fifty years after the division, Judah controlled Edom (1 Kgs. 22:47-48). However, there is no evidence that they exercised any control in the interim. Following Shishak's Palestinian invasion, it is doubtful that Judah could have maintained hold on any significant territory.

⁴ It is doubtful that Benjamin remained aligned with Judah by choice. In the past, Benjamin had been associated with the northern tribes, and when the division first occurred, it seems that Judah was alone in its support of Rehoboam as king (1 Kgs. 12:20). But Judah could not allow Benjamin to remain allied to the north. Benjamin was small and insignificant in terms of military presence, but its border ran right up to the city of Jerusalem. Judah could scarcely allow their foe such easy access to their capital. Being small and weak, it would not take much to force Benjamin into submission.

ans. During this period, Jerusalem served as its political and religious capital. Though periods of idolatry existed, Yahweh worship, with the Jerusalem temple at its heart, prevailed in Judah. The Southern Kingdom had a mixture of good and bad rulers (twenty in all), the good rulers generally characterized as having struggled against idolatrous practices. All the rulers in Judah were descendants of David (except for the usurper queen, Athaliah). The years preceding Babylonian domination saw political intrigue and a line of idolatrous rulers that stimulated God's wrath. After a seventy-year captivity, God allowed Judah to return home to rebuild their capital and revitalize the temple worship.

The Major Nations Surrounding Israel from 931-722

We will now consider a very brief survey of the "major players" in the Near East theater, and then proceed to a more detailed historical survey of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Egypt

Egypt had become a forgotten nation in terms of world influence during its inglorious Twentieth and Twenty-first Dynasties (ca. 1100-950). During this period, Egypt was beset by regular sea invasions by Libyans and other neighbors. There is little evidence of Egyptian contact with the world outside of the Sinai Peninsula. The Twenty-second Dynasty, founded by Pharaoh Shishak I (ca. 935-914), marked a brief resurgence in military power and political influence. He made invasions into Palestine shortly after the division of the kingdom, leaving steles (victory monuments) as far north as Galilee. A full account of his military accomplishments is found on the walls of the Temple of Karnak at Thebes. Shishak's successor, Osorkon I (914-874), was not as successful and was defeated by King Asa of Judah (2 Chron. 14:7-12). From here, Egypt's power diminished steadily.

Assyria

Assyrian influence had remained limited from its time of glory under Shamshi-adad I (1748-1716) until a period of recovery was sparked by Shalmaneser I (1265-1236) who completed a conquest of the Mitanni. Assyria maintained its land holdings and political stability for the next century until the next great Assyrian leader emerged, Tiglath-pileser I (1116-1078), known as the founder of the New Assyrian Empire. Tiglath and his successors were able to expand their kingdom to the east and west, but for many decades they were unable to make headway to the south due to the strength of the Aramean states and a short period of poor national leadership. By 875, under Asshur-

nasirpal II (884-860), one of the cruelest military leaders the world has known, Assyria was able to make regular incursions through Aram into Palestine. One by one, the Aramean states folded under Nasirpal's iron hand. Then, during Omri's reign, he marched westward across Syria to the Mediterranean Sea, taking tribute from the cities of the Phoenician coast (he claims to have "washed his spears in the Mediterranean," ANET, pp. 275ff). Their strength and thirst for control increased steadily and reached its peak in the eighth century under Tiglath-pileser III (745-728), Shalmaneser V (727-723), and Sargon II (722-706), during which period the city of Samaria was destroyed and its population taken captive.

Aram

The land of Aram consisted of a loosely organized group of northern immigrants who settled into the land northeast of the Sea of Galilee. These newcomers to the region merged with the existing population and by 1200 had formed a strong alliance of Aramean states. These states were largely independent; but they could quickly join forces in defending against attacks from neighboring nations, e.g. when Tiglath-pileser I had intentions of annexing Aram into the Assyrian kingdom. During the height of the united kingdom of Israel, David and Solomon were able to bring the Aramean states into subjection; but immediately after the division, the northern states united their efforts and proclaimed independence. During the tenth and ninth centuries, Aram waged continuous war with their neighbors to the south, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Aram remained strong until finally folding under the power of Assyrian forces led by Tiglath-pileser III toward the end of the eighth century. The great cultural contribution of Aram to Palestine was its language. Their Semitic dialect became the spoken language of the masses, and it continued to be so through the first century A.D.

Phoenicia

Phoenicia, located along the Lebanese coast, was a tremendous maritime trade center, funneling great wealth and international influence into the region. Its major cities consisted of Byblos, Berytos, Sidon, and Tyre. The term "Phoenicians" was not used until the eighth century, made popular by the Greeks who called these coastal peoples after the red-purple dye made there (Gr. *phoinix*). Before this time, the people of the area were called Sidonians or Canaanites.

Phoenicia was a prosperous region very early in the record of human history, with archaeological records of Byblos and Ugarit dating back to fourth and fifth millenniums. After a temporary decline in 1200 due to attacks from

the Sea Peoples, Phoenicia entered upon its most prosperous period. Hiram I, King of Tyre, is mentioned prominently in the Old Testament record as having supplied the building materials for the Jerusalem temple and for the palaces of David and Solomon (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kgs. 5:1-12; 2 Chron. 2:13-16). Treaty relations between united Israel and Phoenicia opened up prosperous trade opportunities for Palestine. After the division of 931, the Northern Kingdom of Israel sought alliance with Phoenicia. Such was completed between King Ethbaal of Phoenicia (Hiram's successor) and King Omri of Israel.

Late in the ninth century, and especially in the eighth century, Phoenicia became a casualty to Assyrian aggression. In 853, a Syrian-Phoenician alliance was defeated by Shalmaneser II at Qarqar, and in 743, Tiglath-pileser III subjugated the region. Sorely weakened, the coveted Phoenician coast would become subject to the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans in swift succession.

Closing Thoughts

The tribes of Israel had divided goals and loyalties long before Rehoboam succeeded Solomon. It was probably only a matter of time before political division would ensue. Rehoboam's lack of wisdom and Jeroboam's exploitation of the national rift merely provided the impetus for the division.

Idolatry was a problem in each kingdom and ultimately led to their respective captivities. From the time Jeroboam made the golden calves until Assyria destroyed Samaria, the Kingdom of Israel never was able to overcome the idolatry that plagued their land. In addition to the golden calves erected at Dan and Bethel, the Northern Kingdom was drawn to the worship of Baal, a local Canaanite deity.

The good rulers of the Kingdom of Judah opposed the idolatry that crept into the Southern Kingdom; the bad rulers embraced it, or at least were indifferent to the problem. During the period that Athaliah wielded influence in Judah, Baal worship was present in the land. In addition, frequent references to the "high places" and "Asherah poles" indicate the worship of Canaanite gods continued to surface throughout the period of the divided kingdom.

The blight of idolatry did not come to an end before both kingdoms found themselves held captive on foreign soil. Such was the fate God had promised for His people should they turn to false gods (Deut. 28:64; 1 Kgs. 14:15; Neh. 1:8). Happily, after seventy years in bondage in Babylon, the Kingdom of Judah learned her lesson and never again became entangled in the idolatrous worship of the surrounding nations.

The Northern Kingdom (1)

(from Jeroboam to Jehoram)

by Jim Crouch

The history of the Northern Kingdom is one of tragedy. From beginning to end, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, every king who ruled is characterized in the Scriptures as evil. This is because they all embraced the worship before the golden calves Jeroboam erected at Dan and Bethel. Such wholesale idolatry eventually suffered the wrath of the patient, yet jealous, God of heaven. The kingdom existed from 931-722 B.C., at which time God allowed the Assyrians to call an end to the existence of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. (For a full introduction to this period, see "An Introduction to the Divided Kingdom.")

Jeroboam I (931-910)¹

Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, the son of Nebat and Zeruah (11:26).² He appears on the scene as a capable young man employed as one of Solomon's officials, presumably to collect tax revenues from his native tribe (11:26). He was also a supervisor of labor in Solomon's vast building projects and was put in charge of all the work force from Joseph's clan (tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) in the rebuilding of the city walls (11:28).

In the midst of this building project, Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon. We are not told the exact cause of the rebellion, though some have surmised that it was related to unacceptable forced labor practices of the king.³ In response to the revolt Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam fled to Egypt and gained asylum in the courts of Pharaoh Shishak. But as he escaped Jerusalem, Ahijah the prophet met Jeroboam and prophesied that the Israelite nation would divide after Solomon's death, and that he (Jeroboam) would receive control of ten of the tribes (11:29ff).

Jeroboam remained under Shishak's protection until Solomon's death in 931, at which point a revolt by the northern tribes was imminent. Jeroboam returned from Egypt to be the spokesman for the tribe of Ephraim and the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all ruling dates follow those suggested by Thiele (see chart, p. 271)

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the book of 1 Kings, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible, and all dates are Before Christ.

³ This would make sense, for it was over the heavy forced labor practices of Solomon that the northern tribes ultimately revolted. This revolt was led by the Ephraimite tribe with Jeroboam as their leader

other tribes of the north. At Shechem, in an official audience with the Judahite successor king Rehoboam, the issues of forced labor and unreasonable taxation were raised. As has already been noted, Rehoboam refused to grant their request for alleviation and threatened them with increased labor requirements. Such a threat influenced the northern tribes to renounce the house of David and elect Jeroboam as their rightful king. The secession was finalized when "all Israel" stoned to death Adoniram, the man in charge of forced labor, sent by Jeroboam to quell the revolt (12:28). Rehoboam barely escaped to Jerusalem with his life, and though he raised a large army in an attempt to force the northern tribes into submission, the Lord checked such an effort through Shemiah the prophet (12:22ff). In this way, the prophecy of Ahijah was fulfilled and Jeroboam became the first king of the ten northern tribes of the Kingdom of Israel.

After receiving ruling power, Jeroboam set his capital at Shechem, an ancient and venerable location, the place where Abraham built his first altar upon his arrival in Canaan (Gen. 12:6-7). Later, Tirzah (about seven miles northeast of Shechem) was named as the site of Jeroboam's palace (14:17), indicating that the capital had been moved to this location.

Throughout Jeroboam's reign there were border wars between Israel and Judah (14:30). Only one of the later battles is recorded in any detail, with Judah the decisive victor over an Israelite force twice as large as its own (2 Chron. 13:1-20).

The only other known significant warfare of Jeroboam's reign occurred when Pharaoh Shishak⁴ (ca. 945-924) invaded Palestine (925). There are two accounts of this invasion: the biblical account (14:25ff; 2 Chron. 12:1ff) and an Egyptian account preserved on a Pylon of the temple Amen-Re at Karnak. The biblical account focuses on losses sustained in Judah, especially the seizure of Solomon's golden shields and other treasures from Jerusalem. But the Egyptian account is much broader. In a temple relief, Shishak names more than one hundred fifty Palestinian cities that he captured during this invasion, about fifty of which were cities in the Northern Kingdom (e.g., Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo, Beth-shean, et al.). Jeroboam, once considered a friend of Shishak and in whose court he found asylum during the reign of Solomon, must have failed to repay Shishak's kindnesses adequately and therefore was not immune to an Egyptian invasion.

⁴ Shishak is identified with Pharaoh Sheshonq I, founder of the 22nd Egyptian Dynasty (ca. 945-924). He was a shrewd politician who did much to solidify stability at home. In foreign affairs and military matters he was cautious. His sole military claim was the Palestinian invasion during the final months of his life.

The most significant event of Jeroboam's reign occurred early on. Though the kingdoms were divided politically and economically, they were still united in their worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Jeroboam feared that, if this remained the case, there was still a chance that the tribes might find reconciliation (12:25ff). After all, Jerusalem was not merely the religious center for the nation, but also the political capital of the Kingdom of Judah. Therefore, to maintain his newfound power, Jeroboam instituted a new form of religion for the Northern Kingdom. He established two shrines: one in Dan on the northern frontier, served by priests whose lineage could be traced back to Moses, and one in Bethel on the southern frontier, a venerable site where Abraham and Jacob had made sacrifice (Gen. 28:17). Even more appalling to the devout Israelite was the fact that each shrine held a golden calf (presumably thrones for the invisible God) in imitation of the Canaanite worship practices.⁵ In conjunction with these images, Jeroboam ordained his own priests and new holy days. The installation of the golden images in these shrines is stigmatized throughout the book of Kings as "the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."

When these shrines had been completed, Israel gathered at Bethel for the official inauguration of the new worship. While Jeroboam himself was officiating at the sacrifice, a prophet from Judah stood to decry the altar. In the midst of giving an order to have the young prophet seized, the Lord paralyzed Jeroboam's arm. As a sign of the Lord's displeasure with the adoption of Canaanite worship practices and that the prophets of Bethel would later be slain by a king of Judah named Josiah,⁶ the prophet called for the altar to be broken in two by the Lord. Immediately the altar split (13:1ff). Yet, despite this great sign, Jeroboam did not cease Canaanite worship practices.

When Ahijah the prophet first informed Jeroboam of the Lord's intention to give him ten of the tribes, there was an accompanying promise:

However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes

⁵ The Arameans and Canaanites often placed images of their gods on the backs of standing images of calves as a sign of strength and stability. Therefore, one may assume that Jeroboam never intended for the calves to actually represent Yahweh (and thus openly violate Ex. 20:3). It is more probable that he intended to present the invisible Yahweh riding on the backs of the calves in keeping with Canaanite practices (Albright, Bright, Merrill, et al.). He certainly tried to combine paganism and Jehovah worship.

⁶ This is one of the few prophecies of Scripture where the actual name of an individual is mentioned. Another example occurs in Is. 44:28, 45:1, 13, where Isaiah prophesies that a ruler named Cyrus would allow the temple of Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you (11:37-38).

In leading Israel into sin, Jeroboam forfeited a wonderful, enduring legacy. Jeroboam's name might have been mentioned with that of David. Instead, because of his selfishness and disregard for the will of heaven, Jeroboam's lineage was destined to be snuffed out of existence.

Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone. Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country. The LORD has spoken! The LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam. This is the day! What? Yes, even now (14:10-11, 14).

Nadab (910-909)

Nadab was the son of Jeroboam, the second and last in Jeroboam's line to rule in Israel. He only ruled for parts of two years and very little is known of his reign, nothing outside the biblical account. He "walked in the ways of his father and in his sin," meaning that he continued the same idolatrous practices (15:26).

The only notable event of his reign was an attack that he led on the city of Gibbethon, a city in Dan (20 miles west of Jerusalem). Gibbethon was a city allotted to the Levites after the conquest (Jos. 21:23) and was abandoned when the Levites fled Jeroboam's territory in alignment with the Kingdom of Judah. The Philistines had seized the small town, and Nadab was determined to take it back. However, during the battle, Nadab fell prey to a military coup led by Baasha, one of his captains.

Baasha (909-886)

Baasha was the son of Ahijah of the tribe of Issachar. He seems to have been of lowly origin, for the Lord later said through the prophet Jehu concerning Baasha, "I have lifted you up from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel" (16:2). He came to the throne by an act of duplicity. While fighting at Gibbethon under the leadership of King Nadab, Baasha conspired against the king and slew him. He then slew all the surviving family members of Jeroboam, fulfilling the prophecy of Ahijah of Shiloh (14:12-16).

Although Baasha reigned over Israel for twenty-four years, the Scriptures do not give much information about the events of his reign. He carried on a

long war with Asa, King of Judah. Late in the course of this border war, Baasha began fortifying Ramah, a small town five miles north of Jerusalem and well within Benjamin's territory, in order to control traffic going in and out of Judah. Unable to stop Baasha's advances, King Asa recruited help from Ben-Hadad I, King of Aram (ca. 895-860). Though a treaty existed between Israel and Aram, an extravagant gift of silver and gold from King Asa (Asa took it from the temple) convinced Ben-Hadad to break his alliance with Israel and form a new treaty with Judah. As Ben-Hadad began attacking the northern cities of Israel, Baasha was forced to divide his forces and take up a defensive posture. This allowed King Asa to overrun the uncompleted fort at Ramah and to use its materials to build outposts at Geba and Mizpah just to the northeast and northwest of Ramah (15:16-21; 2 Chron. 16:1-6).

Baasha did not heed the divine warnings against the idolatrous worship established by Jeroboam, nor did he heed the message of the fate of Jeroboam's house that he himself had carried out. As a result, the same fate was announced against his house by the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani (16:1ff). He himself died a natural death and was buried in Tirzah, his capital. Elah, his son, succeeded him.

Elah (886-885) and Zimri (885)

Elah succeeded his father to the throne during a time of great political unrest. He reigned for only two years before being assassinated, relinquishing the throne in the same treacherous manner that his father Baasha had gained it. All that is known of his reign is that he continued the battle with the Philistines for the city of Gibbethon. While the troops were away and engaged in battle, and while Elah was drunk in Tirzah, Zimri, a chariot commander, conspired against the king and slew him. Zimri then proceeded to kill all the remaining descendants of Baasha (just as Baasha had killed all the descendants of Jeroboam) in accordance with the prophecy of Jehu (16:1-4). Elah's reign is characterized in the Scriptures as being evil like his father's, condoning idolatry.

In keeping with the political unrest of the time, Zimri did not reign long—seven days total. When the Israelite army engaged in battle at Gibbethon heard of Zimri's actions, they were not pleased. They refused to accept Zimri's bid for the throne and instead appointed Omri, the army captain, to the throne and marched against Tirzah. While the city was besieged, Zimri barricaded himself within the palace and set it afire, thus committing suicide.

