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# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY  
REV. JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

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Volume I  
THE OLD TESTAMENT  
GENESIS TO ESTHER

*Revised*

The author's aim in this work is to lead his readers into the inner shrine of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and help them to see the spiritual world in the Bible, the world that makes it the Word of God.

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# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY

JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

*Principal Emeritus of Toronto Bible College*

VOLUME I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS TO ESTHER

SECOND EDITION

THE UPPER CANADA  
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To My Wife  
LOUISA BURPE MCNICOL  
"The College Mother"



## PREFACE

FOR over forty years the author of this book has been teaching the Bible to classes of young people preparing for Christian work in the Church and throughout the world. His method has been to lead his students straight through the Bible, book after book, from the beginning to the end. Critical questions have been dealt with only so far as it was necessary to clear the ground. They have not been allowed to occupy the field. The aim has been to enter the inner shrine of the Scriptures and discover the spiritual world in the Bible, the world that makes it the Word of God.

For this purpose the approach has been mainly exegetical and devotional. Other methods of approach have not been ignored. Whatever light could be gained from them has been used in the process of teaching. But the teacher has always reserved the right to judge for himself on the evidence submitted when subjective theories were proposed. He is not ignorant of the modern scientific approach to the Bible and its methods of analysis. But he does not forget that the scientific analysis of a rose does not explain the rose. More is needed than the scientific method to understand the Word of God.

The method that has been followed takes the Bible in the form in which we have it—the form in which it has come down through the Church and made its impact upon the world. It allows the Bible to stand upon its own feet, to speak for itself, and, wherever possible, to be its own interpreter. As a



result the Book rises up in its living unity and bears its own self-evidencing witness to the majestic march of Divine revelation down through the ages which its pages record. It unfolds itself as the Word of the living God.

The teacher was frequently urged by his students, who go out into all the world in the service of Christ, to put into some permanent form the course he was taking them through in the lecture room. He finally undertook to do this, and the result was a series of four volumes published in 1941-42 under the general title, "Thinking Through the Bible". They were prepared primarily as text books for students, but the writer hoped that they would help many others also to think through the Word of God. The welcome which they were given has encouraged him to revise and republish the series as the issue becomes exhausted. The present volume is a revision and enlargement of the original first volume.

The Scripture quotations to be used throughout this new edition will be taken by permission from the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version. Our noble King James Version (A.V.) is the most suitable English Bible to use for the purpose of devotion and worship; but for the purpose of study the careful student should continually consult the Revised Version.

December, 1946.

J. McN.

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTORY

	Page
I. Approaching the Bible - - - - -	1
II. The Two-fold Structure of the Bible - -	3
III. The Two Testaments - - - - -	5
IV. The Unifying Theme of the Bible - -	8

### THE OLD TESTAMENT—BOOKS OF THE LAW

The Books of the Law - - - - -	19
The Book of Genesis - - - - -	24
The Book of Exodus - - - - -	60
The Book of Leviticus - - - - -	81
The Book of Numbers - - - - -	95
The Book of Deuteronomy - - - - -	115

### THE OLD TESTAMENT—HISTORICAL BOOKS

The Historical Books - - - - -	131
The Book of Joshua - - - - -	135
The Book of Judges - - - - -	149
The Book of Ruth - - - - -	160
The First Book of Samuel - - - - -	163
The Second Book of Samuel - - - - -	184
The First Book of Kings - - - - -	200
The Second Book of Kings - - - - -	213
The First Book of Chronicles - - - - -	229
The Second Book of Chronicles - - - - -	240

## CONTENTS (Continued)

	Page
The Book of Ezra - - - - -	253
The Book of Nehemiah - - - - -	260
The Book of Esther - - - - -	267

### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(Incorporated in the above)

The Promise of a Redeemer - - - - -	58
The Basis of the Old Testament Dispensation -	79
The Religious Value of the Levitical Ritual -	93
Wilderness Types of Christ - - - - -	111
The Number of the Israelites - - - - -	112
The Greatness of Moses - - - - -	125
The Spiritual Significance of Canaan - -	147
The Theocratic Character of the Age of the Judges - - - - -	159
The Great Figures of the Transition Period -	181
The Founder of the Kingdom - - - - -	197
The Kings of Israel and Judah - - - - -	226
The Presence of God in the Kingdom of Judah	251
Israel under Gentile Rule - - - - -	274

## **INTRODUCTORY**



## I

### APPROACHING THE BIBLE

THE way to approach the Bible is to take it first as a whole and as it stands, to read it in its own light without prejudice and to allow it to speak for itself. It professes to contain the record of a historic revelation which God has given to man.

This revelation was given in various ways and by progressive stages down through the ages until it was consummated at last in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). It was recorded from time to time, as it was made, by men inspired of God for the purpose, and the Bible is composed of the Scriptures they have written (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). For this reason, and in this sense, the Bible claims to be the Word of God. Through these men God spoke to the people of their own time and revealed His mind and will regarding the human race and the world in which we live. In these Scriptures, which they have written and handed down, His Spirit now speaks, and through them He makes known His mind and will to us.

It becomes us, therefore, to read the Bible through with reverent and earnest attention, that we may know its contents and understand its spirit. Only thus can we properly test its claim to be the Word of God, and give it a fair opportunity to prove its claim to us. A reverent and earnest approach means that we bring to bear upon it, as we read it, all the active powers of our minds and all the light we have, and that we also summon our hearts to respond in faith to the truth which it reveals to us.

The principle that Jesus laid down for those who would test His own divine authority was this: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17). The same principle is true of the Scriptures. A devout attitude toward God, and a readiness to do His will as we come to know it, are the essential conditions for recognizing the voice of God in the Bible. The secret of the Lord is with them that hold Him in reverence, and it is only in His light that we can really see light (Psa. 25:14; 36:9).

Approaching the Bible in this way, we seek first to understand the plain and literal meaning of its language. Then we discover that behind the literal sense of Scripture there is a spiritual and religious meaning. We find a new world in the Bible, the world from which God speaks. Thus the Scriptures establish their own authority for us. Through them we come to know the mind of God and learn to look upon our world as He would have us see it.

## THE TWOFOLD STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

THE structure of the Bible bears witness to the character of the revelation which it contains. Its two parts, the Old and the New Testaments, are complementary to each other and stand together. They are two successive stages in the one progressive unfolding of the divine plan. But the difference between them is not merely one of order and sequence. There is a difference also in the kind of revelation contained in each. The relation that exists between them has been expressed by two of the early Church Fathers in concise statements which cannot be improved upon: "The Old Testament anticipates the New, and the New interprets the Old" (Chrysostom); "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old Testament stands open in the New" (Augustine).