Omri (885-874)

After Zimri's self-inflicted death, the people did not immediately accept Omri's bid for the throne. Part of the people aligned themselves with Tibni. This resulted in continued political turmoil for the next four years, culminating in Tibni's death and Omri as the undisputed King of Israel. Though lacking the overwhelming support of the masses at the first, Omri brought a much-needed political stability to the land and proved to be one of the great kings of the Northern Kingdom. He reigned for twelve years, but this includes the four years of political conflict. Therefore, he reigned in Tirzah for six years (16:23), the first part of which was before the death of Tibni, and six more years in Samaria.⁷

After settling into the throne, Omri founded the city of Samaria (about seven miles northwest of Shechem) and moved the national capital there.⁸ Located on an isolated hill in central Israel, Omri could scarcely have chosen a more strategic location from which to rule the land. It remained the capital of the Northern Kingdom until its demise in 722 under the powerful Assyrian forces, who captured it only after a three-year siege.

Omri's military prowess is seen also in subjugation of Moab, which was forced to pay heavy tribute to Israel during the reigns of Omri and Ahab (2 Kgs. 3:4). On the Moabite Stone, King Mesha of Moab described the situation, attributing its cause to the displeasure of the national deity, Chemosh.

I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh-[...], king of Moab, the Dibonite—my father (had) reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father,—(who) made this high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh [...] because he saved me from all the kings and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries. As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years (lit., days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said, "I will humble Moab."⁹

⁷ In correlating Omri's reign with that of Aka in Judah, it appears that Omri only ruled for eight years (cf. vv. 23, 29). This represents his period of uncontested rule, and when added to the four years of political conflict, brings his total ruling years to twelve (v. 23).

⁸ Samaria (m. "hill of Shemer") is named after Shemer, the man from whom Omri bought the land for the new capital. The hill on which it is built stands 300 ft. high and easily the highest point from some distance in any direction, nullifying a surprise attack on the city. Also, the city lay on a major N-S trade route.

⁹ ANET, 320-321, Pritchard, p. 209. The Moabite stone was discovered in 1868. The date of this particular inscription is toward the end of Mesha's reign, ca. 830.

Mesha described further how he threw off the Israelite yoke of subjection (under Ahaziah's reign, 853-852), attributing his success to the national deity, Chemosh (cf. 2 Kgs. 3:4ff).

The Scriptures imply that Omri lost some territory to Ben-Hadad and the Arameans early in his reign (20:34), but Omri soon solidified the political situation and was able to hold the Arameans at bay. As evidence of this, we know that Omri soundly defeated the Moabites (as noted earlier). Moab was located southeast of the Dead Sea. That Omri sent a large number troops that far away from home indicates he was not fearful of enemy attack from Judah or Aram. Omri must have built a formidable military in a short time.

Further strengthening his position in the region, Omri made a very profitable trade alliance with Phoenicia, giving Israel access to ports along the Mediterranean coast and Phoenicians access to rich grain and oil products. Another advantage would be mutual aid in protection against the Arameans who quickly were gaining strength. In what must have been a part of this alliance, Omri approved the marriage of his son Ahab to the daughter of Ethbaal, Priest-King of Sidonia. This, as the Kings writer emphasizes, opened the door for Baal worship in Israel.

Omri died after a nationally profitable, but religiously ruinous, reign of twelve years. The Kings writer characterizes his reign, "But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him" (16:25). He was succeeded by his son Ahab who continued his father's military, political, and religious policies. Omri's influence in the region is seen in that he was mentioned often on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III of Assyria where Samaria is repeatedly called "Omri-Land," even years after his death.¹⁰

Ahab (874-853)

Ahab, son of Omri, was the seventh king of Israel. He began his reign during the thirty-eighth year of Asa's reign in Judah (ca. 874) and reigned for twenty-two years from the city of Samaria. His reign was also contemporary with that of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ben-Hadad I and II in Aram. It was also during his reign that Asshur-nasirpal II (883-859) began to oppress the Arameans and also made an attempt to push into Palestine. Ahab, more than anyone else in Israel's history, has been associated with pagan practices and immorality.

¹⁰ ANET, pp. 280-285, Pritchard, pp. 191-195. In the first of these references, Samaria is labeled repeatedly as "the house of Omri" (*Bit-Humri*), and Jehu is identified as the current ruler of "Omri-land" (Samaria). Assyrian references to Samaria in this way continued for more than a century after Omri's death.

In acknowledgment of a treaty with the Phoenicians, Omri had arranged for his son Ahab to marry Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal,¹¹ priest-king of the Sidonians. When such a union occurred, it was common for provision to be made for the wife, leaving her homeland, to receive a place for worship of her native gods (Bruce, p. 43). For this reason, Solomon built shrines for his many foreign wives on the western slope of the Mount of Olives (11:7-8).¹² After Jezebel moved to Samaria, Ahab built a temple for her in honor of Baal-Melqart,¹³ the chief god of Tyre, and allowed her to retain many priests in service to Baal and Asherah.¹⁴

It is unlikely that Ahab or Jezebel either one originally set out to destroy the traditional worship of Yahweh or to make Baal the national deity of Israel. While Ahab patronized the Baal cult and supported his wife's beliefs, he named his children after Yahweh: Jehoram ("Yahweh is high"), Ahaziah ("Yahweh has taken hold"), and Athaliah ("Yahweh is exalted") (Bruce, p. 44). Even so, it is clear that Jezebel intended Baal worship to play a significant role in Israel's religious activity. She maintained a large temple with some 850 Baal and Asherah priests (18:19). And when she began to receive opposition by the Yahweh prophets, she systematically began killing them (18:3-4). Obadiah, a devout Yahweh worshiper and member of the court staff (not to be confused with the prophet), was able to hide one hundred of the loyal prophets in caves and to provide for them there.

¹¹ The name means, "man of Baal."

¹² While Solomon's wives turned his heart toward foreign gods (11:4-6), there is no evidence that these foreign shrines had a significant impact on the citizens of Judah as a whole. Not so with Jezebel and her Baal shrine. She made a concentrated effort to make Baal a significant god for all Israel.

¹³ In its general sense, the term Baal refers to the great fertility-god of the Canaanites. However, the term came to be used in compounds to simply denote "Lord of ____" (Baal-zebub, "the lord of flies," Baal-peor, "Lord of the Moabite mountains," Baal-gad, "Lord of good will). Baal-Melqart, the local deity of Tyre, means, "Lord of the city." It was to this aspect of Baal that Jezebel was loyal.

¹⁴ In mythology, Asherah was the wife of the war god Asir, named after the city of Ashhur in Assyria. She was adopted by the Canaanites as a fertility goddess and was often worshiped in conjunction with Baal, the fertility god of the Canaanites. In the Ugaritic Keret text, Asherah is said to have had a temple in Tyre (ANET, 129-142).

Yahweh vs. Baal

It was during this bleak period in Israel's religious history that the most colorful of the Old Testament prophets took center stage. Elijah the Tishbite,¹⁵ dressed in a mantle of animal skin and a leather belt around his waist (2 Kgs. 1:8), appeared on the scene abruptly to announce a drought on the land presumably because of the sins of Ahab and Jezebel (17:1).¹⁶ Indeed, his ministry seemed to focus on the expulsion of the Baal cult from Israel.¹⁷ Upon announcing the Lord's message, Elijah just as quickly disappeared to be nourished by the Lord along the Kerith¹⁸ stream, a tributary of the Jordan, during the drought. After the Kerith became a casualty to the long drought, the Lord sent Elijah to Phoenicia where he and his widow hostess were providentially cared for. There is more than a little irony in the fact that Elijah would find refuge in Zarephath,¹⁹ a Sidonian village, the former turf of Jezebel and in the heart of Baal-Melqart's kingdom. Ahab searched high and low for Elijah, soliciting the help of neighboring nations, yet to no avail (18:10). Sidon was the last place that Ahab would have suspected as Elijah's abode. Here, the Lord sustained his prophet, along with the widow and her son. And in a time of crisis involving the death of the son, God used Elijah as an instrument to restore the deceased to his mother (17:7-24).

After a long time, in the third year of the drought,²⁰ the Lord sent Elijah back to confront Ahab. Because of the drought, Ahab had sent servants out in search of pastureland for livestock, dividing the responsibility between himself and Obadiah. Elijah met Obadiah in the way and sent him to announce his arrival to Ahab. He was reluctant at first, not knowing if Elijah truly intended

¹⁵ It is uncertain whether Elijah was from Tishbe near Kedesh (in Naphtili) or from an otherwise unknown Tishbe in Gilead. His age, upbringing, parentage, and lineage are unknown.

¹⁶ Baal was worshiped as the god of wind and rain (ISBE), and therefore should have been able to prevent such a drought.

¹⁷ Some have suggested that since Elijah does not condemn the worship established by Jeroboam, he must have approved it. This reads too much between the lines. The Scriptures repeatedly denounce "the sins of Jeroboam." At this time in Israel's history, the greater evil that must be dealt with is Baal worship, and Elijah's ministry was uniquely tied to its extermination.

¹⁸ Locations south of Gilgal or east of the Jordan have been proposed

¹⁹ Located about five miles south of Sidon on the Lebanese coast, about eighty-five miles from Samaria.

²⁰ The Old Testament record (18:1) leaves the possibility that the actual length of the drought was only a little over a year, including parts of three years (see Bright, p. 245). In support of this theory, there were still areas of green grass for livestock (18:5-6). However, cf. Jas. 5:17, Lk. 4:25, where James and Jesus state that the drought period was three and one-half years.

to appear before the king. Having received the necessary assurances, Obadiah informed Ahab of Elijah's arrival (18:1-15). Upon meeting Ahab, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a contest to see whether their god or Yahweh was the true God. The site chosen was Mount Carmel, which housed a leading Baal shrine.

The four hundred fifty prophets of Baal met Elijah on Mount Carmel, but there is no evidence that the prophets of Asherah made an appearance. Once a sufficient number of people had gathered to witness the event, Elijah made an official challenge: each would build an altar and adorn it with an appropriate sacrifice and would then pray to their respective god to ignite the sacrifice; the sacrifice ignited by divine intervention would declare which god was the true God.²¹ The Baal prophets prayed all day long, but to no avail. Elijah began to taunt them with such statements as, "Shout louder! Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is in deep thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened" (18:27). This only served to heighten the efforts of the Baal prophets, and they began to shout louder and cut themselves with knives in hopes of attracting the attention of their god. Finally, at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah called a halt to their attempt. Mount Carmel must have also been the site of an ancient altar of the Lord, for the Scriptures say that Elijah began reconstructing a broken altar. Upon preparing the sacrifice, Elijah ordered his servants to soak the sacrifice and the wood with twelve jars of water. Then, turning his attention heavenward, he prayed to God, Who consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, and the water standing around the altar. The empirical evidence compelled the people to acknowledge the reality and supremacy of Yahweh. With emotions running high, Elijah ordered the people to seize the Baal prophets, and he slew them in the Kishon Valley (18:16-40).

Following this dramatic encounter, Elijah prayed again and the Lord sent the much-needed rainfall to the land. Perhaps discouraged, perhaps caught up in the enthusiasm of the people, Ahab returned to Jezreel with Elijah running afoot ahead of his chariot. Since Elijah returned with Ahab, we are left to assume that the king had displayed a change of heart. Further, Elijah must have expected that, given the evidence, Jezebel would reconsider her position as well. Whatever Elijah's expectations, he was disappointed and discouraged when he heard Jezebel's threat to kill him, just as he had killed the Baal prophets (19:2).

²¹ Since Baal was commonly worshipped as the god of the wind and rain, it should have been no problem for him to send lightning down to ignite the sacrifice.

Elijah's Flight

The biblical narrative now leaves Jezreel to follow Elijah. The prophet fled southward from Jezreel, through Judah, to Beer-sheba (ninety-six miles south of Jezreel). Here, Elijah left his servant behind and walked another day's journey southward into the desert before sitting by a broom tree and praying for death. While in a state of depression and slumber, an angel twice gave Elijah food and water. And on the strength of this divine nourishment, the prophet traveled forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, probably another name for Mount Sinai (over two hundred miles south of Beer-sheba). Upon arrival at this ancient hallowed mountain, God appeared to him as He had appeared to Moses nearly six hundred years earlier. Amidst a display of wind, earthquake, and fire, the Lord showed his presence in a gentle whisper—God's power could be seen in the simple spoken message, and such would characterize the remainder of Elijah's ministry.²² God then informed the discouraged and dejected prophet that there were more than seven thousand Israelites who had not yet bowed their knees to Baal. With renewed confidence, Elijah set out to carry out the Lord's will in defeating Baal worship in Israel, and to anoint three leaders who would continue the work he had begun: Elisha to succeed himself, Jehu to succeed Ahab, and Hazael to succeed Ben-Hadad. Elijah would only anoint the first of these personally; the other two would be anointed by his successor, Elisha.

War Against Aramea

The war between Aram and Israel was never decided and continued sporadically for several decades. King Ben-Hadad I of Damascus died c. 860, and the new king, Ben-Hadad II,²³ had thoughts of regaining the Israelite territory lost by his predecessor. Finally, in a bold move, Ben-Hadad led a contingent of thirty-two Aramean rulers with their armies and chariots. He sent a message to Ahab demanding his gold, silver, and choice wives and children. Ahab, apparently afraid to confront such a large force, humbly agreed to the terms. Either Ben-Hadad was just intent on a fight, or he believed that since the first request was granted so readily that he could afford to up the ante. In either case, he sent another message demanding the right to search through all the leading homes of Israel and take whatever he desired. With the consent of the

²² James Smith also suggests that the fire, wind, and earthquake may represent God's wrathful judgment against Israel's sin; i.e., God would not remove Baal worship by supernatural devastation, but by the spoken word (p. 515).

²³ This ruler's personal name seems to have been Hadadezer, and is referred to as such in Scripture, while his throne name was Ben-Hadad (Bright, p. 243).

city elders, Ahab refused this second request. And after a heated exchange of threats, Israel and Aram prepared for battle (20:1-12).

Aware of the alliance that Aram had with Judah, Ahab did not want to find himself sustaining wars on two fronts. Diplomatically, he made peace with the current King of Judah, Jehoshaphat (Asa's son), and sealed the alliance by giving his daughter, Athaliah,²⁴ in marriage to Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (cf. 22:44; 2 Chron. 18:1). This having been settled, Ahab was prepared to confront Ben-Hadad.

In the two battles that followed, the Lord tried once again to win the confidence of Ahab. Through a prophet, the Lord promised to deliver the Aramean coalition forces into his hands. In a surprise attack, the Israelites were able to inflict heavy losses on a far superior Aramean army, driving them from the land (20:13-21). At the prophet's instruction, Ahab immediately began making preparations for another attack the next spring. Meanwhile, Ben-Hadad's advisors convinced him that Yahweh was a god only of the hills; therefore, if the Arameans would attack Israel on the plains, they would be successful. In the spring, Aramean forces gathered near Aphek and the badly outnumbered Israelite force met them there. "The Israelites camped opposite them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside" (20:27). Again, through a prophet, the Lord promised to deliver the Arameans into Ahab's hands. The ensuing battle resulted in 127,000 casualties for the Arameans and King Ben-Hadad taken prisoner (20:29-30). Ben-Hadad sued for peace and Ahab, unwisely and to the Lord's displeasure, granted it. The only terms that Ahab imposed required the Arameans to return the cities they had taken from Israel and to give Israel access to markets in Damascus (20:34).²⁵ After receiving a sound rebuke from the Lord, Ahab returned to Samaria dejected (20:35-43).

²⁴ The Scriptures do not specifically say that Athaliah's mother was Jezebel ("the daughter of Ahab," 2 Kgs. 8:18, 2 Chron. 21:6; "the granddaughter of Omri," 2 Kgs. 8:26, 2 Chron. 22:2), but the fact that she later usurped the Judean throne and introduced Baal worship to the southern kingdom suggests that she was. However, Bright points out that she could not have been the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel because her son, Ahaziah, was born about 864 (2 Kgs. 8:26), and Ahab and Jezebel could have been married only about ten years at the time. He suggests that she may have been Ahab's daughter from a previous marriage or a daughter of Omri who was raised by Ahab and Jezebel after his death (p. 242, n. 38).

²⁵ Ahab probably granted easy peace terms out of fear of Assyrian aggression. It was to Israel's advantage to have a strong ally between them and Assyria.

War Against Assyria

The events of the next three years, though not recorded biblically, are of importance to our survey. To the northeast of Aram, the Assyrians had been slowly gaining military might over the last century and had been expanding their borders to the east and west. In 853, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (859-823) met a coalition of Semitic forces in battle at Qarqar on the Orontes.²⁶ Shalmaneser recorded the kings against whom he fought and the contribution that each made to the coalition forces. Among the twelve kings mentioned are Hadadezer (Ben-Hadad II) of Damascus and Ahab of Israel. Ben-Hadad is credited with having supplied twenty thousand soldiers, while Ahab is said to have supplied ten thousand soldiers and two thousand chariots.²⁷ In his record, Shalmaneser claimed to have won a stunning victory, but the fact that he did not stake out territory in the south or make further inroads toward Palestine suggest that his claim was inaccurate.

Naboth's Vineyard

During the three-year respite from war with Aram, the Kings writer records yet another event in which Ahab showed disregard for the Lord. Naboth, a citizen of Jezreel, owned a vineyard near the royal estate. Ahab coveted this piece of property, but because of its ancestral value, Naboth refused to sell at any price. Seeing her husband moping and pouting over this fact, Jezebel set out to acquire the vineyard. Hiring false witnesses to testify that Naboth had blasphemed God and the king, she ordered the death of Naboth by stoning (21:1-14).²⁸ Ahab, his mood now refreshed, went to inspect his newly acquired property. But as he entered the vineyard, there was Elijah. The prophet announced the Lord's anger and prophesied that the same dogs that licked the blood of Naboth would also lick his own blood, that these same dogs would eat the flesh of Jezebel, and that all his male descendants would be slain (21:17-26). Ahab humbled himself at this prophecy, causing the Lord to suspend the exacting of this sentence for one generation.

²⁶ It is likely that the death of Ben-Hadad I provided an ideal opportunity for an Assyrian invasion of Aram.

²⁷ ANET, pp. 277-281 (Pritchard, pp. 188-192). The Assyrian text refers to Ben-Hadad as Adad-idri, the equivalent of the biblical name Hadadezer.

²⁸ Jezebel was the instigator of many of Ahab's sins. She did not grow up under Judaism and had no respect for the Lord or His laws. Ahab would not have considered murdering Naboth. For Jezebel, it was just one of the avenues that was available if you were the ruler of the land.

War Against Aramea Again

Though having joined forces against a common enemy (viz. Assyria), hostilities between Aram and Israel resumed soon after the Assyrian emergency had subsided. Despite the treaty of three years earlier, the city of Ramoth-Gilead, a frontier city in the Transjordan region, remained in the hands of Aram. During a visit in Samaria, Ahab complained to Jehoshaphat that this city still lay in Aramean control, and solicited his aid in forcibly taking the city. Jehoshaphat agreed in principle, but first he wanted to consult the prophets for divine confirmation of their plan. Ahab was very eager to comply with Jehoshaphat's request, and he began marching his complacent prophets through the palace. One by one, four hundred in all, each prophet predicted a sound and glorious victory over the enemy, some using colorful illustrations to accompany their prognostications. Whether Jehoshaphat knew the backgrounds of these prophets or not (we are not told), he was certain they were not prophets of the Lord. Therefore he said to Ahab, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?" (22:7). Reluctantly, Ahab agreed to call for Micaiah, but he warned ahead of time that this prophet always predicted doom and gloom, adding, "I hate him" (22:8). Though sarcastically supporting the words of the other prophets at the first, Micaiah finally described a vision in which he had seen the people of Israel "scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd" (22:17). Micaiah went on to tell a parable that condemned Ahab's prophets as lying prophets who were doing the Lord's bidding in enticing Ahab to his death (22:19-23).

Ahab angrily threw Micaiah into prison, but feared his prophecy to the extent that, as the day of battle drew near, he instructed Jehoshaphat to go on into battle wearing his royal apparel while he himself went in disguise. In the course of the battle, an Aramean archer drew an arrow at random that happened to hit the disguised Ahab between the armaments, inflicting a mortal wound. He died in his chariot, probably from a loss of blood, and was taken back to his estate in Jezreel. In keeping with Elijah's prophecy, the blood that was washed from Ahab's chariot was lapped up by the dogs that had earlier lapped the spilt blood from Naboth's broken body (22:37-38; cf. 21:19).

So died Israel's most famous and most infamous, king. He ruled Israel for twenty-two years and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

Ahaziah (853-852)

Ahaziah, son of Ahab, was the eighth king over Israel. He reigned for parts of two years from the city of Samaria. Like his father, he accepted the

calf worship instituted by Jeroboam and promoted the worship of Baal. He began reigning in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign over Judah.

Soon after Ahaziah had taken the throne, the Moabites, under the leadership of King Mesha, rebelled against Israel (2 Kgs. 1:1; 3:4). No doubt, the Moabites perceived Ahab's death in battle as a signal of weakness in Israel and seized the opportunity to rebel. With Israel's king having recently been killed by Aramean forces to the north, and with Moab located eighty miles south of Israel, it was unlikely that Ahaziah would be able to march against Moab anytime soon. Any efforts to resubjugate Moab would fall to Ahaziah's successor.

Like his father, Ahaziah made a treaty with Jehoshaphat. The two kings agreed to venture together in a fleet of sailing ships. The ships were constructed in the port village of Ezion-geber on the Red Sea. The Lord was displeased with Jehoshaphat's decision to partner with Ahaziah and prophesied through Eliezer that the ships would be destroyed before ever setting sail. Accordingly, the ships were destroyed. Apparently, Ahaziah wanted to make another attempt to construct a sailing fleet, but Jehoshaphat refused (22:48-49; 2 Chron. 20:35-37).

Still early in his reign, Ahaziah fell through a lattice opening on the second floor of his palace. This accident left him injured and bedfast. Being the son of Jezebel, Ahaziah's first thought was to inquire from Baal concerning his prognosis. He sent messengers to Ekron of Philistia to inquire of the local Baal deity there, Baal-zebul.²⁹ However, having been instructed by an angel, Elijah intercepted the royal delegation. Elijah's message was pointed and ominous.

Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore this is what the LORD says: You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die! (2 Kgs. 1:3b-4).

Having heard the message and a description of the messenger, Ahaziah immediately ascertained the identity of the prophet of doom—Elijah. On three occasions Ahaziah sent companies of fifty soldiers to capture the prophet, but Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume the first two companies. The third survived only because of a plea for mercy. Elijah willingly visited

²⁹ We are left to speculate as to why Ahaziah would inquire of this particular Baal. Perhaps Ekron possessed the nearest Baal shrine or perhaps Baal-zebul had a reputation for favorable oracles. Baal-zebul means "lord of flies," perhaps suggesting his ability to control plagues involving flies and other pests.

Ahaziah at his bedside, pronounced the same ominous message, and Ahaziah died (2 Kgs. 1:2-17).

Ahaziah ruled Israel for parts of two years. He had no sons, so his brother, Jehoram, succeeded him.

The Ascension of Elijah (852?)

Elijah's short visit with Ahaziah would prove to be his last contact with Ahab's house. It was probably shortly after Ahaziah's death that Elijah was taken into the heavens in a chariot of fire.³⁰ Elijah's imminent departure was well known among the prophets (2 Kgs. 2:3, 5) and Elisha was determined to witness the event.

After miraculously crossing the Jordan on dry ground (2 Kgs. 2:8) and reaching the moment of departure, Elijah offered to grant Elisha a gift. Elisha's request was to receive a double-portion of Elijah's spirit, a request that was to be granted if Elisha actually were to witness Elijah's departure. About that time, a chariot of fire received the elder prophet into the heavens. As Elisha peered into the sky at his rising mentor, Elijah dropped his mantle, signifying Elisha's new position as master of the prophets (2 Kgs. 2:9-12). Elisha called out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" (v. 12). We might say that Elijah's leadership had been worth more than cavalries and divisions. Interestingly, this same epithet was applied to Elisha, also (2 Kgs. 13:14).

Elijah's actions from the events at Naboth's vineyard to those surrounding Ahaziah's death are not recorded in the Scriptures. However, we can safely assume that Elijah spent these years training spiritual leaders of Israel in the prophetic office. At Mt. Horeb, God had appeared to Elijah in a small, quiet voice, probably indicating that Elijah's ministry would no longer be characterized by the dramatic, but by the tacitly powerful work of teaching and training others. When Elijah journeyed toward the spot of his final departure, he visited the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho, probably made up of men he had personally taught in the ways of the Lord. In a subtle way, these pious men would effect a change in the Israelite community. After Elijah's departure, Elisha became the master teacher in these schools. He demonstrated his authority in three initial miracles: dividing the Jordan River, healing a foul

³⁰ There is some difficulty reconciling the chronology of events. Jehoram of Judah received a letter of rebuke from Elijah (2 Chron. 21:12-15). William Smith believes Jehoram received this letter during his co-regency. Others assume Elijah left the letter to be dispatched after his death. Still others assume that many of Elisha's miracles occurred before Elijah ascended. The latter explanation seems least likely.

spring, and inciting bears to maul a band of youths who were treating him disrespectfully (2 Kgs. 2:14, 19-25).

Jehoram (852-841)

Jehoram (abbr. Joram), the son of Ahab and brother of Ahaziah, was the ninth king of Israel. The biblical record grants a more favorable assessment of Jehoram's character—he removed the sacred stone of Baal from Samaria, but supported the calf worship at Dan and Bethel. He began reigning in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah and in the second year of Jehoram's reign in Judah (2 Kgs. 1:17b; 3:1).³¹ (In 853, Jehoshaphat had received his eldest son onto the throne as a co-regent.)

War Against Moab (2 Kgs. 3:4-27)

Soon after gaining the throne, Jehoram gathered his forces in an attempt to resubjugate Moab. As noted earlier, Moab had rebelled after the death of Ahab. Interestingly, King Jehoshaphat agreed to aid Jehoram in this effort.³² The decision was made to march southward from Judah through Edom and then north to Moab. This was in an effort to solicit the aid of the Edomites who were subject to Judah (vv. 8-9).

Disaster struck south of the Dead Sea—the armies ran out of water. Elisha had traveled with the company, apparently without the knowledge of the kings, and his aid was sought. The Lord, through Elisha, instructed the soldiers to dig ditches, which were subsequently filled with water by the Lord. Elisha further prophesied that the allied armies would inflict heavy losses on the Moabites (vv. 9-20).

God used the water both to refresh the allied armies and to deceive the Moabite army. As the Moabites looked across the desert plain the next morning, they observed what appeared to be large amounts of blood adorning the desert floor (the red morning sun was reflecting off the water). Concluding

³¹ Both Ahab and Jehoshaphat named one of their sons Jehoram. Some believe that this happened in conjunction with the treaty the two kings had signed as a token of their friendship. Ahab later gave his daughter, Athaliah, to Jehoram of Judah to marry. Therefore, Jehoram of Israel and Jehoram of Judah were brothers-in-law and contemporary rulers of their respective kingdoms.

³² This marks the third time the Bible records Jehoshaphat's aiding the cause of an Israelite king: Ahab at Ramoth-gilead, Ahaziah in an effort to build a fleet of ships, and Jehoram in an effort to subjugate Moab. This shows the close tie between the houses of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. One might even wonder how much influence Athaliah had in convincing Jehoshaphat to participate in these ill-fated ventures.

that the three allied kings had turned against one another, the Moabites rushed recklessly into the desert to gather the spoil. The allied troops ambushed the disorganized and stunned Moabites, driving them back into their cities. The allied troops sacked many of the Moabite cities, stopped up the water wells, and destroyed the crops. The battle seemed won until King Mesha sacrificed his firstborn son and in so doing rekindled the spirits of the Moabites. They fought with such zeal that the allied forces returned to their homes having failed in their attempt to subjugate Moab (vv. 21-27). Moab's small success in this matter emboldened King Mesha to gather his forces in an attack against Judah later that year (2 Chron. 20:1ff).

Various Miracles by Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:1-6:7)

Elisha is more decorated in the Bible as a miracle worker than any other Old Testament prophet—only Jesus and Moses are credited with having performed more miracles. Six of Elisha's miracles are mentioned in this section of Scripture. We will note them in brief.

One of the prophets died, leaving his wife and two sons penniless and with heavy debts. The desperate widow asked Elisha for help. Ascertaining that the only household asset was a jar of oil, Elisha instructed the widow to borrow as many jars as possible from neighbors and then to begin filling them with oil. Miraculously, from her one small jar, she was able to fill all the borrowed jars with oil. Elisha told her to sell the oil to pay off her debts and provide for children (4:1-7).

A Shunammite woman had proven quite hospitable to Elisha to the extent that she and her husband built a room onto their house for Elisha and Gehazi (Elisha's servant) to use whenever they passed that way. In return, Elisha promised the aging, childless couple a son. Some years later, the son became ill and died. The Shunammite woman summoned Elisha, who raised the boy back to life (4:8-37).

One of the prophets at Gilgal prepared a stew for the other prophets from some wild gourds he had gathered. Unknown to him, the gourds proved to be poisonous. By mixing some flour into the stew Elisha miraculously made the food fit for consumption (4:38-41).

A man came from Baal-shalisha bearing a food offering of twenty bread cakes and a few stalks of grain to Elijah. This amount of food would normally feed about twenty men. Elijah commanded his servant to distribute the food to the people, presumably at the prophetic school in Gilgal, a group consisting of one hundred men. In keeping with Elisha's prophecy, there was food enough and to spare (4:42-44).

The most developed narrative of Elisha's miracles involved the healing of an Aramean captain named Naaman. Naaman was a leper. From one of his Hebrew captives (perhaps taken in the battle against Ahab and Jehoshaphat), Naaman learned that there was a prophet in Israel who might be able to alleviate his malady. He traveled to Samaria with a letter to the king asking for healing. The king was bewildered and thought for sure it was a trick, but Elisha learned of Naaman's arrival and had the Aramean brought to him. Elisha instructed Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River, a prescription Naaman was loathed to follow, but one that ultimately produced the healing he desired. This convinced Naaman that there was no God save for Yahweh (2 Kgs. 5:1-27).

The school of the prophets, having outgrown their current residence, decided to build a new habitation near the Jordan River. As they were building, the head of one of the axes fell into the river, a double loss since the ax had been borrowed. Elisha caused the ax head to float to the surface where it was recovered (2 Kgs. 6:1-7).

Through these miracles and others that follow, the Lord gave King Jehoram and the Israelites concrete evidence that He alone was to be revered. Nevertheless, the people failed to see the connection of the miracles to their relationship to Yahweh. This spiritual blindness would ultimately lead the Northern Kingdom into unrecoverable disaster. We are reminded of Jesus' harsh words for the residents of Capernaum who had witnessed so many of His miracles, yet without repentance:

And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you (Mt. 11:23-24).

In light of the wonderful miracles worked in Israel by Elisha and the people's lack of repentance, perhaps similar words of judgment could have been uttered against them.

War Against Aramea (2 Kgs. 6:8-7:20)

There had been skirmishes between Israel and Aramea ever since Ahab's death with a general understanding that Aramea had the upper hand.³³ King Ben-Hadad decided to flex his muscle a bit by setting up secret camps in

³³ This fact is seen in that Naaman, an Aramean commander, could walk into Samaria unharmed and wreak fear on King Jehoram with the slightest hint of an impending attack. Also, in this passage, the small Aramean forces are able to camp in Israel without fear of serious reprisal.

hopes of attacking passersby. But to the dismay of Ben-Hadad, the Lord communicated the whereabouts of the Aramean troops to Elisha, and Elisha communicated the information to King Jehoram with the result that the Israelites avoided the traps. Having learned that Elisha was the source of his problems, Ben-Hadad sent a mass of troops to trap and capture him in the city of Dothan.

When Elisha and his servant awoke the next morning, they found themselves completely surrounded by Aramean soldiers. Elisha's servant feared for his life. It was at this point that Elisha did something spectacular—he prayed for the eyes of his servant to be opened to the spirit world. Now Elisha's servant could see the hills "full of horses and chariots of fire" (6:17). Elisha then asked for the Lord to blind the Aramean forces, after which he led them helplessly into the midst of Samaria and the presence of King Jehoram. In a great show of restraint and strength, Elisha ordered the king to feed the Arameans and release them so they could tell King Ben-Hadad of all that had happened. This put an end to Aramean raids in Israel (6:8-23).

Perhaps angered and frustrated by the lack of success in raiding, King Ben-Hadad mounted an all out affront against Samaria. During the siege, the famine became so great that food was no longer affordable and some had even resorted to cannibalism (6:25-29). King Jehoram blamed Yahweh for the dire straits of the city and decided to vent his anger by killing Elisha, Yahweh's prophet. When the king announced his intention to Elisha, the prophet assured the king that the famine would be lifted by the next day. When the king's officer scoffed at Elisha's prophecy, Elisha prophesied that this man would not be allowed to eat any of the food that would be provided (6:30-7:2).

That evening, a group of lepers, realizing they would soon die of starvation, determined to surrender to the Aramean army. But when they arrived into camp, they found it deserted, but still full of provisions. Though tempted to hoard the food for themselves, their consciences led them to inform the city's inhabitants that the enemy had fled leaving their provisions behind. After the lepers' report had been confirmed, the people stormed through the city gate, crushing the king's servant who had challenged Elisha the previous day. Thus, Elisha's prophecies were fulfilled—the city received relief from the famine, but the king's officer was not allowed to enjoy it (7:3-20).

Final Acts of Elisha (2 Kgs. 8:1-15; 9:1-3)

Knowing that there would be a famine in the land, Elisha had warned the Shunammite woman. She and her family had stayed in Philistia for seven years, but upon their return to Israel found that someone else had taken over

their house and land in their absence. She made an appeal to the king to have her property restored. The king granted the appeal (8:1-6).

Elisha traveled to Damascus where King Ben-Hadad II lay ill. Hearing of the prophet's arrival, Ben-Hadad sent Hazael, his servant, with gifts to inquire from Elisha concerning the king's prognosis. Elisha told Hazael, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover'; but the Lord has revealed to me that he will in fact die" (8:10). Hazael was perplexed, and even more so when Elisha prophesied that he (Hazael) would be the next king of Aram and that he would mercilessly ravage the inhabitants of Israel. The next day, Hazael killed King Ben-Hadad (8:7-15).