The Old Testament is a book of outward forms, which embody and enshrine inward principles not yet in active operation. It contains types and prophecies of a coming Saviour, laws and ceremonies foreshadowing another dispensation. The history itself that is recorded there has a typical significance (1 Cor. 10:11). The New Testament, on the other hand, is a book of inward principles, which create and develop, by their own inherent spiritual power, the outward forms of life and worship foreshadowed in the old dispensation and now realized in the Christian dispensation.

The Apostle John, referring to the essential



difference between the two dispensations, declares: "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). In these words he is not contrasting law and grace as contrary methods used in different ages, but pointing out the two different stages of the one progressive plan of redemption. The Old Testament system, based upon the Law, prepared for the New Testament system, based upon the Gospel. The Law was imposed from without by the human agency of Moses as a formal system of life and worship. The Gospel brought the grace and truth that lay behind the Law into actual manifestation through the life and work of Jesus Christ. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has the same idea in mind when he describes the Mosaic system of the Old Testament, in its relation to the Christian system of the New, as "having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1). The shadow became substance and reality in the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In taking the Bible as a whole, therefore, its two parts should be kept in their proper relation to each other, and should be considered in the light of it. The Old Testament is the necessary preparation for the New, and the New Testament is the necessary sequel and fulfilment of the Old. The setting in which the Christian revelation of the New Testament was given cannot be properly understood without the approach through the Old Testament revelation. Both parts of the Bible together combine to form the Christian Scriptures. Both make up the Word of God, and both are needed for a true and full understanding of the historic revelation which God has given to man.

### III

#### THE TWO TESTAMENTS

THE two stages of the Divine revelation which the Bible contains are centred in two Covenants. This fact accounts for the titles that have been given to its two parts. The word "testament" in these titles is due to the early Christian way of rendering the Greek word for "covenant" in Latin. In 2 Cor. 3: 14 Paul refers to the Mosaic Books of the Law as "the old covenant" (A.V. "the old testament"). Hence the name came to be used for all the Jewish Scriptures, which deal with the dispensation of the Law. It followed, as a matter of course, that the title "New Testament" should be given to the other Scriptures, which deal with the dispensation of the Gospel. The expression was used by Jesus when He instituted the rite that was to commemorate His death (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11: 25). The New Covenant had been foretold in the Scriptures of the Old Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). The use of this term by the Lord links the two Testaments together, and indicates the essential relation that exists between them.

The two Testaments, as they stand in the Bible, are symmetrical in their arrangement. Each of them begins with a historical narrative in which the basis is laid for the subsequent books. This narrative contains the special revelation that marks the dispensation and is developed in the course of it. Each Testament ends with a prophetic outlook upon the consummation of the dispensation. The books contained in each of them fall into four

groups in the same progressive order, thus showing the symmetrical development of the two dispensations.

The order of the books in the Old Testament differs from their arrangement in the Hebrew Bible, but in both cases the order begins with the Books of the Law. The rest of the Old Testament proceeds from the revelation of the Law and develops out of it. The thirty-nine books, as we have them, are arranged in the following four groups.

I. The Books of the Law: From Genesis to Deuteronomy. They tell of the origin of Israel and of the way this people was chosen by God to be the medium of His revelation to the world. Their central theme is the proclamation of the Law and the establishment of the Old Covenant.

II. The Historical Books: From Joshua to Esther. They record the history of God's dealings with Israel from the time of their entrance into the land of Canaan until their return and re-establishment there after the Babylonian captivity. Their central theme is the manifestation of the Law in the corporate life of the nation.

III. The Poetical Books: From Job to the Song of Solomon together with Lamentations. These books deal with various aspects of the religious life and experience of the people of God under the old dispensation. Their main theme is the realization of the Law in the life of the righteous man.

IV. The Prophetical Books: From Isaiah to Malachi. The writings of the prophets have to do with Israel's outlook upon the future and upon the nations around them. Their general theme is the consummation of the Law in the Kingdom of God in the world.

The New Testament also falls into four parts, which are parallel with the four divisions of the Old Testament. It begins with the books that contain the Gospel, and the rest of the New Testament proceeds from the revelation of the Gospel and develops out of it. The twenty-seven books are arranged in the following divisions:

I. The Gospels: From Matthew to John. These four books are not four different gospels, but four accounts of the one Gospel. The Gospel corresponds to the Law as the basis of the new dispensation. In it the grace of God, which was behind the Law, came to light in the revelation of Jesus Christ and in the establishment of the New Covenant.

II. The Acts. This one historical book deals with the manifestation of the Gospel in the world through the rise and spread of the Christian Church.

III. The Epistles: From Romans to Jude. These writings have to do with the realization of the Gospel in the life and experience of individual Christians and in the life and fellowship of the Christian Church.

IV. The Revelation. This one prophetic book, the last book of Scripture, looks forward to the consummation of redemption and the final triumph of the Gospel.

## IV

### THE UNIFYING THEME OF THE BIBLE

ALTHOUGH the Old and the New Testaments differ in character and are separated by a historic gap of four hundred years, yet they fit into each other in such a way as to give the Bible a living and unbroken unity. The sixty-six books of Scripture which compose the Bible are marked by great diversity, but they are linked together by a single theme which runs through them from the beginning to the end. This theme is the gradual development through the ages of God's plan for man's redemption.

The plan of God is brought to a head in the Person of the Redeemer. The Saviour of the world is the central figure of the whole Book. All the lines of the Old Testament converge toward Him; but they do not find their goal until, in the New Testament, He stands revealed.

The Old Testament in itself is incomplete; it ends in an unfinished way. It leads us from the creation of the world down through the stories of the patriarchs and the history of Israel, on through psalms and prophecies, till at last the road breaks off and disappears. If there were nothing more in the Bible we should be left in the dark. There are three different roads that can be followed through the Old Testament revelation, each of which ends in this way.

First, there is the highway of promise and prophecy. It begins in the Garden of Eden with the announcement that the seed of the woman should

bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). This is a promise of some One who was to arise among men and destroy the power of Satan. This prophecy takes one form after the other as it goes on through the Old Testament, deepening in its significance and narrowing in its scope. In the age of the patriarchs it is passed on through Abraham (Gen. 22:18), and Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and Jacob (Gen. 28:14), till it is deposited with the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). In the time of the monarchy in Israel it is taken up again and settled upon the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12-13; 1 Chron. 17:11-12).

The prophets carry on the announcement about David's son and expand it into the Messianic hope. "For unto us a child is born", declares Isaiah, "unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder"; and then he goes on to describe the nature of the coming Ruler and the character of his reign (Isa. 9:6-7). He is to be not only a triumphant King; he is to be the patient Servant of the Lord and a lowly sufferer as well (Isa. 42:1-4; 53:1-3). As we pass on through the Prophets, one feature after another is added to the picture. He is to be a Priest upon his throne, uniting the priestly with the kingly office (Zech. 6:13). But when we arrive at the end of the Old Testament, the coming One has not appeared; the promise is left unfulfilled.