Elisha instructed one of the young prophets to locate Jehu, an Israelite commander, and to anoint him the next king of Israel (9:1-3). By appointing Hazael and Jehu as the next kings in their respective countries, Elisha was fulfilling instructions the Lord had given to Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:15-17), and which apparently had been delegated to Elisha.

The Death of Jehoram (2 Kgs. 9:4-24)

Jehu wasted no time. After informing his soldiers of his royal anointing, Jehu set out for Jezreel. King Jehoram was in the royal city nursing wounds he had received while fighting against King Hazael at Ramoth-gilead. King Ahaziah of Judah (Jehoram's nephew) was with him there. The kings saw Jehu approaching at breakneck speed and went out to meet him. By the time Jehoram discovered Jehu's intention, it was too late. Jehu sent an arrow that spit the shoulder blades of the King of Israel.

King Jehoram ruled over Israel for twelve years. All of his descendants and ancestors (the house of Ahab) were killed by Jehu. His death marked the end of the longest of the Israelite dynasties. He was succeeded by Jehu, son of Nimshi.

Conclusion

Some would conclude that it is unimportant to study the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel—they had no "good" kings, the Messiah did not descend from any of these tribes, their history is cut short due their destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Nevertheless, there are two broad lessons to be learned from our study.

First, despite the fact that the Northern Kingdom had no kings who served God acceptably, He was patient with His people. It may be argued that God sent His two greatest prophets, Elijah and Elisha, to the Kingdom of Israel in hopes of turning their hearts toward righteousness. In the same way, God is

patient with His people today; He does not want anyone to be lost (2 Pet. 3:9, 15, et al.).

Second, despite the great love God had for the people of Israel, His patience had a limit. After repeated failed attempts to turn the hearts of the people, God allowed the Assyrians to take the Northern Kingdom into captivity (see next article). The destruction was so great that the Northern Kingdom ceased to exist and the identity of these ten tribes was lost forever. Peter warns, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, now wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come . . ." (2 Pet. 3:9-10; cf. Rom. 11:11-24). 9955 W. 82nd Place, Arvada, CO 80005

Bibliography

- Albright, W. F. **From the Stone Age to Christianity**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957.
- _____. "The Old Testament World." **The Interpreter's Bible**. Nashville, Tenn.: Abington Press, 1:233-271.
- Archer, Gleason L. **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, revised 1985.
- Bright, John. **A History of Israel**. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981.
- Bruce, F. F. **Israel and the Nations**. London: Paternoster Press, 1963.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W, ed. **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979.
- Free, Joseph P. **Archaeology and Bible History**. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1969.
- Hester, H. I. **The Heart of Hebrew History: A Study of the Old Testament**. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1962 (revised).
- Merrill, Eugene H. **An Historical Survey of the Old Testament**. Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1966.
- Pritchard, J. B., ed. **The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, Volume 1**. Princeton University Press, 1958 (an anthology of Pritchard's Ancient Near Eastern Texts [abbreviated ANET] and Ancient Near Eastern Pictures).
- Smith, James E. **The Books of History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995.
- Smith, William. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970.

Thiele, E. R. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Wood, Leon J. *A Survey of Israel's History*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1970.

Charts

The Kings of Israel: Jeroboam to Jehoram

King	Length of Rule	End of Rule
Jeroboam I	22 years	Died
Nadab	2 years	Slain
Baasha	24 years	Died
Elah	2 year	Slain
Zimri	7 days	Suicide
Omri	12 years	Died
Ahab	22 years	Slain
Ahaziah	2 years	Accident
Jehoram	12 years	Slain

Chronology of the Kings of Israel

	Hayes and Hooker	Thiele	Bright	Cogan and Tadmor
Jeroboam	927-906	931-910	922-901	928-907
Nadab	905-904	910-909	901-900	907-906
Baasha	903-882(880)	909-886	900-877	906-883
Elah	881-880	886-885	877-876	883-882
Zimri	7 days	885	876	882
Omri	879-869	885-874	876-869	882-871
Ahab	868-854	874-853	869-850	873-852
Ahaziah	853-852	853-852	850-849	852-851
Jehoram	851-840	852-841	849-843/2	851-842

The Kings of Israel in Relation to Other Regional Rulers

Israel	Judah	Egypt	Aram	Assyria
Jeroboam (931-910)	Rehoboam (931-913)	Shishak (935-914)	Rezon (940-915)	Asshur-dan II (935-913)
Nadab (910-909)	Abijah (913-911)	Osorkon (914-874)	Tabrimmon (915-900)	Adad-nirari II (912-892)
Baasha (909-886)	Asa (911-870)		Ben-Hadad I (900-860)	
Elah (886-885)				
Zimri (885)				
Omri (885-874)				Asshur-nasirpal II (884-860)
Ahab (874-853)	Jehoshaphat (872-848)		Ben-Hadad II (860-841)	Shalmaneser III (859-825)
Ahaziah (853-852)	Jehoram (853-841)			
Jehoram (852-841)	Ahaziah (841)			

The Northern Kingdom (2)

(From Jehu to the Exile)

by Bill Davis

The worship of golden calves that Jeroboam I established was followed consistently by each king until Ahab took the throne. When Ahab married Jezebel and instituted Baal worship as Israel's official religion, the Bible declares, "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (1 Kgs. 16:34). While calf worship was detested by Yahweh, it was never as hated as Baal worship. Consequently, God condemned Ahab and Israel repeatedly for their evil, but to no avail. They simply would not repent of their idolatry. Finally, Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, was appointed by divine decree to eliminate the house of Ahab (1 Kgs. 19:17; 2 Kgs. 9:6-8).

Jehu, 841-814 B.C. (2 Kgs. 9:1-10:31)

Jehu came to the throne of Israel in 841. This was an important year in Old Testament history for several different reasons. First, it was an important year because the Omride dynasty ended when Jehu murdered Joram, the last descendent of Omri to rule Israel. Second, it was significant because Assyria would have conquered Israel in 841 had Jehu not paid tribute to Shalmaneser III. Finally, it was important because the Jehu dynasty had its beginning in that year.

The End of the Omride Dynasty

As noted above, Jehu was selected to terminate the dynasty of Omri, and this he did in a most dramatic way. Soon after receiving his decree to destroy the house of Ahab, Jehu drove to Jezreel. He had a special reason for going there—Joram, the last son of Ahab to rule Israel, had been injured in battle and had retired to Jezreel to recover. Further, while at Jezreel, Joram's nephew, Ahaziah, King of Judah, had gone to visit his wounded uncle. When Jehu arrived in Jezreel, both Joram and Ahaziah went out to meet him only to learn too late that he had come to abolish the house of Ahab.

Jehu killed Joram and had his body cast onto the plot of ground once owned by Naboth (2 Kgs. 9:26). Although Ahaziah escaped, he was mortally wounded and later died in Megiddo. Then, in fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (1 Kgs. 21:23), Jehu saw to it that Jezebel died a horrible death. She who had introduced the hated Baal worship to Israel was providentially removed from the scene. With the queen mother Jezebel, her son Joram King of Israel, and

her grandson Ahaziah King of Judah disposed of, Jehu's next move was against the remaining descendants of Ahab.

There were seventy of Ahab's sons living in Samaria (2 Kgs. 10:1). Jehu used intimidation (2 Kgs. 10:2-4) to acquire the loyalty of the guardians of those sons, and requested that the heads of all seventy be sent to him in Jezreel. The guardians promptly cut off the heads of the sons of Ahab and sent them in baskets to Jehu. In turn, he deposited the heads in two piles at the gate of the city. He then used that ghastly sight to convince the people of Jezreel that they were witnessing the result of divine intervention (2 Kgs. 10:9-10). Once he had established a divine reason for what he was doing, Jehu proceeded without interference as he killed all who remained of Ahab's family and friends.

Although Jehu had practically destroyed the house of Ahab, he had not yet destroyed Baal worship. His next project therefore, was to go to Samaria and take on the citadel of Baalism. On the way to Samaria, he encountered forty-two brethren of King Ahaziah of Judah. Jehu had all of them brutally executed at the place where he found them. When he arrived in Samaria, his first act was to eradicate any who remained of Ahab's family. After that, he pretended to be a worshiper of Baal, and called for a special assembly of all Baal worshipers in the land. When all had gathered at the temple and were worshipping Baal, Jehu ordered eighty of his men to go in and to slaughter every one of them. Then in a final blow against Baalism, he destroyed the temple with all of its furnishings (2 Kgs. 10:26-28). So complete was his eradication of Baal that it was never again the serious problem it had been under Ahab.

Jehu Commended and Condemned

God commended Jehu for destroying the house of Ahab and doing away with Baalism (2 Kgs. 10:30). Accordingly, God blessed Jehu and gave him the throne until the fourth generation, the longest dynasty of any king of Israel. God was not, however, entirely pleased with Jehu. For later, God stated through the prophet Hosea that he would "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and would cause the kingdom of Israel to cease" (Hos. 1:4b).

Why would God commend and condemn Jehu for the same apparent action? There are several possible reasons. First, although God was pleased that Jehu destroyed Baalism, he was displeased with Jehu's deception and brutality in the affair. Second, Jehu murdered the house of Ahaziah without authority, and that must have attributed to God's discontentment with him. Third, it became obvious that Jehu had a different reason for removing Baalism than God had for wanting it removed. God obviously wanted his people to worship Him

and Him only; but Jehu was acting purely from his own selfish ambition. True Yahweh worship was not what Jehu had in mind. He was a bitter enemy of Baalism, but Jehu was not a true worshiper of God. He worshiped, instead, the golden calves set up by Jeroboam.

Baal worship and calf worship were both considered idolatry. The former broke the first commandment and the latter the second commandment of the Law of Moses. Of the two, it would seem that calf worship was the more tolerable. Neither Elijah nor Elisha was as hard on calf worship as on Baal worship. The difference was probably that calf worship was false worship of Yahweh, whereas Baal worship was worship of a false god. The calves were only symbols of God's power, and Israel was worshiping God through those symbols (albeit, unscripturally). That was what Aaron was doing at Sinai when he built a golden calf. At that time, the people exclaimed, "These be thy Gods [margin, a God], O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Then, "Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh." They evidently had no intention of worshiping a false God—they were worshiping Yahweh in a false way.

When Jeroboam later instituted calf worship, he said exactly the same thing the people did at Sinai (1 Kgs. 12:28). Like Aaron before him, Jeroboam was not introducing a new god, but a new way to worship the old God. God, though, was no more pleased with Jeroboam than he had been with Israel at Sinai. Neither was God happy with Jehu for reestablishing calf worship after eradicating Baalism.

The Bible historian put it this way, "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short [reduce the size of Israel, NIV] and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel" (2 Kgs. 10:31-32). The reducing of the size and power of Israel was divine retribution because of the sin of Jehu.

Jehu Paid Tribute To Assyria

Israel's reduction in size came about at the hand of Syria when she declared war against Israel. The reason for the Syrian attack was that Jehu incurred the wrath of Hazael King of Syria when Jehu paid tribute to Assyria (Unger, p. 567). Assyria invaded both Israel and Syria in 841, and instead of joining a confederation with Hazael to fight Assyrian expansion, Jehu submitted to Shalmaneser III, King of Assyria. The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III that was found at the Nimrud ruin near ancient Nineveh in 1946 pictures Jehu bowing before the Assyrian ruler. An inscription on the Obelisk shows Jehu paid tribute to Assyria.

After Shalmaneser invaded Syria and Israel, he retreated for some time and concerned himself with other countries to the east and north. Consequently, Hazael, who was still a formidable opponent, began to harass Israel. While Jehu staved off domination by Shalmaneser III by paying tribute, he left Israel open to Hazael's plunder (Mould, p. 239). According to the biblical record (2 Kgs. 10:32-33), Hazael took all the land east of Jordan as far south as the Arnon River. All of this was divine punishment upon Israel (2 Kgs. 8:7-15) because of Jehu's evil in embracing calf worship, and his bloodletting in Jezreel.

Jehu reigned twenty-eight years (2 Kgs. 10:36). He established a dynasty that lasted eighty-nine years, twice as long as any other in Israel. Jehu was a ruthless, bloodthirsty, ambitious annihilator of Baal worship, but as a king, he was a miserable failure.

His merciless destruction of Jezebel and the house of Ahab alienated the Phoenicians (Jezebel was a Phoenician) on the west, and the murder of Ahaziah alienated Judah on the south. As noticed above, Jehu paid tribute to Assyria, which antagonized Syria on the north. Israel's neighbors on three sides were therefore hostile and this naturally had a detrimental effect upon Jehu's reign, both economically and politically. The real reason, however, that he failed as an administrator is found in Scripture: "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart" (1 Kgs. 10:31).

Jehoahaz, 814-798 B.C. (2 Kgs. 13:1-9)

During Jehu's reign, Syria, under Hazael, put relentless pressure on Israel (2 Kgs. 10:32). As already noted, this resulted in the loss of most of Israel's territory east of the Jordan. After Jehu died and his son Jehoahaz took over, things got even worse. As a result of Jehoahaz's sin, God allowed Hazael and his son Benhadad II to again invade Israel and inflict even greater punishment (2 Kgs. 13:3).

The oppression by Syria continued "all the days" (2 Kgs. 3:22) of the reign of Jehoahaz. Like all of his predecessors, Jehoahaz was an evil king, but one thing distinguished him from the others. During the Syrian affliction, the Bible revealed that Jehoahaz "besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him" (2 Kgs. 13:4). The outcome of his seeking the Lord's favor was that Yahweh provided "a savior" (v. 5), and they were able to escape Syrian domination.

The identity of the "savior" is a debated question among scholars. Some think it was the Assyrian leader Adas-nirari III (810-783) who ruled during the time of Jehoahaz. Adad-nirari III subjugated Hazael in 805 (Merrill, pp. 365-

366) while Jehoahaz was still on the throne of Israel, and by that, gave Israel some relief. It is therefore possible, that Adad-nirari III could have been the "savior" of Israel. Other scholars (Smith, p. 613), however, think the "savior" of Israel is a reference to the successors of Jehoahaz, i.e., his son Jehoash and grandson Jeroboam II. This seems the most likely because during their reigns, Jehoash, and particularly Jeroboam II, gained deliverance from Syrian control.

The order of the Bible account suggests that the "savior for Israel" came during the reign of Jehoahaz. However, it should be noted that the verses that speak of the "savior for Israel" (2 Kgs. 13:5-6) are parenthetical, and therefore do not necessarily follow the sequence of the story—they can refer to another period. Most likely, they refer to the time of Jehoash and Jeroboam II.

Jehoahaz ruled Israel for seventeen years. Perhaps the best thing that could be said of him was that he "besought the Lord and the Lord gave Israel a savior so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians." Other than that, the reign of Jehoahaz was mostly one of gloom and despair.

Jehoash, 798-782 B.C. (2 Kgs. 13:10-25; 14:15-16)

Jehoash was the third in line of the dynasty of Jehu. Like his father Jehoahaz and grandfather Jehu, Jehoash engaged in the sins of Jeroboam and "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kgs. 13:11). In spite of this biblical evaluation of him, Jehoash did seem to have a redeeming quality. When Elisha lay dying, Jehoash went to visit him and mourned his condition (2 Kgs. 13:14). This act of kindness moderates to some extent the harsh assessment of Jehoash that is given in 2 Kings 13:11. His visit to Elisha showed a degree of concern and compassion.

Jehoash addressed Elisha in the same manner as Elisha had addressed Elijah just before he was carried into heaven (2 Kgs. 2:12). His statement was, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof." By those words, Jehoash was saying that Elisha was more important to Israel than all her chariots and horsemen, and that Elisha was, in reality, the leader of Israel.

In response to Jehoash, Elisha assured him of complete victory over the Syrians. Jehoash, however, failed to show proper zeal for, or faith in, the symbolism used by Elisha to predict the victory. As a result, Jehoash was not allowed to completely destroy Syria as first promised (2 Kgs. 13:19). He was, nevertheless, allowed three victories, and in these he regained the cities his father had lost to Hazael (2 Kgs. 13:25).

Jehoash also gained a great victory over the Amaziah, King of Judah (2 Kgs. 14:8-14). The military triumphs of Jehoash demonstrate that he was a

capable leader. He ruled Israel for sixteen years (2 Kgs. 13:10) and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II.

Jeroboam II, 793-753 B.C. (2 Kgs. 14:23-29)

Jeroboam's reign (fourth in line of the Jehu dynasty, and forty-one years in length) lasted much longer than any other king in Israel. The first twelve years of his rule were concurrent with his father, Jehoash.

Jeroboam II, like the entire Jehu dynasty, was an evil king. His reign, though, was by far the most prosperous of all the kings of Israel. During his rule for instance, Jeroboam restored all the territories east of the Jordan River from Hamath to the Red Sea (2 Kgs. 14:25). Hamath and the Red Sea were the original northern and southern borders of Canaan (Num. 34:8, 12; Deut. 3:17). This was approximately the territory that Solomon ruled in Israel's glory days. It is also very probable that Jeroboam II brought Damascus under his control (2 Kgs. 14:28). Clearly, Jeroboam was one of Israel's most powerful leaders.

There were certain favorable conditions that existed at the time of Jeroboam's rule that made it possible for him to be successful. For example, the great Assyrian Empire was on the defensive because of internal problems brought on by a succession of inept rulers. In addition, pressure from powerful enemies such as the Urartu (Ararat) people to the north had left the Assyrians weak (Mould, p. 242). Another favorable situation was that Syria had suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Zakir of Hamath (Langer, p. 47). With both Assyria and Syria in weakened conditions and unable to intervene, Jeroboam could begin his great work of restoration unencumbered.

The historical account of Jeroboam's reign is very brief in the book of 2 Kings. Nevertheless, much information about the conditions of his rule is provided by the prophets of that era.

Amos, for instance, lived during the reign of Jeroboam (Amos 1:1). He describes the social and spiritual conditions as deplorable during that time. The conquests of Jeroboam had brought wealth and prosperity to Israel, but they had also brought degeneration and moral decay. In his condemnation of their evil, Amos specifically mentions injustice, greed, bribery, and sexual immorality (Amos 2:6-8). Their idolatrous worship was an insult to God and He hated their feasts (Amos 5:21-22). Amos prophesied that the house of Jeroboam would perish by the sword (Amos 7:9) and that Israel would be taken captive into a foreign land (Amos 7:17).

Hosea was a contemporary of Amos, but prophesied a few years later. Amos probably did his work near the middle of Jeroboam's reign, whereas Hosea's prophecies occur near the end of it. Both speak of the same condi-

tions, except the conditions had worsened in Hosea's day, if that were possible. Hosea describes the situation in Hosea 4:1-2 in these words:

Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because [there is] no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Their evil lifestyle had become unbelievable. Amos had predicted that Israel would be carried into captivity, but did not name the place. Hosea is more specific. He names Assyria as the land of Israel's captivity (Hos. 11:5).

The consensus of the prophets was that under Jeroboam, Israel was exceedingly evil. Jeroboam himself was no less evil. He was, however, an exceptional political leader that led Israel to their greatest fame. He accomplished all of this in spite of his ungodliness. Jonah the prophet stated that God "saved Israel by the hand of Jeroboam" (2 Kgs. 14:27). In view of Israel's sin and Jeroboam's wickedness, why did God "save" them? The reason must have been that God is a merciful and loving Father who gave his people one more chance to repent. The time of their judgment was not yet; but it would come, for they did not repent.

Zachariah, 753 B.C. (2 Kgs. 15:8-12)

Zachariah succeeded his father Jeroboam II. God had told Jehu that his children of the fourth generation would sit on the throne of Israel (2 Kgs. 10:30). Finally, after almost ninety years, the last descendent of Jehu ascended the throne.

The Bible says little about Zachariah except that he did "evil in the sight of the Lord as his fathers had done" (2 Kgs. 15:9). His reign was only for six months. He died in a conspiracy by Shallum, the son of Jabesh. Amos had prophesied the house of Jeroboam would perish by the sword, and that prophecy came to pass in a violent way.

Shallum, 752 B.C. (2 Kgs. 15:10-15)

Shallum did not have long to enjoy the fruits of his overthrow, for within a month of his takeover he too was assassinated. The instigator of that deed was Manahem of Tirzah. Interestingly, Tirzah had been the capitol of Israel from Jeroboam I to the time of Omri. Some scholars have thought, accordingly, that because Menahem was from Tirzah, the assassination of Shallum was an attempt to reestablish an old political power base. It is more likely that Menahem was a commander in Zachariah's army (according to Josephus) and

he was avenging the king's murder. Nothing more is said of the short rule of Shallum.

Menahem, 752-742 B.C. (2 Kgs. 15:14-22)

Only two events of Menahem's reign are recorded in 2 Kings. First, there is the capture and extreme mistreatment of the inhabitants of the city of Tiphshah (2 Kgs. 15:16). Menahem probably did this because they would not submit to him. In addition, it served as an example for the benefit of any other malcontents who might not wish to submit.

Second, there is recorded the initial aggression against Israel by Pul the King of Assyria (2 Kgs. 15:19-20). William Smith says, "Pul was none other than the great Tiglath-pileser III, the greatest monarch in Assyrian history. He is called Pul (Pulu) in Babylon, and took the name Tiglath-pileser from an earlier Assyrian conqueror" (Smith, p. 622).

Tiglath-pileser III came to the throne in 745 and reigned until 727. After consolidating his regime at home, he turned in the direction of his neighbors, especially to the west. In his first campaign in 743 (Merrill, p. 394), he placed Menahem under heavy tribute (2 Kgs. 15:19). Menahem raised the money by making the rich pay large sums. The Bible historian affirms that Menahem paid the tribute to gain the support of Tiglath and to strengthen his own hold on Israel. Satisfied with the money paid him, the Assyrian king returned home. Menahem died shortly after paying the tribute money. He reigned ten years, and was the only one of the last six kings of Israel to escape a violent death.

Pekahiah, 742-740 B.C. (2 Kgs. 15:23-26)

Pekahiah succeeded his father Menahem, and ruled for two years. The Bible says little of his reign, except that it was idolatrous. Pekahiah and two of his friends were murdered at the king's palace in Samaria. This evil act was perpetrated by Pekah, a chief officer under Pekahiah, along with fifty Gil-eadites. Pekah then set himself up as the next king.

Pekah, 752-732 B.C. (2 Kgs. 15:27-31)

Pekah was the eighteenth King of Israel. His reign of twenty years started in the fifty-second year of Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah (2 Kgs. 15:27), or in 740 (Thiele, p. 129). If the fifty-second year of Uzziah was 740, and Pekah ruled twenty years from that date, then he would have died in 720. Yet, most historians agree that the Northern Kingdom ended in 722/723. This would mean that Pekah outlived the kingdom of Israel by two or three years. Obviously, this is impossible, so there must be something wrong with the equation.

Contradiction in Chronology

The answer to the apparent contradiction in the above chronology is that Pekah actually began his rule in 752 and ruled twenty years from that date. This, in turn, would mean that he died in 732 instead of 720. This would also mean that Pekah and Menahem began ruling the same year, 752, and Pekah's rule was concurrent with that of Menahem and Pekahiah. Thiele (p. 129) and other scholars (Merrill, p. 397) suggest that Pekah ruled in Gilead as a rival to Menahem and Pekahiah.

Just how Pekah became a commander in Pekahiah's army (2 Kgs. 15:25) while a rival is explained in various ways. Thiele, for example, thought that Pekah at some point had come to terms with Pekahiah and had accepted the military post under him. Merrill, on the other hand, suggests that Pekah was already a commander at the accession of Menahem, and at that time he became a leader in opposition to Menahem. At any rate, when the time was right, Pekah assassinated Pekahiah and declared himself king over all of Israel.

Pekah Joined Confederation with Syria

After Pekah assumed control of Israel, he joined in a confederation with Rezin of Syria (Is. 7:1-2). This alliance was meant to counteract the advances of Assyria. Ahaz of Judah would not join the coalition, and in retaliation, Pekah and Rezin independently invaded Judah. The Judean incursions proved successful—Pekah and Rezin took many spoils, as well as prisoners, back to their homelands (2 Chron. 28:1-15; Merrill, p. 407). These two punitive invasions were soon followed by a combined effort of both kings (2 Kgs. 16:5-9). Their intention was to replace Ahaz with their own man (Is. 7:6). Ahaz, however, refused to budge, and in retaliation appealed to Assyria for help.

Tiglath-pileser III responded by marching against Syria. In the process, Rezin was killed and Damascus was captured (2 Kgs. 16:9). During this same invasion, Tiglath-pileser took all of Israel east of the Jordan and northern Israel (2 Kgs. 15:29). As was the practice of Assyria at that time, the inhabitants of those regions were deported to various places throughout the Assyrian Empire. This first captivity was the moment of decline for the nation of Israel. Evidently, at this time, Tiglath also instructed Hoshea to kill Pekah. Tiglath then installed Hoshea as a puppet ruler over Israel (2 Kgs. 15:30; Rawlinson, p. 301).

Hoshea, 732-722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17:1-6)

Hoshea was the nineteenth and last king of Israel. His rule lasted nine years. While he was evil, surprisingly he was not as bad as his predecessors were (2 Kgs. 17:2). In just what way he was less evil is not revealed.

From the beginning, Hoshea was a vassal of Assyria and paid tribute to them. He subsequently turned in revolt against Assyria, refused to pay tribute, and sought help from Egypt. This was a tragic mistake, because when Shalmaneser V, who had replaced his father Tiglath-pileser, learned of the plan, he had Hoshea imprisoned (2 Kgs. 17:3-4).

Next, Shalmaneser V laid siege on Samaria, but it took three years to overthrow the city. When it was finally overcome, the inhabitants of the city, as well many others, were taken captive to Assyria (2 Kgs. 17:6). This captivity took place in 722/723. Of interest here is the fact that in 722 a new leader came to the throne in Assyria. His name was Sargon II. Many historians believe that Shalmaneser V died in 722, and some think he was killed while besieging Samaria. Consequently, there are those who believe it was Sargon II that actually captured Samaria. Moreover, in some of his writings, Sargon II claims to have captured it. On the other hand, there exists a large body of scholars who think the claim of Sargon was an exaggeration to enhance his own record. Sargon evidently did not come to the throne until December of 722, far too late to have captured Samaria. This has led many current historians to deny that Sargon II was responsible, and rather give the credit to Shallmaneser V (Thiele, pp. 163-172). The Bible account strongly favors Shallmaneser as the conqueror of Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:3; 18:9).

Deportation

As for Assyria, their purpose in deporting Israel was to curtail rebellion and discourage any nationalist aspirations that might arise. From God's standpoint, there were two reasons for the deportation. First, it was a warning to the southern kingdom to repent of their evil lest the same thing happen to them. Second, it was God's judgment upon them. The author of 2 Kings articulated it with these words: "Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight" (2 Kgs. 17:18). Never was greater mercy shown to a people, yet they would not change.

Israel existed as a nation for more than two hundred years. During that period, nineteen kings sat on the throne, representing nine dynasties. None of the nineteen kings were considered good by Yahweh. All of them, without exception, engaged in idolatrous worship. Warning after warning was issued, but

they would not hear. Finally, the day of God's mercy ended and His day of wrath arrived.

What Happened To Israel?

When Israel was taken into captivity, they simply ceased to exist as a nation. The ten tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom lost their identity as tribes. Those taken into captivity were absorbed into the Assyrian population. Those left behind were assimilated with the foreigners that were imported into Israel by the Assyrian's (2 Kgs. 17:24). Under these circumstances, it was impossible for Israel to maintain their national and tribal distinctions.

There were, of course, individuals from the tribes who survived the captivity. As an example, when the people Judah returned to their homeland after the captivity, there were individuals among them from the northern tribes. Also, one can read in the New Testament of individuals who were from the various tribes of Israel. That, however, does not change the fact that God no longer recognized them as a nation. If God does not recognize them, it is useless for people today to try to identify them. 17 S.E. 23rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73129

Works Cited

- Langer, William L. **An Encyclopedia of World History**. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972.
- Merrill, Eugene H. **Kingdom of Priests, A History of Old Testament Israel**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964.
- Mould, Elmer W. K. **Essentials of Bible History**. New York: The Ronald Press, 1951.
- Rawlinson G. **Pulpit Commentary, 2 Kings**. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, n.d.
- Smith, William. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1976.
- Thiele, Edwin R. **The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings**. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994.
- Unger, Merrill F. **Unger's Bible Dictionary**. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964.

The Southern Kingdom (1)

(From Rehoboam to Hezekiah)

by Taylor A. Joyce

Our story begins at a place called Shechem, a territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim. All Israel had come together for a coronation ceremony. King Solomon had recently died, and his only son, Rehoboam, was to be crowned as his successor. But the ceremony was aborted, and the body politic suffered a wound from which it would never recover. The writer of the book of Chronicles describes the event in this manner:

And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed (2 Chron. 10:1-5).

The words "made our yoke grievous" and "grievous servitude" suggest that Solomon had enslaved many of his own countrymen. Whether this was actual slavery or just a figurative way of describing the heavy tax burden imposed upon the people, we cannot tell. The ornate temple and the lavish accoutrements of the palace, which so greatly impressed the queen of Sheba, must have required the imposition of heavy taxes.

Having heard the complaints of the people Rehoboam then sought the advice of the old men who had been counselors to his father. They wisely said, "If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever" (v. 7). "But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him" (v. 8).

Rehoboam then turned for advice to "the young men that were brought up with him" (v. 8). James Burton Coffman thinks these were siblings. "This is the only hint in the Bible that Solomon had any other sons besides Rehoboam. Evidently these were other children brought up in Solomon's godless harem." Others think they were children of members of the court family who were schooled with Rehoboam. The young men's counsel was just the opposite of that of the elders:

Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions (vv. 10-11).

Their advice was accepted with disastrous results. Upon hearing these ill-advised words from Rehoboam, "Israel rebelled against the house of David" (v. 19).

Causes of Division

The casual reader may assume that a more conciliatory stance on the part of Rehoboam would have averted the open and permanent rift among Abraham's descendants. Alexander Maclaren observed that "A dozen rash words brought about four hundred years of strife, weakness, and final destruction." Coffman commented, "Thus Rehoboam lost the greater part of his kingdom by one idiotic acceptance of the foolish advice of his harem-born associates." There is, however, much more to the story than that, and such comments seem to ignore other pertinent information contained in Scripture. In light of the entire record, it is evident that division was inevitable. It might have been postponed by a more sympathetic response to the legitimate complaints of the people, but it could not have been permanently averted.

To be sure, the events at Shechem were the immediate and direct cause of the division. The complaints leveled against the king were precisely the ones the prophet Samuel had anticipated when the people rejected God and demanded that they be given a king "That we also may be like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:7, 20).

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not

hear you in that day. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us (1 Sam. 8:11-19).

The complaints at Shechem were almost a mirror-image of the words of Samuel. Both God and Rehoboam turned a deaf ear to the cries of the people, but for different reasons.

While Rehoboam's promise to continue the oppressive rule of his predecessor was the immediate cause of division within the kingdom, there were other forces at work behind the scenes which would have eventually resulted in division even if the new king had promised greater leniency. The nation of Israel had always been more of a loose knit confederation than a cohesive unit. The northern tribes had always looked with suspicion and envy on the house of David. Indeed, after succeeding Saul on the throne, David ruled over Judah for seven years before he was able to gain the allegiance of the northern tribes (2 Sam. 5:1-5).

Another contributing cause of the division was the ambition of Jeroboam. He had gained favor with Solomon because he was "a mighty man of valour" and "industrious" (1 Kgs. 11:28). He seems to have served the king well until an encounter with a prophet caused him to have higher aspirations. He met Ahijah the prophet in a field one day. Ahijah seized a new garment (it is unclear whether the garment was being worn by Ahijah or Jeroboam) and tore it into twelve pieces. He gave ten pieces to Jeroboam and explained that he would rule over ten of the twelve tribes included in the kingdom of Solomon. Jeroboam was evidently impatient for this prophecy to be fulfilled, so he "lifted up his hand against the king" in a failed effort to supplant him and was then forced to flee the region until Solomon's death (1 Kgs. 11:26-40). One could almost predict that a man with such aspirations would have vied with the legal claimant to the throne at his first opportunity. Some of his countrymen must have had some hope that Jeroboam would champion their cause because "they sent and called him," and he seems to have acted as spokesman for the disgruntled tribes at the convocation in Shechem. Indeed, his leadership role raises the suspicion that the demand for the redress of grievances was really a pretext for revolt.

Another curious thing about this meeting in Shechem is that it was located in land occupied by the tribe of Ephraim. Jeroboam was from the tribe of Ephraim (1 Kgs. 11:26). Why did Rehoboam consent to have his coronation ceremony at Shechem rather than Jerusalem? Did he fall into a trap by coming to a place where there was already great hostility toward him and which was the power base of his strongest opponent? Or was he a shrewd politician who

thought that he might appease his adversaries by honoring them with the pomp and circumstance of such a rare affair of state? We will never know.

There are two other related underlying causes for the division of the kingdom—the sin of Solomon and the decree of God. Both are described in 1 Kings 11:9-13:

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

A divided kingdom was the price Solomon paid for his sinful behavior. Much of the subsequent history of Israel and Judah can be better understood if blessing and bane are seen as direct consequences of keeping that which the Lord commanded or of turning the heart from the Lord God of Israel.

That God had a hand in the rending of the kingdom is clearly stated in 2 Chron. 10:15: "So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat." As soon as the kingdom was divided Rehoboam determined to gather an army and wage war against the rebels to the north. He was deterred from that course of action by the prophet Shemaiah who said, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me" (1 Chron. 11:4).

The Rulers

Rehoboam

Rehoboam's reign began auspiciously enough. For three years, there was a faithful adherence to the law of God. During this time, the cities within Rehoboam's domain were fortified and well-armed troops stationed strategically. As already noted, a change in the religious orientation in the Northern Kingdom resulted in a sizeable migration of its most spiritual citizens. This influx of Levites and others "strengthened the kingdom of Judah" (2 Chron. 11:13, 16-17).

In the latter part of the chapter, however, a different picture begins to emerge. Rehoboam "took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters. . . And he desired many wives" (2 Chron. 11:21, 23). The chronicler then informs us that Rehoboam "forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him" (12:1). Coffman says:

There was no spiritual compatibility whatever with such an arrangement as that revealed here; and by the Chronicler's placement of this paragraph just prior to the mention of Rehoboam's shameful apostasy, he might indeed have considered this as contributory to that apostasy. Indeed, it could hardly have been otherwise.