We go back to the beginning again to take another road, the highway of sacrifice and worship. Immediately after the human family start their life outside the Garden of Eden, we find them bringing offerings to God (Gen. 4:3-4). Abel's offering is accepted because he sacrifices the firstlings of his flock. From this time on the worship of God through sacrifice appears again and again in the

historic record. When Noah comes out upon the renewed world after the Flood, his first act is to build an altar and offer sacrifices thereon (Gen. 8:20). When Abraham becomes a sojourner in the Land of Promise, he builds an altar wherever he pitches his tent (Gen. 12:8; 13:18).

The children of Israel are brought out of their bondage in the land of Egypt under the sprinkled blood of the passover lamb, which has been sacrificed for their deliverance. At Mount Sinai the ransomed people enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord God, and the covenant is sealed by a sacrifice (Exod. 24:4-8). After that a whole system of sacrifices and offerings is organized. A tabernacle is prepared and set up in which they are henceforth to be offered, and one of the tribes is set apart to minister in the tabernacle and carry on the sacrificial system of worship. The ceremony of the altar has been developed into an elaborate ritual.

This goes on throughout all the history of the nation in their own land. Sacrifices are to be offered daily, and special sacrifices are required on specific occasions. The temple at length takes the place of the tabernacle, and hecatombs are offered at its dedication (1 Kings 8:62-63; 2 Chron. 7:4-5). The sacrificial shedding of blood is the heart of all the worship of God in tabernacle and temple alike. No other way of approach to God is provided for Israel.

And yet the devout Israelite knew that what God wanted was not the sacrifice itself or the blood of the victim. "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in", says the psalmist (Psa. 40:6). "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Psa. 50:13). The prophets denounced sacrifices when they were carried on with insincerity. "Bring

no more vain oblations", cried Isaiah (Isa. 1:13); they were of no value without righteousness of life and conduct. "What doth Jehovah require of thee", asked Micah, "but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). The message of the prophets emphasized the ethical character of the Mosaic Law as its essential feature; yet they did not repudiate the sacrificial system of worship.

The most notable religious revivals in Israel, which involved the restoration of the temple services of sacrificial worship, occurred in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, when such outstanding prophets of ethical righteousness as Isaiah and Jeremiah were preaching in Jerusalem. The one way of return to God after backsliding and apostasy was through the Levitical system of sacrifices. There was some vital reason, therefore, for all these ceremonies; there was some deeper significance in this ritual of blood. But the Old Testament comes to a close without giving us any explanation.

There is still a third road that can be traced through the Old Testament—one which is not so clearly marked as the other two but is there nevertheless—the line of aspiration and longing. Soon after the banishment from Eden, when the human race had only begun to develop in the earth, we read: "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah" (Gen. 4:26). Even as early as that it was found that the world could not satisfy the heart of man, and he began to turn back to God.

Abraham set out from his early home in response to a Divine call which appealed to an unsatisfied longing in his soul. He was looking for a city with deeper foundations than Ur of the Chaldees, a city



“whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Jacob revealed the deepest desire of his heart at Peniel, when he cried out in the struggle with his Heavenly antagonist: “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen. 32:26). At the end of his long life, when he was pronouncing his final prophecy over his sons, he paused in the midst of it, as though weary with the world, and turned to God with this cry: “I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah” (Gen. 49:18).

The elemental aspiration of the heart of man breaks out most fully in the story of Job. There its deepest depths are sounded. The whole book is a cry for God out of the darkness and mystery of suffering. It is all summed up in the words: “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” (Job 23:3). The same cry runs as an undertone through the Book of Psalms. “As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa. 42:1). “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Jehovah” (Psa. 130:1).

On through the writings of the prophets this line still runs, for we find them basing some of their most eloquent appeals upon the unsatisfied desires of the human heart; as when Isaiah cries: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isa. 55:1). But again, the Old Testament comes to a close, and there is no indication given us as to how these aspirations are to be realized.

So the Bible leaves us there, facing the great gap between the Testaments, with Divine promises given but unfulfilled, with sacrificial ceremonies of worship required but unexplained, and with desires of the human heart awakened but unsatisfied. All the roads by which we have come thus far seem to end in the dark.

The moment we pass into the New Testament, light begins to break. On its very first page we find the words, "that it might be fulfilled" (Matt. 1:22). A child comes into the world at Bethlehem, of the family of David; and prophecy begins to come to pass. He grows up in a poor and humble home, "as a root out of a dry ground". He leaves the obscurity of Nazareth and goes down to the Jordan for a special anointing, and John the Baptist points Him out as the One that was to come (John 1:29). From that time on He goes about teaching and preaching and doing good; and prophecy is seen unfolding about Him as a flower unfolds to the rising sun.

In the meantime John has been cast into prison, and his faith begins to falter. He sends to ask Jesus if He really is the One that should come, or if someone else is to be looked for. John is the last in the long line of the prophets of the old dispensation; and the message Jesus sends back to comfort and assure him is simply this, that in the very character of the ministry now being carried on among the poor and needy people of the land, the words of the prophets whom John represents are being fulfilled (Matt. 11:2-5). Here then we find the first of the roads by which we have travelled through the Old Testament taken up again and reaching its goal in the New. In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ among men, the prophecies of a coming Saviour are finding their fulfilment.

The second road also soon appears. There came a time in the life of Jesus when He told His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer and be put to death. They sought to dissuade Him from this purpose, but He would not be turned aside. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. In the

upper room there He gathered His disciples about Him and instituted an ordinance that was to commemorate His death and set forth its significance: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). Then He went out to Gethsemane and on to Calvary. When He died, the veil that hid the innermost sanctuary in the temple was rent in twain; there was no longer need for it. On the Cross something had happened. A way of access was now open into the presence-chamber of God. The sin of the world that barred the way to God had been removed. The long line of ceremonial sacrifices was at last explained. Their meaning was fulfilled when Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9: 26).

And what about the aspirations of the Old Testament? During His ministry Jesus appealed to the yearnings of men and claimed to be able to satisfy them. In Galilee He looked out upon the multitudes and said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). In Jerusalem He stood among the throngs in the temple courts and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). But the meaning of these invitations was not understood till after His death. When He arose and ascended into Heaven and sent back the Holy Spirit, then the full meaning of these great words was realized by His disciples. Their lives became flooded with a wealth of joy and blessing they had never known before. At Pentecost He had come back again to abide with them.

From this point onward the New Testament unfolds the significance of this great fact and shows

how the living and ascended Lord, who had been dead but was now alive for evermore, meets all the needs and satisfies all the longings of the heart of man. As it draws to a close, we are shown the beatific vision of a numberless multitude out of all the races of men gathered round the Lamb upon the throne, of whom it is said, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more" (Rev. 7:16).