A detailed description of the apostasy is recorded in 1 Kings 14:22-24:

And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . above all that their fathers had done. For they built them high places, and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also Sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

The word "abominations" occurs some 117 times in the Old Testament and frequently refers to the idolatrous practices that God's people borrowed from the pagans who inhabited the land before them. The worship of the pagans was often conducted on the "high places," and Judah either joined in the pagan worship or built its own high places.

As an aside, it might be useful to note a passage that has probably been misunderstood by some Bible readers: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hill, from whence cometh my help" (Ps. 121:1). The punctuation of this verse in the King James Version leaves the impression that the psalmist expected his help to come from the hills. Clearly this is not so, because he immediately affirms, "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (v. 2). Only the pagans and certain apostate Jews sought divine assistance in the "high places." Jeremiah offers this valuable insight: "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jer. 3:23).

As we have already seen, God's judgment was swift. "And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord" (12:2). God, through the prophet Shemaiah, said: "Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak" (v. 5). In addition to the divine agency involved in the invasion of Shishak (Sheshonk) of Egypt, there may have been a human agency as well. Although the biblical record is silent on the matter, there is a strong suspicion that Jeroboam, during his exile in

Egypt, may have befriended Shishak. The Egyptian ruler might very well have simply been helping out a friend by invading the territory of his arch enemy.

After over-running all of Judah's fortified cities, Shishak moved on Jerusalem. It is unclear whether or not he actually captured the city, but at any rate, he "took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house" (12:9). It appears that penitent prayer may have averted the destruction of the city, but a heavy price in terms of material wealth had to be paid to the aggressor. A fascinating victory relief found in the Temple at Karnak provides independent confirmation of the biblical record of this event. On an outer wall of this massive temple, said by some to be the greatest ever constructed by human hands, is a bold relief that celebrates the military success of Shishak. It shows the god Amun bringing 156 manacled Palestinian prisoners to Shishak. Some of them have biblical names. The fortified city of Megiddo is mentioned, and archeologists digging in the ruins of that ancient city have found the name of Shishak there.

Abijah

Rehoboam died after seventeen years on the throne and was succeeded by his son Abijah (Abijam) who, by winning a significant battle with Jeroboam, expanded his territory toward the north. The forces of Jeroboam were routed because "God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah" (v. 15). "The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chron. 13:18). The Southern Kingdom was victorious in this battle in spite of the fact that their leader was evil. "He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father" (1 Kgs. 15:3). During the days of the divided kingdom, David is often mentioned as the standard for acceptable behavior. "Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kgs. 15:5).

Asa

It is recorded of the next king, Asa, that he "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father" (1 Kgs. 15:11). He undertook extensive religious reforms and "took away the Sodomites out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made" (v. 12). He even destroyed an idol belonging to his mother. However, his reforms fell short because "the high places were not removed" (v. 14).

So far as military achievements were concerned, Asa, with an army half the size of his adversaries, overthrew a million Ethiopians arrayed against him

in the valley of Zephathah. It was the Lord's doing and little credit goes to Asa or to his troops.

And Asa cried . . . help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude . . . So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah...for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before his host" (2 Chron. 14:9-13).

Unfortunately, Asa soon forgot that this remarkable victory was won because "we rest on thee [God], and in thy name we go against this multitude." When Israel started making threatening moves against Judah, Asa made an unholy alliance with Benhadad of Syria (1 Kgs. 15:16-22). The Syrian king was given silver and gold to break an alliance with Baasha, king of Israel who was building a stronghold on Judah's northern border. Benhadad moved against Israel and destroyed a number of cities in the land of Naphtali. Baasha had to abandon his campaign against Judah and marshal his forces to respond to the invasion of his northern border. Although the alliance with Benhadad provided Judah temporary protection against Israel it created a situation in which Syria would eventually become a more serious threat than Israel had been. The prophet Hanani anticipated this future by saying to Asa, "Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand" (2 Chron. 16:7). The prophet reminded Asa of his prior success against the hordes of Egypt saying, "because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand" (2 Chron. 16:8). By placing his reliance on Benhadad, Asa forfeited the Lord's help and opened the door to unspeakable trouble. "Herein thou hast done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars" (2 Chron. 16:9).

Toward the end of his reign, Asa again manifested a disposition to reject the Lord's help in the time of need. "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians" (2 Chron. 16:12).

Jehoshaphat

Asa was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was essentially a good king.

And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; But sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel (2 Chron. 17:3-4).

On the positive side, he also commissioned his princes and the Levites "to teach in the cities of Judah" (v. 7). "And they taught in Judah, and had the

book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people" (v. 9). His reign was also marked by successes on the battlefield against traditional enemies Ammon and Moab, in one instance using an unusual strategy of sending a choir of singers in the vanguard of his army (2 Chron. 20). He established a judicial system that was a model for integrity (2 Chron. 19:5-11). His subjects bestowed "riches and honour in abundance" upon him (2 Chron. 17:5). Neighboring kingdoms paid tribute to him (v. 11) and the economy flourished (v. 13). Consequently, "Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly" (v. 12).

The inspired historian then reports that Jehoshaphat "joined affinity with Ahab" (2 Chron. 18:2) and, in spite of his own misgivings, cooperated in an ill-fated battle against the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead. Ahab lost his life, but Jehoshaphat was spared. Upon his return to Jerusalem, he was rebuked by a prophet who said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (2 Chron. 19:2). A joint-venture with Ahaziah, Ahab's son, also met with failure. They built a fleet of ships with the intention of sending them to Tarshish for gold. However, another prophet came to tell Jehoshaphat, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." The historian adds: "And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish" (2 Chron. 20:37).

Jehoram

Jehoshaphat was followed by his son, Jehoram. An arranged marriage with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, brought nothing but grief to himself and to his people. "And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kgs. 8:18). The evil which he did included the murder of all six of his brothers (2 Chron. 21:2-4). In fulfillment of a "writing to him from Elijah the prophet," he was smitten by the Lord with an incurable disease and died a horrible death (2 Chron. 21:12-19). "He passed away, to no one's regret" (v. 20, NIV).

Ahaziah

The next king was Ahaziah, and "he also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly" (2 Chron. 22:3). His reign lasted only one year. He died at the hands of Jehu, along with his uncle Jehoram of Israel with whom he had joined in battle against the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead. "And the destruction of Ahaziah was of the Lord" (2 Chron. 22:7).

Athaliah (Usurper)

The next six years were the low point in the history of Judah. Upon the death of her son, Ahaziah, Athaliah seized power, killing, as she thought, all the rightful claimants to the throne from the house of David. The inspired historian put it this way: "And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal" (2 Kgs. 11:1). However, Jehosheba, a sister to king Ahaziah, successfully hid her brother's son, Joash. With the help of the priest Jehoiada, Joash was hidden "in the house of the Lord six years" (2 Kgs. 11:3). Then Jehoiada gathered all the rulers of the people and certain military personnel and showed Joash to them. He entered into a covenant with them and set in motion a plan that ended in the death of Athaliah and the coronation of seven-year-old Joash.

Joash

"And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chron. 24:2). Athaliah's sons had "broken up the house of God" and looted it of its "dedicated things" and bestowed them upon Baalim (v. 7). Joash sent the priests and Levites into all Israel to collect money to repair the damage.

And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the Lord the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness (vv. 8-9).

Upon the death of Jehoiada, however, Joash, in concert with the princes of Judah, "left the house of the Lord God of their fathers" and engaged in idolatrous practices. When God sent prophets to testify against them, "they would not give ear." They even stoned the son of Jehoiada "at the commandment of the king." "Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son" (2 Chron. 24:15-22). Divine retribution came in the form of an incursion by a small army of Syrians. "And the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash" (vv. 23-24). Following this disaster "his own servants conspired against him . . . and slew him on his bed, and he died" (v. 25).

Amaziah

Amaziah then came to the throne. "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chron. 25:2). He conquered

Edom and took its gods, but lost a war to Israel that left the city of Jerusalem devastated. Conspirators took his life at Lachish.

Uzziah

Uzziah, the sixteen-year-old son of Amaziah, was made king.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord . . . And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper (2 Chron. 26:4-5).

He waged successful wars against the Philistines, Arabians, and Ammonites. Uzziah is also credited with two new inventions to add to Judah's military arsenal.

And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, til he was strong (2 Chron. 26:15).

Adam Clarke has this quote from the **Targum**, an Aramaic translation of the Old Testament: "He made in Jerusalem ingenious instruments, and little hollow towers, to stand upon the towers and upon the bastions, for the shooting of arrows, and projecting of great stones." Clarke then adds:

The Jews alone were the inventors of such engines; and the invention took place in the reign of Uzziah, about eight hundred years before the Christian era. It is no wonder that, in consequence of this, his name spread far abroad, and struck terror into his enemies (Vol. 2, p. 684).

Sadly, a mistaken notion that all his successes were his own doing led to Uzziah's downfall. "His heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (26:16). His folly caused him to be afflicted with leprosy. "And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper" (26:21). The ruins of the "several house" in which he lived were found in 1959 by Professor Yohanan Aharoni of the Hebrew University. Located two miles south of Jerusalem, the palace rubble once again provided non-biblical confirmation of the Bible's accuracy.

Jotham

Jotham, another good king, was the next descendant of David to rule over Judah. "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chron. 27:2). The historian adds one significant disclaimer: "howbeit he entered not into the house of Lord." Does this mean that he did not commit the same pre-

sumptuous sin that his father had committed, or does it mean that he habitually absented himself from worship? If the latter, then his conduct may explain why the next statement was included in the divine record: "And the people did yet corruptly." Like the monarch, like the masses. In spite of all the good he did, he may have set a bad example before the people, and they followed it.

Ahaz

One of the worst of the kings to rule Judah was Jotham's son Ahaz.

Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his own son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops, and under every spreading tree (2 Kgs. 16:2-4).

He hired the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser to attack Israel. "And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria" (2 Kgs. 16:8). The annals of the Assyrians refer to this "present" as "tribute from Juahazi (Ahaz) of Judah." Ahaz also installed a Damascus altar in the temple. So evil was this man that there is virtually no good word written about anything he did during his sixteen year reign. To the contrary, it is written of him: "For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel: for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord" (2 Chron. 28:19).

Hezekiah

One of the best rulers of the kingdom of Judah during this period was Hezekiah. "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him" (2 Kgs. 18:5). Like Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Joash before him, Hezekiah initiated religious reforms. His reforms, however, were more extensive and more successful than anything previously attempted. The king shared his vision with the Levites and priests, calling on them to "Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (2 Chron. 29:5). He attributed all the ills which had befallen his nation to the fact that "our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord" (v. 6). He saw that nothing short of a return to the worship of God as first authorized through Moses could avert the divine wrath and restore Judah to God's favor.

The priests and Levites began their task with enthusiasm "and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord" (v. 15). Sixteen days were required for the cleansing of the temple. The king then "gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah" (vv. 20-21). The congregation then "brought in sacrifices and thank offerings," as well. "So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly" (vv. 35-36).

Hezekiah then wrote letters to all Judah and Israel inviting the people to "come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel" (2 Chron. 30:1). Those who bore the invitations were greeted with laughter and mockery by many in the country of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Zebulun. However, a multitude of various tribes in the north joined the inhabitants of Judah at Jerusalem and "kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness" (v. 21).

And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem (vv. 25-26).

Those who observed the Passover then fanned out over the Southern Kingdom and Ephraim and Manasseh in the north, breaking images, cutting down groves, throwing down "high places" and altars "until they had utterly destroyed them all" (2 Chron. 31:1). At the direction of Hezekiah, the brazen serpent Moses had lifted up in the wilderness was also destroyed because it was being used in an unauthorized way (2 Kgs. 18:4).

And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered (2 Chron. 31:20-21).

Azariah, the chief priest, noted that the Lord had "blessed his people" (2 Chron. 31:10) because of the spiritual reforms of Hezekiah.

The fourteen years of unparalleled religious devotion, peace, and prosperity were threatened as war clouds again cast an ominous shadow across the Judean landscape. "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sen-

nacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself" (2 Chron. 32:1). One of the "fenced" cities that eventually fell to Sennacherib was Lachish. His victory there was celebrated in a massive relief found in the ruins of Nineveh by Sir Henry Layard. The relief, housed in the British Museum, pictures in graphic detail the well-armed Assyrians and the heroic defenders. Siege-machines, the primitive prototype of a modern tank, are shown being used in the assault for the first time in history. Some of the victims are impaled on stakes, and men and women captives are being removed from the city.

Sennacherib had great success against the fortified cities of Judah (2 Kgs. 18:13), but he was unable to take the city of Jerusalem. He made a haughty speech to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, attempting to frighten them into submission. Hezekiah met the crisis by going to the house of the Lord and praying. Isaiah the prophet sent word to the king that his prayer had been heard and that Jerusalem would be spared.

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh (2 Kgs. 20:35-36).

But not for long. Another account reads, "He returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth from his own bowels slew him there with the sword" (2 Chron. 32:21).

Jerusalem was spared for the moment and would continue to fare well during the lifetime of Hezekiah. The Northern Kingdom had fallen victim to Assyria during the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, and Micah the prophet fore-saw a time in the future when a similar fate would befall Jerusalem and Judah. He described the Northern Kingdom as having suffered an incurable wound, adding, "for it is come unto Judah: he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem" (Micah 1:9).

Hezekiah seems to have been a man of great vision and foresight. He took steps to increase the military preparedness of his nation and also engaged in a number of public works projects. One project that may have had a military as well as a domestic purpose was the construction of an underground aqueduct connecting a water source outside the walls with a reservoir on the inside. When its only water supply was outside its walls, Jerusalem was highly vulnerable to any hostile army that lay siege to it.

The biblical writers tell us how this problem was addressed: "And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a con-

duit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?" (2 Kgs. 20:20). "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David" (2 Chron. 32:30).

The historical accuracy of this narrative was confirmed by a remarkable discovery in 1880. An Arab boy, playing at the Pool of Siloam, fell in. As he paddled about trying to get out of the pool, he discovered a small passageway that subsequent investigation revealed to be a long, underground tunnel. The passage, 1,758 feet long and six feet high, was cut through solid limestone and bears the marks of a project done in haste. The builders had started at each end of the conduit and worked toward each other. They had met near the midway point, and one of them marked the occasion by cutting an inscription into the wall of the aqueduct. Experts examining the passage saw the inscription by the light of their torches. It was later removed by the Turkish government and placed in a museum at Istanbul. The inscription has been translated as follows:

The boring through is completed. And this is the story of the boring: while yet they plied the pick, each toward his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling to the other that there was a hole in the rock on the right hand and on the left hand. And on the day of the boring through the workers in the tunnel struck each to meet his fellow, pick upon pick. Then the water poured from the source to the pool twelve hundred cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the workers in the tunnel.

Perhaps the most well-known story involving Hezekiah involves a life-threatening illness which he suffered. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kgs. 20:1). Hezekiah prayed to the Lord with great weeping and was then assured, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee . . . and I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (vv. 5-6). Isaiah then prescribed a "lump of figs" for medication and Hezekiah recovered. As a sign that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled and in response to a request from Hezekiah, the shadow on the sun dial went backward ten degrees.

It has been suggested by some writers that it would have been far better for Judah had Hezekiah died during his illness, because it was during the fifteen years of his extended life that he fathered a son, Manasseh. Manasseh was his successor on the throne and his corrupt rule brought nothing but grief to the people of Judah and planted the seeds of national dissolution. Revival

would come again, but the forces were now set in motion that would culminate in the "carrying away into Babylon."

The Lessons to be Learned

Paul says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). Since the books of Kings and Chronicles on which our study is based are part of the "aforetime" writings there must be lessons of value here for modern day students of the Word.

The standard by which the tenure of each king is adjudged as either good or evil is the degree to which he worships God appropriately. The primary lesson of this portion of Scripture seems to be that God is the object of worship and only He has the right to prescribe the way that worship will be expressed. To import a new altar, to rearrange the furniture, or to establish new locales for worship can never be justified. All who wish to please God must take care to worship Him in His own appointed way—without addition, subtraction, or alteration.

A second lesson of great importance is how faithful God is to the promises He makes. Apostasy in Judah was often punished, but the tribe was allowed to survive. God had made a promise to David:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever (2 Sam. 7:12, 16).

When idolatry became rampant as in the days of Jehoram we read: "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children" (2 Kgs. 8:19). The relevance of this attribute of God is mentioned by the writer of Hebrews: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10:23).

God's dealings with the kings of Judah demonstrate that "God is no respecter of persons." The king is just as amenable to the law of God as his lowliest servant. The kings might rebel and disobey, but God maintained an unvarying consistency to the principle enunciated by Samuel to Saul:

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Another lesson to be learned is the confidence we can have in the integrity and authenticity of the Scriptures. The pick and shovel continue to unearth artifacts that corroborate the divine record. Each new find causes the enemies of the truth to retreat in disarray before the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). *1713 Savannah Dr., Fort Smith, AR 72901*

Bibliography

- Clarke, Adam. **Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 2, Joshua-Esther**. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.
- Coffman, James Burton and Thelma B. **Commentary on First and Second Chronicles**. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1993.
- Hester, H. I. **The Heart of Hebrew History**. Liberty, Mo: The William Jewell Press, 1949.
- Keller, Werner. **The Bible as History**. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981.
- Ringenberg, Loyal R. **The Living Word in History**. Broadview, Ill.: Gibbs Publishing Company, 1974.
- Sawyer, Wyatt. **Panoramic Views of the Bible, Book I, Genesis-Proverbs**. Fort Worth: Sawyer Publications, 1955.
- Smith, William, Wilbur Fields, ed. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo: College Press, 1979.
- Winters, Clayton. **Commentary on Kings-Chronicles**. Abilene, Tex: Quality Publishing, 1995.

The Southern Kingdom (2)

(Manasseh to the Exile)

by Jim Crouch

The Southern Kingdom of Judah existed uninterrupted from 931-586 B.C. During this period, the kingdom experienced the leadership of a mixture of both good and bad kings, the general distinction being that the good kings fought to rid the land of idolatry and restore the lawful worship of Yahweh.

Twenty individuals ruled the Kingdom of Judah, nineteen of which were descendants of David. The exception was Athaliah, a daughter of Jezebel who usurped the throne following the death of her son, King Ahaziah. Eight of the Judean rulers are characterized in the Scriptures as having been "good"—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. However, of Judah's final seven kings (the topic of this article), only one was "good" (Josiah). This stretch of inept and idolatrous rulers exhausted the Lord's patience and led to the demise of the kingdom. (For a full introduction to this period, see "An Introduction to the Divided Kingdom" and "The Southern Kingdom, Rehoboam to Hezekiah.")

Manasseh (697-643)¹

During Hezekiah's extension on life (see 2 Kgs. 20:1-11) he fathered a son named Manasseh who was to be heir to the Judean throne. Manasseh was twelve years old when he came to power. He probably co-reigned with his father, Hezekiah, for the first ten years, 697-686.² He did not inherit the piety of his father; indeed, he was perhaps the worst of the rulers who ruled Judah (the possible exception being Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel). The account of his reign begins this way:

He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his sons in the fire in

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all dates are Before Christ and all ruling dates follow those suggested by Thiele (see chart, p. 312).

² Cf. Thiele, p. 154ff.

the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger (2 Chron. 33:2-6; cf. 2 Kgs. 21:2-6).³

In addition to these and other sins of idolatry, Manasseh was also a violent ruler who shed much innocent blood (2 Kgs. 21:16).⁴ The Scriptures declare that Manasseh had more of an evil influence on the people than all of the foreign nations did at any point in Judah's history.

Because of the evil of Manasseh and his success in spreading spiritual degradation throughout the land, the Lord decided to completely destroy the Southern Kingdom just as He had destroyed the house of Ahab in Samaria (2 Kgs. 21:10-15). This destruction would be carried out by the Babylonians.

From what can be gleaned from the biblical record and Assyrian documents, we are left to assume that Manasseh was a loyal vassal of the Assyrian Empire. Esarhaddon lists him among twenty-two kings who were required to contribute building materials for Assyrian construction, and Asshurbanapal names him as one of a number of vassals who aided an Assyrian effort against Egypt.⁵ This further explains why, in accordance with the Lord's plan to punish Manasseh for his evils, Manasseh would be taken captive by the King of Assyria and led about for some time by a nose-chain (33:10-17).⁶ Manasseh was exiled to Babylon, where Esarhaddon had built a palace in order to aid Assyrian dominance over this region.

Assyrian records do not mention Manasseh's exile, nor is it possible to determine its length. Though Manasseh was vassal to both Esarhaddon (681-669) and Asshurbanapal (669-627), it more likely that his exile occurred toward the end of his own reign under the latter Assyrian ruler. Some suggest that Manasseh was carried to Babylon in 669 to be present for Asshurbanapal's coronation and to affirm his vassal oath. Others maintain Asshurbanapal took Manasseh prisoner after squelching a general uprising in the southern states led by Shamash-shum-ukin of Babylon (652-648).⁷

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from 2 Chronicles of the New International Version of the Bible.

⁴ Tradition declares that Isaiah the prophet was sawn in half under orders from Manasseh, this being the reference of Heb. 11:37.

⁵ Pritchard, ANET, pp. 291, 294.

⁶ A parallel to this is the capture and the subsequent release of Neco I, king of Egypt, by Asshurbanapal (Pritchard, ANET, p. 295).

⁷ Bright, pp. 311-314; Wood, pp. 309-310.

While in Babylon, Manasseh repented of his evils and the Lord allowed him to return to Judah. Upon his return, Manasseh made an earnest effort to undo the damage he had done, removing many of the foreign gods and altars from the land (33:10-17). However, with only a few years (perhaps five according to Wood's estimate) to undo decades of damage, the effectiveness of his reforms comes into question. In addition, any reformation headway would have been neutralized by the idolatrous ways of Amon, Manasseh's son and successor.

Manasseh ruled over Judah for fifty-five years, longer than any other ruler of either Judah or Israel. Had it not been for his final years of reform and the monumental effort of Josiah a few years later, one might question whether any vestige of Yahweh worship would have remained. The Kings writer characterizes Manasseh as the absolute worst king ever to rule Judah (2 Kgs. 21:9-15; 24:3-4).

Amon (643-641)

Amon, the fourteenth King of Judah, was twenty-two years old when he ascended the throne. The Scriptures have not preserved much information in respect to Amon's reign, nor does secular history provide additional insight. He succeeded his father, Manasseh, to the throne. Like his father and great-grandfather, Amon embraced Canaanite idolatry and personally worshiped before the images. These practices, or perhaps other character deficiencies, influenced Amon's officials to conspire against him in assassination. The people, not willing to tolerate the assassination, killed all the conspirators. Amon ruled Judah for two years and was succeeded by his son, Josiah (33:21-25; 2 Kgs. 21:19-25).

Josiah (641-609)

Josiah was only eight years old when the people elevated him to the throne; therefore he would have relied on advisors to guide the nation's development during his first few years of rule. Josiah's reign represented the last opportunity for Judah to regain its spiritual fervor and recommit itself to Yahweh. A better leader of genuine reform could not have been chosen. Coupled with Josiah's own determination to restore Yahweh to His rightful place of honor in Judah, the final chapter of the Assyrian Empire was dawning, freeing Judah from sixty years of bitter oppression.

When Josiah was sixteen years old, "he began to seek the God of his father David" (34:3a). This pursuit of truth led Josiah to understand the nature of the God of heaven and the folly in pursuing idols of wood and gold. This was a personal decision that led to personal conviction. At age twenty, based on

what he had learned and now believed about Yahweh, Josiah "began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols, and cast images" (34:3b).

At the time Josiah began his reign, idolatry was rampant in Judah. Manasseh had so infected the land that during his reign God determined to destroy Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 21:10-15). No doubt, had it not been for the reforms of Josiah, this destruction would have come long before 586. Josiah's reign can be characterized as a full-scale war against idolatry in an effort to turn the hearts of the people back to Yahweh. Aiding in this effort, and no doubt encouraging Josiah, were great prophets such as Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk. These prophets condemned the idolatrous practices of Judah and warned of the coming destruction.⁸

Josiah's campaign against idolatry began in earnest at age twenty in the twelfth year of his reign. Over the course of the next six years, he tore down the altars dedicated to Baal, smashed the Asherah poles, and crushed the images dedicated to false deities. He disentombed the priests and prophets of these false gods and burned their bones on the altars, then destroyed the altars themselves. Having made significant progress in the land of Judah, Josiah turned his attention to the northern land that once housed the Kingdom of Israel. He cleansed the idolatry from the lands that once belonged to Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and Naphtali (34:3-7).

In Josiah's eighteenth year of rule, a remarkable discovery was made. While campaigning against the idolatry of the land, Josiah collected money from the people to be used in repairing and refurbishing the temple. He sent this money to the High Priest, Hilkiah, with instruction as to how the money was to be used (34:8-13; 2 Kgs. 22:3-7). In the course of the construction, Hilkiah found a book containing the Law of Moses and delivered it to the king. When Josiah read the words of the book, he tore his robes and wept (34:19, 27). To help readers understand the impact this discovery must have had on Josiah, Smith offers the following parallel.

We can scarcely conceive of a state of things in which, during centuries of the nominal establishment of Christianity, the people should still observe solemn festivals to Buddha; the altars of the Aztec Indians should smoke with human sacrifices in every city, town and village; the statues of grotesque African gods should be set up in our church houses and the hills around our cities be crowned with temples to Jupiter and Venus: all this lasting for centuries, with an

⁸ Nahum also prophesied during this period, foretelling the destruction of Nineveh and fall of the Assyrian nation under the Babylonians and Medes (612 B.C.).

occasional and partial return to the purer form of worship, while the Bible, never multiplied by printing and only known in older and purer times through infrequent reading by the clergy, should have been utterly lost and forgotten! Add to this the supposition that the lost volume contained, not the dark symbols of the book of Revelation, but a clear warning of national destruction and captivity to befall us because of these idolatries, and then let us imagine our feelings on its sudden discovery! No wonder Josiah rent his clothes and could not rest till he found a prophet to expound these terrible denunciation! (William Smith, p. 668).

Upon inquiring further about the book that had been found, Huldah the prophetess explained that the words of the book were indeed true—Yahweh would destroy Jerusalem and punish the people because of their idolatry. However, there would be a stay in the execution until after Josiah's death because of his obedience and humble piety (34:23-28; 2 Kgs. 22:15-20).

Having summoned all the residents of the Kingdom of Judah, Josiah personally read aloud the contents of the Law of Moses and the people renewed the covenant their forefathers had made with the Lord at Mt. Sinai. The temple was thoroughly cleansed of any idolatrous or detestable items; the Ark of the Covenant was moved to its rightful place in the Holy of Holies. That year, the Kingdom of Judah and a remnant of the Kingdom of Israel observed the Passover in accordance with the instructions of the law.

The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem (35:18).

Having attained a new height of religious fervor, Josiah continued his campaign against idolatry. Wherever there were high places, shrines of prostitution, altars to Baal, poles to Asherah, or altars to Molech upon which children had been offered in sacrifice, Josiah and his army of priests destroyed the offending items and sanctified the areas (2 Kgs. 23:1ff).

Among the idolatrous sites that fell victim to Josiah's reforms was Bethel, one of the religious centers of the defunct Northern Kingdom where King Jeroboam had set up a golden calf (2 Kgs. 23:15-18). Josiah's actions were in keeping with a prophecy that a young prophet had uttered against Jeroboam and the Bethel altar at the time of its construction (cf. 1 Kgs. 13:1-3).⁹

⁹ This prophecy is unusual in that it is one of only two prophecies in which the a person living in the future is mentioned by name—the prophet of 1 Kgs. 13 named Josiah, a descendant of

Josiah ruled in Judah for thirty-one years. He died on the battlefield while in the prime of life when he confronted Pharaoh Neco II and the Egyptian army in the Valley of Megiddo. The KJV says that Neco was on his way to confront the Assyrians in battle; the NIV correctly asserts that Neco was on his way to help the Assyrians in battle (2 Kgs. 23:29).¹⁰ Neco warned Josiah that his mission was ordained by God and that any interference would result in personal disaster, but such warning fell on deaf ears. No doubt Josiah remembered well the havoc the Assyrians had wreaked on the land in recent years, completely devastating the Northern Kingdom and bringing the Southern Kingdom to its knees. Intent on preventing Neco from aiding and abetting the Assyrians, he confronted the Egyptian army in the Valley Megiddo and there suffered a mortal wound from an arrow (35:20-34; 2 Kgs. 23:29-30).

In one respect, Josiah was the last ruler of Judah before their exile to Babylon. Four more rulers, including Josiah's three sons, would have the opportunity to sit on the throne, though merely as puppet-kings under Egyptians and, later, the Babylonians.

The Fall of Assyria; The Rise of Babylon

The Assyrian Empire reached its peak strength under the leadership of Tiglath-pileser (745-727), Shalmaneser V (727-722), Sargon II (721-705), Sennacherib (704-681), Esarhaddon (681-669), and Asshurbanapal (669-627). During this period, the Assyrians gained control of the entire Near Eastern theater, including Phoenicia, Palestine, Egypt, Babylon, and Persia. They maintained their dominance through cruelty and intimidation. While such tactics can be effective, they breed resentment, requiring strong leadership and constant attention in order maintain control. The Assyrian Empire began declining during the later years of Asshurbanapal as nations throughout the region began rising up in rebellion and invaders from other lands (Cimmerians and Scythians) began raiding from the north and east. Pharaoh Psammetichus achieved a degree of independence from Assyria and was expanding his realm of influence northward into Palestine and eastward toward Babylon.

David, as the one who would someday destroy the Bethel altar. The other prophecy sharing this characteristic concerns Cyrus the Mede as the one who would release the Kingdom of Judah from Babylonian captivity (cf. Is. 44:28; 45:13).

¹⁰ The Hebrew text does not specify Neco's intent; therefore, some translations state simply that Neco was on his way to meet the Assyrians (cf. NRSV, NASB). Pharaoh Psammetichus, Neco's father, had earlier assisted the Assyrians in battle against the Babylonians. It is reasonable to think that Neco would continue his father's agenda of aiding the Assyrians in hopes of gaining control of Babylon and the other southern territories. In addition, Babylonian records show that Nebuchadnezzar defeated both the Assyrians and the Egyptians on this occasion.

The beginning of the end for Assyria came in 612, largely due to ineffective leadership following the death of Assurbanapal in 627. The decline began with an internal struggle for the throne between two of Assurbanapal's sons that lasted about three years. The Babylonians, under the leadership of Nabopolassar (626-605), defeated the Assyrians outside of Babylon in 626, thus establishing the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In Media, Cyaxares (ca. 625-585) was ready to lead the Medes in another attempt at independence. Within a few years, Assyria was fighting for its life against the Babylonians in the south and the Medes in the east. Between 616-605, the Babylonian-Median coalition won a series of decisive battles resulting in the complete destruction of Asshur and Nineveh, and a total rout of the Assyrian army.

The Medes, the weaker member of the alliance, sued for control of the northern states extending to Asia Minor; the Babylonians took control of the central and southern states that made up the now defunct Assyrian Empire. Both kingdoms were destined to play significant roles in Judah's history—Babylon as the Lord's instrument of punishment, and Media as the Lord's instrument of restoration.

Along with dealing a crushing blow to the Assyrians at Carchemish in 605, Babylon also soundly defeated the Egyptian contingent that was present to aid the Assyrians. A Babylonian general named Nebuchadnezzar pursued Neco II southward and defeated the Egyptians again at Hamath; but then returned to Babylon upon receiving word of Nabopolassar's death. Nebuchadnezzar would return to Palestine the following year as King of Babylon to complete what he had begun earlier.

Jehoahaz (609)

Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, became the sixteenth King of Judah after his father's death in 609. Why the people would make Jehoahaz king (also called Shallum) rather than Josiah's eldest living son is unknown (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:31, 36; 1 Chron. 3:15; Jer. 22:11). The Scriptures characterize Jehoahaz as an evil king, though no details are supplied. Soon after he ascended the throne, Pharaoh Neco II (who had defeated Josiah in battle) removed Jehoahaz from the throne and imposed a large levy on Jerusalem, thus showing that Judah was now subject to Egypt.¹¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he took office and ruled for three months before being taken prisoner to Egypt where he remained until his death (36:1-4; 2 Kgs. 23:31-35). Jeremiah had prophesied that Jehoahaz (Shallum) would never return to Judah (Jer. 22:11-12).

¹¹ No indication is given as to why Neco would depose Jehoahaz. One might suspect that he did so merely to prove that he could, thus flexing his political muscle.

Jehoiakim (609-598)

After deposing Jehoahaz, Pharaoh Neco placed Eliakim, also a son of Josiah, on the throne. As he did so, he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.¹² Jehoiakim, Judah's seventeenth king, was twenty-five years old when he began to reign as a vassal of Egypt.

Jehoiakim receives scathing rebuke in Jeremiah's book. In order to comply with Neco's demand of one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold as tribute, Jehoiakim taxed the people mercilessly (2 Kgs. 23:33-35). Even in Judah's time of political and financial distress, Jehoiakim added a great burden to the people by requiring a new palace. Jeremiah contrasts Jehoiakim's avarice and oppression of the poor with the justice exemplified by his father Josiah (Jer. 22:13-17). Because of his greed, Jeremiah prophesied that Jehoiakim would receive no proper burial, but rather would be drug from the city and buried like an animal (Jer. 22:18-19). Though threatened, chained, beaten, and ever on the verge of execution (cf. Jer. 26), Jeremiah faithfully delivered God's message of doom against Jehoiakim and his henchmen, captivity for Judah in Babylon, and the future restoration of the kingdom (Jer. 13; 19-22).

In 605 (the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign), the remains of the Assyrian army, together with the Egyptian army, were defeated at Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar, then general of Babylonian army. When Neco fled, Nebuchadnezzar pursued him southward, defeating him again in battle at Hamath. No doubt, Nebuchadnezzar would have subdued the entire region at that time had he not received word of King Nabopolassar's death (his father). Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, received the coronation, and returned the next year to subdue the Palestinian states. Jehoiakim became a vassal of Babylon (36:6-7; 2 Kgs. 24:1-7). Much of the royal treasure was taken to Babylon, along with a number of Hebrew youths who excelled in beauty and intelligence to be trained in the schools of Babylon. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. 1:1-7). It was at this time that Jeremiah prophesied Judah's exile would last seventy years (Jer. 25).