And so it is that all the lines of the Old Testament revelation lead on into the New Testament and meet in the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the key to the whole Bible. Its central theme is not so much the plan of redemption as it is the Person of the Redeemer. The Scriptures all speak of Him; "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). His shadow falls across the pages of the Old Testament, and we can find Him there when we read it in the light of the New. The New Testament has a deeper and richer meaning when we read it in the light of the Old. When we see Christ in this way in all the Scriptures as their unifying theme, the Bible becomes for us, in the deepest and truest sense, the Word of the living God.



**THE OLD TESTAMENT  
BOOKS OF THE LAW**



## THE BOOKS OF THE LAW

THE first five books of the Old Testament form a group by themselves to which the term Pentateuch ("of five books" or "five-fold") has been given. They were originally regarded as one book and are always so referred to in the Bible. They are called "the law", "the book of the law", "the book of the law of Moses", or "the book of the law of God" (Josh. 1:8; 8:31, 34; 24:26; 2 Kings 22:8; Neh. 8:1-3). These titles indicate the general theme of the Pentateuch. The revelation which God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai in proclaiming His law to them and establishing His covenant with them is the central feature of these books. This revelation is the basis of the whole Old Testament dispensation, and all the later books rest upon it.

The Pentateuch is referred to also as "the book of Moses", or simply under the name of "Moses" alone (Ezra 6:18; Luke 16:29; 24:27). It professes to have come originally from his hand. Moses kept a record of God's dealings with the people whom he had led out of Egypt, and he was instructed from time to time to write therein (Exod. 17:14; 34: 27; Num. 33:2). It is also stated that "Moses wrote this law", and when he had finished "writing the words of this law in a book", he gave it to the Levites and instructed them how to have "this book of the law" preserved in Israel (Deut. 31:9, 24-26).

The book which Moses left behind was the beginning of the Bible. It was edited by other sacred



writers, whose task was to preserve, transcribe, and hand on Moses' work. Marks of later hands are to be seen in Gen. 36:31, Num. 15:32, and Deut. 3:14, where notes are put in which were evidently written after Moses' day. The account of Moses' death at the end of Deuteronomy was probably written by Joshua. The last three or four verses were evidently added long afterwards.

Moses occupies a unique place in the Books of the Law. They make him a personal witness of the revelation which they record, and so link their Mosaic origin inseparably with the Divine character of the Old Testament dispensation. They represent him as the mediator of the Covenant between God and Israel, and the agent establishing the worship of Jehovah as the God of Israel. The monotheistic belief of the Hebrews and their national system of worship did not arise from a discovery of God reached by themselves, for their history shows that they were by nature prone to idolatry. The religion of Israel was the result of a supernatural revelation in which God Himself took the initiative, and these books tell the story of it. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel" (Psa. 103:7).

The claim of a Mosaic origin which the Pentateuch makes for itself is supported by other evidence of a cumulative character, which may be summed up as follows:

1. The unanimous tradition of the Jewish race throughout the ages ascribes these books to Moses. The Pentateuch forms part of their own national literature, and it was never doubted in Israel that it contains the true story of their origin and the true account of their religion. A uniform belief

such as this, which is more deeply and solidly rooted than the traditions of any other people and has powerfully influenced the character and destiny of the race, cannot be lightly dismissed. Only an adequate cause can account for it. That cause could not have been an invention imposed upon the nation in the course of its history.

2. The internal evidence of the books themselves points to the age of Moses. The language reflects his age, and much of it would be unsuitable for a later age. The accounts of Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt correspond in the minutest details with what is known of that ancient country from other sources. The story of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness bears signs of having been written by an eye-witness. The narrative throughout the Pentateuch has an air of simple truthfulness. This evidence is not invalidated by the presence of double narratives or signs of different documents, for there were records of the past in Moses' time which he could use. Nor is it affected by the occasional references to later times, for they could have been inserted by the editors of Moses' work.

3. Archæology supports the historical character of these books. It has dispelled the critical doubts that were formerly cast upon the Genesis account of the patriarchs. Its more recent discoveries have thrown a flood of new light upon the time of Abraham, and also upon the later Mosaic era. In no case have they shown the Biblical record to be erroneous in any particular, or raised any doubt about it.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ took these books for what they claim to be. He referred to them and quoted them as the work of Moses (Mark 12:26;

Luke 24:44; John 5:45-47). His testimony cannot be dismissed by saying that He accepted the traditional view about them that was current in His own day; for He did more than that. He regarded them as having Divine authority and as revealing the mind of God. He met the assaults of Satan in the wilderness by quoting from Deuteronomy with the statement, "It is written", thus showing what He thought of the authority this book carried (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13). If its claim to have come from Moses had been false, it could not have had such authority for Him. The infallible spiritual insight of the Son of Man recognized the Word of God. He who "came out from the Father" (John 16:28) could not have been deceived about His Father's voice.

NOTE:—Modern subjective criticism denies the Mosaic authorship of these books and substitutes for it an elaborate documentary theory. It regards them as a compilation of material from various sources put together long after Moses' day. It assumes that there were two original documents containing the traditions of the Hebrew people. One was the J Document, which used the name "Jehovah" for God. The other was the E Document, which used the name "Elohim" for God. To these was added the P Document, which was the work of the priests giving symbolic significance to the history. Finally came D, our Deuteronomy, which was "the book of the law" professedly found in the Temple in the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs. 22:8; 2 Chron. 34:14-15). This is the key to the whole critical theory. The book had been prepared secretly by unknown authors as a basis for moral reform and

to support the preaching of the prophets. Its authorship was ascribed to Moses in order to give the work the greatest authority and the widest influence. Nothing dishonest should be seen in this; so it is declared. It was justified by the motive behind it and the standards of the time.

Such, in substance, is "the documentary hypothesis" of modern Biblical criticism. It has never been accepted with unanimity, for there always have been critical scholars who rejected it. The Christian Church as a whole, with a sound spiritual instinct, treats it with only academic interest, and simply passes it by. The common sense of Christians in general still continues to take these Books of the Law at their face value.

## THE BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS, as its name implies, is the book of "beginnings". It goes back to the beginnings of the world, but it deals especially with the beginnings of redemption. This theme is manifest in the structure of the book. It is composed of ten separate sections, introduced by similar headings, and arranged in such a way as to show how God's purpose of redemption moved down through the early ages of the world by a selective process among men till it rested at last upon Israel. The structure may be shown as follows:

Introduction: The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (1:1—2:3)

1. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4—4:26)
2. The Book of the Generations of Adam (5:1—6:8)
3. The Generations of Noah (6:9—9:29)
4. The Generations of the Sons of Noah (10:1—11:9)
5. The Generations of Shem (11:10-26)
6. The Generations of Terah, the father of Abraham (11:27—25:11)
7. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)
8. The Generations of Isaac (25:19—35:29)
9. The Generations of Esau (Ch. 36)
10. The Generations of Jacob (Chs. 37—50).