While Jehoiakim was a Babylonian vassal, Jeremiah commissioned Baruch to be his scribe in producing a book of prophecy. Once completed, he sent Baruch to read the book aloud at the temple to any who would listen. The people were moved by Jeremiah's depiction of Judah's sin, the Lord's wrath, and the destruction yet to come. Even the members of Jehoiakim's cabinet were moved and asked for permission to examine the book more carefully

¹² This, too, seems to be a mere show of strength, for the names "Eliakim" and "Jehoiakim" have virtually the same meaning.

with other cabinet members. Convinced the book contained an urgent message, they took it to King Jehoiakim. As the book was being read, Jehoiakim continually cut away the read portion of the scroll and tossed it into the fire. This same spirit of rebellion later would seduce Jehoiakim to attempt a rebellion against Babylon, leading to a total destruction of Jerusalem. At the Lord's instruction, Jeremiah reproduced the prophetic book that had been destroyed, adding further invectives against Jehoiakim (Jer. 36).

In 601, Nebuchadnezzar marched against Egypt. The battle near the Egyptian border was pitched with neither side gaining a decisive victory. Nebuchadnezzar finally withdrew his forces to Babylon. The Egyptian success gave Jehoiakim courage and he rebelled against Babylon (2 Kgs. 24:1). It is unclear whether Jehoiakim sought an alliance with Egypt in the matter.

For the next three years, there were no reprisals from Nebuchadnezzar himself, but he sent raiders from Aram, Moab, and Ammon to harass the rebels (2 Kgs. 24:1; Jer. 35:11). Nebuchadnezzar was not disinterested in Judah—he was occupied in other parts of the empire. In 598/97, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Palestine with a vengeance. Upon his arrival, Jehoiakim died. Jehoiakim reigned in Judah for eleven years. Though history has not preserved the cause of his death, some have speculated that he was executed in hopes of appeasing the approaching Babylonian army.

Jehoiachin (597)

Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was the eighteenth King of Judah. He began reigning when he was eighteen years old. In the third month of his reign (March 16, 597), he surrendered Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar—no support from Egypt materialized. Jehoiachin, along with the royal house and ten thousand leading citizens (including the craftsmen and smiths), were taken to Babylon. Also, the temple and palace houses were plundered (2 Kgs. 24:10-16). Ezekiel the prophet was taken in this deportation.

Zedekiah (596-586)

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle (a son of Josiah) to the throne, and changed his name to Zedekiah. He was twenty-one years old when he began to rule. It seems that the people never really accepted Zedekiah as their king, but rather regarded him as an imposed governor.¹³

¹³ This is evident from inscriptions unearthed from the period of Zedekiah's reign that still attribute the throne to Jehoiachin, both in Jerusalem and Babylon (ANET, p. 308). The biblical record also indicates that Jehoiachin retained the title of "king" while he was in exile (2 Kgs. 25:27-30).

The ineptness of Zedekiah is seen in the fact that he, too, rebelled against Babylon. A group of zealots convinced the king that a coalition of Palestinian states could be formed to fend off any Babylonian incursions (Jer. 27:1ff). Further, false prophets declared success for such a plan and prophesied that the whole of Judah, including its treasure, would return from Babylon within two years. Jeremiah strongly opposed such fantasies (Jer. 27:12ff; 28:1ff). He warned that the only way Zedekiah and the people would be spared further suffering was by submitting to Babylonian domination.

In 594, Pharaoh Neco II was succeeded by Pharaoh Psammetichus II who was more bold to oppose Babylonian directives. He was succeeded in 588 by Hophra who was bolder yet. This led Zedekiah to believe he could count on Egyptian support and so he decided to revolt. Tyre (which Nebuchadnezzar besieged after Jerusalem's fall) and Ammon (cf. Ezek. 21:18-32) are the only other Palestinian states known to have revolted with Judah.

Wasting no time, Nebuchadnezzar marched his armies westward in 588, making his headquarters at Riblah. He immediately laid siege to Jerusalem. The Egyptians marched up from the south to provide support for Judah, causing Nebuchadnezzar to temporarily pull away from Jerusalem. He delivered a thorough defeat to the Egyptians and was surrounding Jerusalem again within a few months. Jerusalem fell in July of 586.

When the walls were breached, King Zedekiah and other officials fled toward the Jordan, but were captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. Here, he was forced to witness the death of each of his sons. He was then blinded and taken to Babylon, held in shackles until his death (2 Kgs. 25:4-7; Jer. 52:9-11). Zedekiah, the last ruler of the Southern Kingdom, ruled Judah for eleven years.

The Destruction of Jerusalem (586)

One month after the walls of Jerusalem had been breached, Nebuchadnezzar sent Nebuzaradan, commander of the Babylonian guard, to Jerusalem for its destruction (2 Kgs. 25:8-12; Jer. 52:12-16). He leveled the walls, leveled the temple after removing the remaining articles of value, and set the city to the torch. Some of the civil leaders were executed (2 Kgs. 25:18-21; Jer. 52:24-27) while other portions of the population were deported to Babylon.

By the end of 586, the Kingdom of Judah had ceased to exist. All the leading citizens had either been executed or deported; the kingdom had been stripped of all its wealth; the builders and craftsmen had been deported; the city walls had been torn down leaving it open to further attack; and the temple, the heart of Judah, was no more. The population that remained consisted of the

elderly and the poor—those least likely to create problems for the Babylonians (2 Kgs. 25:12).

Nebuchadnezzar placed Gedaliah in position to govern the remnant of the population. He set up his headquarters at Mizpah, probably because Jerusalem was in such devastation and unable to be defended (2 Kgs. 25:22-24). Though Gedaliah tried to conciliate the people, he was soon assassinated by Ishmael and his followers, who then escaped to Ammon for refuge. Fearing further reprisals, Gedaliah's supporters and others of the Judean population who were able to travel fled to Egypt. Jeremiah went with them. Jeremiah mentions a small deportation that occurred in 582 (Jer. 52:30) that may represent Nebuchadnezzar's response to Gedaliah's death. 9955 W. 82nd Place, Arvada, CO 80005

Bibliography

- Albright, W. F. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957.
- _____. "The Old Testament World." *The Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abington Press, 1:233-271.
- Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, revised 1985.
- Bright, John. *A History of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981.
- Bruce, F. F. *Israel and the Nations*. London: Paternoster Press, 1963.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979.
- Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1969.
- Hester, H. I. *The Heart of Hebrew History: A Study of the Old Testament*. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1962 (revised).
- Merrill, Eugene H. *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*. Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1966.
- Pritchard, J. B., ed. *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, Volume 1*. Princeton University Press, 1958 (an anthology of Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* [abbreviated ANET] and *Ancient Near Eastern Pictures*).
- Smith, James E. *The Books of History*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995.

Smith, William. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970.

Thiele, E. R. **The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings**. Rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Wood, Leon J. **A Survey of Israel's History**. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1970.

The Chronology of the Kings of Judah

	Hayes and Hooker	Thiele	Bright	Cogan and Tadmor
Rehoboam	926-910	931-913	922-915	928-911
Abijah	909-910	913-911	915-913	911-908
Asa	906-878 (866)	911-870	913-873	908-867
Jehoshaphat	877-853	872-848	873-849	870-846
Jehoram	852-841	853-841	849-843	851-843
Ahaziah	840	841	843/2	843-842
[Athaliah]	839-833	841-835	842-837	842-836
Joash (Jehosash)	832-803 (793)	835-796	837-800	836-798
Amaziah	802-786 (774)	796-767	800-783	798-769
Azariah (Uzziah)	785-760 (734)	792-740	783-742	785-733
Jotham	759-744	750-732	750-735	758-743
Ahaz	743-728	735-716	735-715	743-727
Hezekiah	727-699	716-687	715-687/6	727-698
Manasseh	698-643	697-643	687/6-642	698-642
Amon	643-642	643-641	642-640	641-640
Josiah	641-610	641-609	640-609	639-609
Jehoahaz	3 months	609	609	609
Jehoiakim	608-598	609-598	609-598	609-598
Jehoiachin	3 months	598-597	598/7	597
Zedekiah	596-586	597-586	597-587	596-586

Israel and Judah in Captivity

by Ronny Wade

In the long ago, when Jacob pronounced blessings upon his twelve sons, he said to Judah:

Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise . . . Judah is a lion's whelp . . . the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be (Gen. 49:8-10, ASV).

The descendents of Jacob increased in number and after 215 years of bondage emerged from Egypt a numerous nation under the leadership of Moses. At Mount Sinai, they entered into an agreement with God and became His peculiar people, (Ex. 19:1-6) sealed by a blood covenant (Ex. 24:1-8).

During the three hundred years that followed, these people became involved in one apostasy after another. They were often oppressed and persecuted. When they would repent, however, Yahweh would raise up a deliverer and set them free.

After the death of Solomon, this great kingdom was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms and were known as Israel and Judah.

The Nation of Israel

In the years that followed, Israel sank deeper and deeper into idolatry and immorality. Because of this, God declared His intent to bring the nation to an end. Through the prophet Amos He warned, "Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth" (Amos 9:8a). Hosea also declared "for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease" (1:4b).

This came to pass when God used Assyria to destroy Samaria and carry the people of God into captivity in 722 B.C. In 724, Shalmaneser V marched against Israel (2 Kgs. 17:3-6). Hoshea went to meet him, bringing with him his tribute. Such, however, failed to satisfy the Assyrian ruler. Taking Hoshea captive, Shalmaneser moved on to Samaria, placing the capital under siege. The city stubbornly resisted his advances and it was not until 722 that it fell, bringing the days of Israel as a sovereign nation to a close after a duration of 209 years. The ten tribes never returned to their land as a distinct people. During her existence, nineteen kings reigned, representing nine ruling families. Of these, eight kings were assassinated or committed suicide. Not one of

the nineteen was considered good by God. Each had followed false worship at the golden calf centers or with the evil cult of Baal.

From a religious standpoint, the fall of Israel was a logical outcome of the idolatrous practices that had been in existence for so long, despite the repeated warnings of the prophets. The people were morally depraved, and they had repudiated the covenant obligations to such an extent that they had virtually passed from memory.

The end of the kingdom of Israel involves two issues of interest: (1) the fate of the captives, and (2) the conditions existing in the country after their capture. Regarding the first, we are told that certain of the people were transported to districts of Assyria and Media. Some writers believe that the number of people actually carried away was far less than commonly supposed, and consisted mainly of those living in the region immediately around Samaria. These people were easily absorbed into the surrounding population as a result of their long association with the practices of idolatry and the loss of reverence for the religion of Yahweh, a sad commentary in and of itself.

Regarding the conditions in the country after their capture, the following is noted: according to their custom, the Assyrians imported a foreign upper class of people and settled them among the remaining Israelites. This practice of mixing populations had also been used by Tiglath-pileser III as a means of diminishing chances of rebellion among subjugated peoples. While it may have served such a purpose here, it also brought about religious havoc since the foreigners brought with them their own native ideas of deity and manner of worship. The result was a mixing of religions. God showed His displeasure for such a thing by plaguing the people with lions. The compromise between their new religion and their old idolatries is thus summed up: "They feared Jehovah and served their own gods." The mixing of population also resulted in intermarriage between the Israelites and the new foreign people. The descendants of these marriages came to be called Samaritans, a mixed race with a mongrel religion. These facts explain the long hostility between the Samaritans and the Jews that later developed. This relationship can be summed up in the saying, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" not so much as to ask and receive a cup of cold water at a well in the noonday heat of travel (Jn. 4:9).

This is one reason God had always demanded that His people not intermarry with the heathen nations about them (Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12). He knew and understood the following dangers:

1. A loss of faith or the mixture of faith with false doctrine;
2. A loss of love for truth;

3. Involvement in idolatry and other sinful practices characteristic of the foreign people involved;
4. A loss of love for God.

The church today would do well to learn from this incident in Old Testament history and teach our people to marry only in the Lord. Paul claimed the right to lead about "a sister, a wife" (1 Cor. 9:5).

The Nation of Judah

God declared through Jeremiah the prophet, "Write this man [Coniah] childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah" (22:30). Coniah was, therefore, the last rightful heir to throne in Judah. Some one hundred years after the Assyrians carried Israel into captivity, God brought the Babylonians against Judah. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel charged that Judah had become more corrupt than Israel. "And Jehovah said unto me, Backsliding Israel hath showed herself more righteous than treacherous Judah" (Jer. 3:11). She was compared to Sodom: "Thou wast more corrupt than they in all thy ways;" . . . "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they" (Ezek. 16:47b, 51a; also see 23:11) God told the prophet Habakkuk:

Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs (Hab. 1:5-6).

On three different occasions, Babylon came against Judah, beginning in 605, then in 597, and finally in 586 B.C. The long day of reckoning had finally arrived. Judah had to pay for neglecting to keep the covenant. One writer eloquently said:

Hordes of hapless Hebrews were herded together for a forced three months' trek over mountain and desert. With backs bent under burdens of loot they carried for their conquerors, they turned tear-wet eyes for a last, long, lingering look at mined Jerusalem, 'ere they took the trail to a strange and distant land.

Not everyone who left Jerusalem that day would make the destination.

Many a grave must have been shaped in the hot sands or flinty slopes along the trail before the green country of the Euphrates was sighted.

Nebuchadnezzar did not carry all the Jews in and around Jerusalem with him back to Babylon. Many who were considered undesirable and irrespons-

ble, and therefore were of little or no value to the conquering ruler, were left behind. Many of these fled to Egypt, probably in an attempt to escape the wrath of the Babylonian king. The prophet Jeremiah describes the condition of these Jews in Egypt (42-44). Largely, they fared well, living segregated in large cities. There was an attempt to transfer many habits of home life and religious practices to their new dwelling place. Some, however, repudiated Yahweh altogether and became idolaters. Many of these Jews continued to live in Egypt after those in Babylonia were allowed to return to Jerusalem.

The Jews carried away into Babylonia were probably in excess of 50,000. Compared to the relatively poor country of Palestine, they found themselves in a large, rich, prosperous country. They were introduced to an advanced culture, big business, and materialistic splendor.

The exiles were settled in a rich plain on the river (or canal) Chebar, which connected Babylon with Nippur (Ezek. 1:1-3). They enjoyed considerable freedom. They were not slaves, nor were they forced to do unbearable or undesirable work. So long as they remained loyal to the Babylonian government, it appears that they were able to do much as they pleased. Ezekiel, the prophet, worked among them, and his book, along with that of Daniel, are primary sources of information about this period.

Did such conditions compensate for the captivity? Certainly not. There was homesickness, resentment, and bitterness toward their captors. A record of their feelings is found in Psalm 137.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps. For there they that led us captive required of us songs, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O Jehovah against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock (ASV).

They were disgraced. They had lost their freedom, their government had been destroyed, they were without a country, they were subjects of another power, and they were strangers in a strange land, all because they had forgotten the God who had made them great.

During the exile, there was also a crisis in the religious life of these Jews. First, many fell prey to the attractive opportunities for material gain. They drifted away from the faith of their fathers. In this land of plenty, where abundance was commonplace and luxury available to all, many began to question what advantages there were in worshiping Yahweh, especially when compared to the sparkling and appealing allurements around them. Second, many felt God had forsaken them, allowing them to be captured. Had it paid to serve God? If so, why were they in the present situation? This type of reasoning, no doubt, led many to lose interest in spiritual religion and service to God.

Another problem that surfaced during this time involved the idea that God was national, and therefore could only be worshiped by His people in their native land (Palestine). "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a strange land?" Through Ezekiel and other prophets, the Jews had to learn that God could be worshiped anywhere. He is one God, who is near to all, and whose presence none can escape.

Two outstanding figures who emerge during the exile were Ezekiel and Daniel. Ezekiel has been called "the star figure of the exile." His whole career belongs to this period. He was a powerful and influential man. Two great truths emphasized by him were: (1) the doctrine of individualism, i.e. the individual is morally responsible to God for his behavior; and (2) he helped the Jews to realize that God was their God not only in Palestine, but also in Babylonia.

Daniel was among the first group taken to Babylon. His steadfast loyalty to God is legendary. He was a man of remarkable influence as is evidenced by the miraculous events that happened to him during this time.

Some Results of the Captivity

1. There were times of great discouragement (Ps. 137), and times when Babylonian rulers tried to force idolatry on the Jews (Dan. 3).
2. Some of the Jews became bitter against God, some indifferent, and some doubtless lost faith (Ezek. 18:2, 25; 33:31).
3. Tribal identity and genealogies were preserved by scribes during the period (Ezra 2:59, 62).
4. Many never forgot their homeland and were ready to return at the first opportunity (Ps. 3 7).
5. They were able to impart to the people around them a knowledge of the true God.
6. The synagogue came into existence. Meeting places were erected in various settlements where the law was read and taught. The importance of the

synagogue is seen later in the introduction and spread of the gospel in the Gospels and Acts.

7. The bitter experiences of the exile seemingly cured the Jews of idolatry, at least those who returned to Jerusalem after the exile.

Lessons from the Exile

1. Rejection of God and His laws always brings destruction to those involved.
2. Idolatry and immorality, a seeking after one's own way, will not be tolerated by God.
3. Alliances with foreign nations always tend to weaken the people of God, leaving them but a shadow of what they had been and should be.
4. God can and often does, through trying circumstances, bring out the best in people.

All of God's people should learn the valuable lesson of serving God and Him only. *P.O. Box 10811, Springfield, MO 65808*

Bibliography

Foakes-Jackson, F. J. **The Biblical History of the Hebrews**. Cambridge: W. Heifer and Sons, n.d.

Hester, H. I. **The Heart of Hebrew History**. Liberty, Mo.: The Quality Press, 1962.

Smith, William and Wilbur Fields. **Old Testament History**. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1970.