There is evidence of purpose in this arrangement. The word "generations" means the posterity of the

persons named or the progress of events relating to them. It refers in each case to the history that follows. As we follow this plan through the book, we notice that the side branches of the race are always taken up first and cut off before the main branch, through which God's redemptive purpose runs, is carried onward. The history of Cain and his line in chapter 4 precedes that of Seth and his line in chapter 5. The generations of the sons of Noah precede the generations of Shem. The generations of Ishmael and of Esau precede those of Isaac and of Jacob respectively. With the generations of Jacob we arrive at last at the origin of Israel.

For purposes of study the Book of Genesis is best divided into two main parts: Chapters 1-11, which cover long ages of the world's early history, the narrative being given in bare outline, and Chapters 12—50, which deal with the age of the patriarchs alone, the narrative being amplified in greater detail. The first part may be summed up under four great themes, and the second part under four great names. This gives us the following working outline of the book:

- I. The Beginnings of the World—Chs. 1-11
  1. The Creation (Chs. 1-2)
  2. The Fall (Chs. 3-5)
  3. The Flood (Chs. 6-9)
  4. The Nations (Chs. 10-11)
- II. The Beginnings of Israel—Chs. 12-50
  1. Abraham (Chs. 12-23)
  2. Isaac (Chs. 24-26)
  3. Jacob (Chs. 27-36)
  4. Joseph (Chs. 37-50)

### THE CREATION (Chs. 1-2)

The Creation is described in these chapters from two different points of view. In the first account man comes at the end, as the crowning work of the Creator and as His final purpose in the material order. In the second account man comes at the beginning, as the starting point of human history and the preparation for a spiritual order.

1. A General Account of the Creation of the World (1:1—2:3). The Bible begins with a fitting prologue; it brings us to God at once. This account of the origin of the world is sublime in its majesty and simplicity. It has the unmistakable marks of a primitive revelation, broken fragments of which are found in the mythological accounts of Creation. It transcends science; but it does not conflict with science. It is not so much an account of the Creation as a revelation of the Creator. Its purpose is not to give information as to the way the world was made, but to reveal God at work in the making of the world.

The events of Creation are described as if they were seen by an observer on the earth while the handiwork of the Creator develops in progressive stages around him. The making of the world goes on, not as a process of evolution up an inclined plane, but as a series of steps up a stairway, each brought about by a creative act of God. Each period of creative activity is characterized by a higher grade of life than the preceding period; and each period is also the preparation for a still further advance introduced in the one following.

These progressive periods are represented as

“days”, each with an “evening” and a “morning”, a beginning and a culmination of its own particular form of life. The Hebrew day began in the evening and came to a head in the morning. After an introductory statement in which the earth is described as “waste and void” (vs. 1-2), these “days” or cycles of time begin. They form two great eras of three days each. In the first three days (vs. 3-13), that which was “waste” was given order and arrangement. In the next three days (vs. 14-31), that which was “void” was given fulness and life. At the end of the first era plants were created, introducing the element of organic life. At the end of the last era man appeared as the crowning work of creation, made “in the image of God”, with a spiritual nature capable of fellowship with Him.

The seventh day follows as the period in which God “rested” from His creative work (2:1-3). It is not described as having an evening and a morning, for though it has had a beginning, it has not yet reached its consummation. “God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it”, as the age for the spiritual development of the human race. It was the Creator’s purpose that His highest creature should share His Sabbath rest by worship and fellowship with Him. This purpose, frustrated for a time by the fall of man, is now attained through the redemption of Christ (Heb. 4:9). Hints of the coming “morning” occur in such passages as Psa. 49:14; Isa. 60:1-3; and Rom. 13:11-12.

2. A Particular Account of the Creation of Man (2:4-25). Having told of the origin of the heavens and the earth, the story now takes up their “generations”, or the history that proceeds from their creation. It goes back into the sixth day and deals with that part of the earth where man was placed (vs.



4-6). A suitable abode was being prepared for him. The reference is not to the vegetation of the world as a whole, but to that which requires human oversight and cultivation. The story of the human race is about to begin. Reminiscences of Eden linger in the ancient mythologies which tell of a garden of bliss and a golden age in the far past. They point back to the primeval truth which Genesis here records.

The conditions of man's original state as he came from the Creator's hand are set forth in pictorial form. We are shown that he had a dual origin, linking him with both the physical and the spiritual world (v. 7), and that he was placed in an ideal environment, perfectly suited for his enjoyment and the development of his nature (vs. 8-14). The locality of Eden, where human history began, was evidently known when this account was written. The description of it indicates that it was somewhere in the Mesopotamian plain. Throughout the account the Lord God is represented as the friend and instructor of man, giving him work to do and a purpose for his life (vs. 15), and providing for the development of his whole nature.

Special provision was made for the development of man's moral nature. He was to learn to know the difference between good and evil, not by experimenting with them, but by following the expressed will of his Creator as the guiding principle of his life (vs. 16-17). His mental nature was trained, and his own peculiar social need discovered, by reflection on the nature of the animal world around him (vs. 18-20). His social nature was finally and fully provided for, and marriage instituted, when God "made a woman and brought her unto the man" (vs. 21-25). This is represented as the final step

in God's creation of man. Adam's words mark the crowning point in man's primitive development: "This is now — ." They express his joy at finding his nature fully satisfied at last. The family was thus made the unit in the constitution of the human race. Manhood and womanhood together make humanity.

NOTE:—A new name for the Creator is used in the special account of the creation of man. The two Divine names which occur throughout the Old Testament, "Elohim" (God) and "Jehovah" (represented in the English Version by the word Lord in capital letters), are here combined into "Jehovah God", or "the Lord God". The combination is continued to the end of chap. 3, that is, throughout the story of the creation and fall of man. This does not mean that another document is being used by the writer for his material, but that another idea is being introduced into the record. The "documentary hypothesis", which assumes that the two different Divine names come from two different documentary sources, fails to take account of the special significance of the names.

These two names are not used at random in the Hebrew Scriptures. They both designate the Supreme Being, but they represent Him under different aspects. Elohim is the common name for the Deity. It is the term used when His relation to all mankind is in view, and so it occurs alone in the general account of the creation of the world in chap. 1. Jehovah is the proper name of the God of Israel. It is the name by which He made Himself known to His chosen people as their covenant God. It implies the idea of redemption. The revelation of redemption in the Bible really begins with the

story of man in the Garden of Eden, and so the new name is properly introduced here. The Creator of the world is also the Redeemer of men.

### THE FALL (Chs. 3-5)

The fact of the Fall is the pivot of the whole Bible. Without it the message of redemption would be meaningless. Something happened at the very beginning of man's history which perverted his nature and turned the stream of human life in the wrong direction. This section begins with a story which explains the nature of the event, and goes on to trace its consequences as they began to develop in the course of human history.

1. The Beginning of Sin (Ch. 3). The pictorial form in which the story is told does not mean that it is mythical or unreal. It should not be forgotten that our natural faculties themselves have been so altered and circumscribed by the Fall that the conditions of human life before that event are beyond the reach of our present experience and cannot be conveyed to our understanding in common speech. The life of man in Eden reached out into the unseen spiritual world, and from that world man has fallen. A similar reason exists for the symbolic language of Scripture describing the heavenly life which is still beyond our ken. The story in this chapter sets forth the facts in such a way as to show us how human sin originated and how Divine grace came out to meet it.

(1) Human sin. The serpent hides a mystery; behind it looms a dark evil intelligence, the real source of sin, who used the serpent as his instru-

ment. The shadow of Satan is seen here, the great enemy of God and man (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). From him came a temptation to doubt the love and question the will of God (vs.1-5). The act of disobedience which Eve and Adam committed (v. 6) consisted in turning aside to self-will instead of following God's will as the rule of life. Eve was deceived by the suggestions of the tempter, but Adam acted deliberately (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14).

That act of his put the permanent bias of self-will upon the original free will of man, and turned his whole nature in the direction of self-interest. This is the essence of sin. The immediate result of eating the forbidden fruit was a sense of shame before each other (v. 7), a sense of fear and guilt before God (vs. 8-10), and the rise of the ugly spirit of self in both the man and the woman (vs. 11-13). They had the knowledge of good and evil now, but they had obtained it by taking evil into their own being; it was incorporated in their own will and experience.

In pronouncing judgment, God addressed the serpent, the woman, and the man, each in turn (vs. 14-19). A curse was to lie upon the serpent above all the animal world, aggravating its natural state to become the very symbol of evil. The woman's function of motherhood was to be accompanied by pain and sorrow, and she should become subject to her husband. Because of Adam's moral failure in yielding to his wife and disobeying God, the ground producing his food was to be cursed, and the race was to be condemned to an existence of painful toil. The world of nature would deteriorate and resist man's efforts to cultivate and subdue it. Man's life was doomed to end in death, and he was to go back to the dust from which he came.

(2) Divine grace. Even in pronouncing judgment, God manifested His grace and gave the guilty pair ground for hope. His redeeming purpose was implied in the judgment upon the serpent, which contains the first announcement of redemption for the race (v. 15). There was to be perpetual enmity between the serpent and the woman, that is, between Satan and the human race; and between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, that is, between those who inherit the wickedness of their father the devil and are his spiritual children (Matt. 13:38; 23:33; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:8-10) and those who are the children of God through the woman, born of God through the woman's seed. This is the only case in Scripture where the word "seed" is used of the posterity of the woman. In the statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head and the serpent bruise his heel, there is a foreshadowing of the mystery of the Incarnation, the suffering of the Cross, and the ultimate triumph of Christ over Satan (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9-10; 20:2-3, 7-10).

Adam showed his faith in the promise of God by the name he gave his wife as the mother of the coming seed (v. 20). God's grace is further seen in the provision of coats of skin to clothe the nakedness of Adam and Eve. (v. 21). This involved the slaying of animal victims and probably had something to do with the institution of sacrifice, for the event antedates the permission of animal food (9:3).

Finally God proceeded to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden out into the world beyond (vs. 22-23). They were shut out from fellowship with God and lost their right to the tree of life. Thus the fall of man was not only a fall into sin, but also a fall from the spiritual world, the world

that transcends the natural and visible order. For that world man was created, and now he could no longer have access there. But God's grace followed him still.

Supernatural symbols of God's presence were placed at the east of the garden, to keep and mark the way to the tree of life (v. 24). These gave man hope of an ultimate return to the fellowship of God, and in the meantime provided a way of worshipping Him. "The flame of a sword which turned every way", means a flame of fire in constant motion, living fire. It is the first appearance of the Shekinah in the Old Testament. Fire continues to be the symbol of the Divine presence and activity down through the Old Testament dispensation until the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended and sat upon each of the disciples in tongues, "like as of fire" (Acts 2:3).

2. The Growth of Sin (4:1-15). When Adam and Eve went out from the Garden of Eden, they carried with them God's promise of a Redeemer. The fundamental difference in the character of their two sons, Cain and Abel, was due to the attitude of each toward this redeeming purpose of God. It was shown, not in their different occupations (vs. 1-2), but in the offerings they presented to Him in worship (vs. 3-5). Cain's occupation was a higher and more important one than Abel's, for he continued the work God had given man to do at his creation. The two brothers are chosen out of Adam's family, which must have become very large by this time, as representative of the two classes of men, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. The New Testament makes this distinction between them (1 John 3:12; Heb. 11:4). The age-long conflict was now beginning.

Man's worship of God would take place at first before the symbols of the Divine presence at the east of the Garden of Eden (3:24). There Adam's family would gather every Sabbath day. The phrase rendered "in process of time" is literally "at the end of days", and probably means, at the end of every weekly period. Week after week Cain brought the fruit of his own toil, but nothing else, showing no sense of sin. Abel brought a sacrificial victim, confessing thereby his need of redemption. Abel's sacrifice is described in Heb. 11:4 as "more excellent", literally "fuller", than Cain's. He added the sacrificial victim to his other offerings. His was the worship of faith, while Cain's was the worship of self-will. The Lord "had respect unto Abel and to his offering" by having the flame of fire consume it while Cain's was left unconsumed. It was thus, the writer of Hebrews means, that Abel "had witness borne to him that he was righteous"—that he was right with God.

The Lord met Cain's anger and resentment by explaining the merciful provision made for worshipping Him (vs. 6-7). Apparently God still maintained direct communication with men. The language of the passage is involved and its meaning is obscure. The word for "sin" is the technical term for "sin-offering" in the Mosaic sacrificial system, and in the light of that v. 7 may be paraphrased as follows: "If thou doest well (dost not sin), shall not thy offering be accepted? and if thou doest not well (dost commit sin), a sin-offering lieth at the gate of Eden. It is under thy hand, ready for thy use". But Cain persisted in his sullen self-will. Sin in him developed rapidly into hatred, and finally into murder, deliberately planned (v. 8). Something has dropped out of this verse in the Hebrew, for the

word rendered "told" means "said unto" and requires an object. The Greek Septuagint, which was translated from the Hebrew in the third century B.C., has this: "And Cain said unto Abel his brother, Let us go into the field." This exactly suits the context and was probably in the original Hebrew text.

Then God called Cain to account; blood shed by man cries to God for justice. It was a judicial enquiry and probably took place when the time for worship came round again. It exposed Cain's heart; self-will had at last destroyed natural affection in him (vs. 9-10). He was doomed to live under a curse which was to spring from the ground in retribution against him. The ground would be barren under his hand, and he should be a wanderer in the earth (vs. 11-12). Cain shrank under the judgment of God, haunted by the memory of his crime and apprehensive of vengeance; and God gave him some kind of assurance of personal security before he went away from the presence of the Lord and the immediate vicinity of Eden (vs. 13-15).

3. The Progress of Man (4:16-26). The powers of the human race were first developed by the descendants of Cain. The beginnings of a progressive civilization are here described, but it was inspired by self-will and pride. Cain himself started it in the second generation by building a city in honour of his son and giving rise to architecture (vs. 16-18). In the seventh generation, Lamech violated the Creator's constitution of the family by introducing polygamy (v. 19). His sons were men of enterprise and genius. From them sprang pastoral pursuits, the basis of commerce and trade in primitive times (v. 20), music and the fine arts (v. 21), and the industrial and mechanical arts (v. 22).



Lamech himself composed the first piece of poetry recorded in the Bible (vs. 23-24). It is a war song, in the parallel structure of Hebrew poetry, which he sang to his two wives, boasting of a murder he had committed. It casts a vivid light on the moral condition of the Cainite family. In the seventh generation from Adam, the self-willed spirit of Cain had developed into bold defiance of God and confident pride in human power.

In the meantime another son had been given to Adam and Eve in the place of Abel, to maintain the true worship of God and the spiritual development of man (vs. 25-26). In the same generation in which Cain was building a city to establish himself in the world, Seth was discovering that the world could not satisfy the heart and was leading men to seek the Lord. He became the head of a God-fearing line through whom the redeeming purpose of God was to be carried down through the ages.

The names of the three sons of Adam and Eve in this chapter are evidently intended to be significant. They seem to reflect the faith and religious experience of Eve, who gave them. She called her first-born Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah", playing on the word for "get" which has a similar sound in the original. This would indicate a thought in her heart that Cain was the promised seed. When he disappointed her, she called the next son Abel, "a breath", or "vanity". This name expressed that disappointment, and also indicated the kind of experience she was meeting with in the world. When Seth was born she gave him a name which means "placed" or "put", believing that God had "appointed" him instead of the godly Abel to be the head of the line in which the promised seed should appear.

4. The Reign of Death (Ch. 5). The record now leaves the line of Cain and follows that of Seth. Ten generations are recorded from Adam to Noah. The results of the Fall work themselves out even in the godly line. Death now reigns. The phrase, "and he died", rings down the record like the tolling of a bell. There is one striking exception in the seventh generation (vs. 21-24). The translation of Enoch indicates what would have been the end of man's earthly life had there been no Fall; he would have passed on into the heavenly world without dying. The long lives of these antediluvian patriarchs bear witness to the vital powers with which man's physical nature was endowed in his original creation.

There are three statements in this chapter which deserve notice: (1) Adam begat a son "in his own likeness" (v. 3). The bias of self-will introduced into man's nature by the Fall was transmitted to the whole human race; every child of Adam is born with it. (2) Enoch "walked with God" (v. 22). This expression is unique in Scripture. Except in the case of Noah (Gen. 6:9), it occurs again only in connection with the priests' intercourse with God in the Temple (Mal 2:6). It means a peculiarly intimate and personal converse with the Lord, the kind of fellowship man was originally intended to have with his Creator (Heb. 11:5-6). (3) Lamech's reason for calling his son Noah ("rest"). "This same shall comfort us", or "give us rest" (v. 29). Evidently he felt the burden of toil upon an earth which was under the curse of man's sin, and he looked forward in faith and hope to the fulfilment of the Divine promise of deliverance.

## THE FLOOD (Chs. 6-9)

The development of sin resulted at last in such universal corruption that it brought on a judgment of God in which He destroyed the old world and made a new start with man under new conditions.

1. The Corruption of the Race (6:1-12). This came about when the line of Seth ("the sons of God") mingled with the rest of the race by following their own self-willed choice in marrying the "daughters of men" (vs. 1-2). The flesh had overcome the spirit even in the godly line, and the Lord determined to shorten the duration of human life (v. 3). The mingling of the two lines had resulted in a great development of the powers of the race, but also in great wickedness and the corruption of man's whole inner nature (vs. 4-5). The purpose for which God created man was being completely perverted; and, for the very preservation of the race, Divine justice required the destruction of its present representatives (vs. 6-8). In the midst of this universal wickedness there was one righteous man who "walked with God", and the record makes a new beginning with him (vs. 9-12).

2. The Making of the Ark (6:13-22). God's purpose of judgment, which has been already stated, was now revealed to Noah. God gave him instructions for the building of an ark for the preservation of himself and his house, and promised to establish His covenant with him, thus carrying on through him His design for the race. The narrative emphasizes Noah's complete obedience to the Divine instructions in all the preparations for the Flood (6:22; 7:5, 9, 16). He did the will of God in faith,

while all the rest of the world went on in their own wicked, self-willed way (Heb. 11:7).

3. The Saving of Noah (7:1—8:19). The story of the Flood is told with majestic simplicity and restraint. It was caused by an uprush of waters from the seas as well as a deluge of rain from the skies: "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (v. 11). In describing the course and duration of the Flood, the narrative is amplified and reads like a log-book. It marks out the week before it began (7:1-5), the day Noah entered the ark (7:6-10), the forty days of rain (7:11-17), the hundred and fifty days when the waters prevailed on the earth (7:18-24), the gradual subsiding of the waters till the tenth month when the tops of the mountains were seen (8:1-5), the sending out of the raven and the dove (8:6-12), and finally Noah's leaving the ark at the command of God (8:13-19).

4. The New Beginning (8:20—9:29). The new conditions under which the human race made a new start in its history are set forth in the incidents recorded in this section.

(1) Noah's sacrifice (8:20-22). His first act on coming out of the ark marked his faith in God. The way of approach to God was still by the altar of sacrifice. The Lord accepted the sacrifice, admitted the fact of universal sinfulness, thus taking account of it in His subsequent government of the world, and promised never to interrupt the course of nature again.

(2) The blessing of Noah (9:1-7). The blessing given to Adam was renewed, with several significant changes. Man's dominion over the animal world now became one of fear and dread. Animal food, blood excepted, was to be allowed, marking a

coarsening of man's physical nature. Authority to punish crime, formerly forbidden to any private person because reserved for God Himself (4:15), was now delegated to man. Thus was instituted the principle of civil government suited to man's fallen state.

(3) The covenant with Noah (9:8-17). The promise not to destroy the world again by a flood was put in the form of a covenant, including in its scope both the human race and the animal world. The rainbow was made the token of this covenant and given a spiritual meaning. Nature thus became a symbol of spiritual truth.

(4) The prophecy of Noah (9:18-27). Noah's three sons were to become the heads of a three-fold division of mankind as they spread over the earth. His prophecy regarding his sons foreshadowed the destiny and character of these three branches of the race. Embodied in the prophecy is a hint that the purpose of redemption was to be carried down through the line of Shem. In a peculiar sense the Lord was to be the God of Shem (v. 26).

Noah's age at his death classes him with the long-lived antediluvians (vs. 28-29). After this, human life was shortened from age to age down to the time of the Hebrew patriarchs, when its limit was less than two hundred years. This is shown in the generations of Shem as recorded in ch. 11: 10-32.

#### THE NATIONS (Chs. 10-11)

After the Flood the world was peopled by the descendants of Noah. National divisions among mankind began with the institution of authoritative human government (Rom. 13:1).

1. The Origin of the Nations (Ch. 10). Seventy nations are mentioned in the list, which is evidently intended to be symbolical rather than complete, representing all the races of mankind. The unity of the human race is set forth in this roll of the nations (Acts 17:26), which is God's final review of them before the sacred record takes up the story of the chosen nation, through whom the Redeemer of all the nations was to come.

The sons of Japheth are mentioned first (vs. 2-5). They produced the colonizing peoples and spread westward over the isles and coast-lands of the Mediterranean. The sons of Ham come next (vs. 6-20). They were the first to found powerful kingdoms, spreading through Mesopotamia and on into Africa. The sons of Shem come last (vs. 21-31). They apparently did not spread far from their original home.

2. The Rebellion of the Nations (11:1-9). This was the first manifestation of organized rebellion against God. Formerly human sin had been manifested as individual corruption and violence; here it broke out into united and centralized defiance of God. Self-will had now developed into corporate presumption, pride, and ambition (v. 4). It took the form of a godless political and national federation. It was visited by a Divine judgment, which confused the speech of men and caused them to scatter abroad over the earth. Thus do God's judgments confound the self-willed purposes of men (Psa. 2:4).

3. The Origin of the Chosen Nation (11:10-32). The nations having failed, God began to prepare a nation for Himself, through whom He could carry out His plan of redemption for the whole race. This section carries the record from Shem down to the

time of Abraham. It closes with the migration of the family of Terah, the father of Abram (his name at that time), from Ur of the Chaldees in the southern part of Mesopotamia to Haran in the upper Euphrates valley. It prepares the way for the calling out of Abraham.

ABRAHAM  
(Chs. 12-32)

With Abraham, who was born about 2000 B.C., a new stage of revelation begins. He was separated from the line of Shem at the call of God to live by faith. He was known as "the friend of God" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23). No higher title was ever given to any man. Paul calls him "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). His history illustrates the life of faith. It may be divided into four periods, each beginning with a special revelation from God and marked by a special response of faith on his part.

1. The Call and the Promise (Chs. 12-14). The Lord appeared to Abraham when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees, and called him to set out for a land which He would show him (Heb. 11:8). Migrating from Mesopotamia, he stopped at Haran and dwelt there till his father died (Acts 7:2-4). He was seventy-five years old when he took a further step in obeying the call of God and came into Canaan (12:1-5). There the Lord appeared unto him and gave him the definite promise of the land (12:6-9). This is the first mention of any "appearance" of the Lord. Hitherto Divine communications seem to have been direct. After this the Angel of the Lord appears in the narrative again and again as the Divine messenger.

The promise given to Abraham in connection with his call was threefold: (1) His name should become great and his seed should become a great nation. (2) They should be given Canaan as a special land of their own. (3) Through him and his seed a blessing should come to all the nations of the world. All this had in view the preparation and separation of a people through whom the Saviour of the world would come.

Abraham showed his faith by sojourning in the Land of Promise and building an altar to the Lord wherever he dwelt. His faith weakened during a time of famine, when he went down to Egypt and deceived Pharaoh about his wife (12:10-20). It revived again when he returned to Canaan and, to avoid strife among brethren, allowed Lot, who had accompanied his uncle from Haran, to choose the best of the land for himself (13:1-13). He was rewarded for this magnanimous act of self-sacrifice and faith by a new assurance of the Lord's own promise of the land (13:14-18).

When Abraham rescued Lot from the foes who had captured him in their plunder of Sodom (14:1-16), he gave further evidence of his faith by refusing to receive anything from the king of Sodom (14:17-24). Melchizedek appears upon the scene at this point as one of those who still carried on the primeval worship of the one true God. He is a witness to the fact of an original revelation. Abraham recognized him as a true priest of the Most High God and "gave him a tenth of all". The tithe seems to have come down from primitive times; it was man's recognition of the goodness of his Creator and his dependence upon Him.

2. The Promise Made a Covenant (Chs. 15-16). After this another revelation came to Abraham, and



for the first time the specific expression is used which is so often repeated afterwards: "The word of Jehovah came". It met the particular need the patriarch would feel after the events related in the preceding chapter by first giving him an encouraging assurance: "Fear not, Abram". Then it gave him the promise that he should have a son of his own and an innumerable seed (15:1-6). The faith which he placed in the Lord on this occasion is used three times in the New Testament as an illustration of the faith that justifies the sinner: "He reckoned it to him for righteousness", that is, with a view to righteousness (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). Abraham's faith in the Lord was such an attitude of entire trust that God could accept him as a righteous man.

God then renewed the promise of the land in the form of a covenant; and in so doing He revealed to Abraham the long period of affliction through which his seed should pass before they would be given the land. The wickedness of the inhabitants was not yet ripe for the judgment of God (15:7-21). After being ten years in the land, Abraham's faith weakened again. He took another false step at Sarah's suggestion, and Ishmael was born to him of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid (ch. 16).

3. The Covenant Sealed by Circumcision (Chs. 17-21). Abraham had to wait till he was ninety-nine years old before the Lord appeared to him again. This time it was to reveal Himself as the Almighty God, the One who is All-sufficient, besides whom Abraham needed none else to help him (17:1). Then the Lord renewed His covenant promise, and as a pledge of its fulfilment, changed the patriarch's name from Abram, "exalted father", to Abraham, "father of a multitude" (17:2-8). He

also commanded Abraham to institute the rite of circumcision in his family as a sign and seal of the covenant (17:9-14). He added a blessing for Sarah also, promising to establish His covenant with a son whom she should bear to Abraham and whom he was to name Isaac (17:15-21). Abraham then proceeded to carry out the instructions now given to him (17:22-27).

During this period of his life three mysterious visitors came to Abraham's tent one day, and he entertained them with the generous and gracious hospitality of an oriental host. One of them was none other than the Lord Himself, coming with two heavenly attendants to call upon His earthly friend. He gave Sarah the promise of a son in her old age, meeting her incredulity with the question: "Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?" (18:1-15). He then disclosed to Abraham the purpose of His visit. It was to reveal the imminent judgment of the wicked city of Sodom to the man whom He had chosen for the ultimate blessing of the world: "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" (18:16-21).

The patriarch immediately began to intercede with the Lord in behalf of the righteous who might be in the city. His nephew Lot was there, but he does not mention him. His plea is based upon the righteousness of God, the fundamental quality of the Divine character: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (18:22-33). The whole story of this chapter illustrates the believer's fellowship with God, and his ministry of intercession for the world. The answer to Abraham's prayer was the saving of Lot out of the judgment as recorded in the next chapter (19:29).

The visit of the two angels to Sodom for the rescue of Lot was followed at once by the destruc-

tion of the cities of the Plain (19:1-28). His wife, lingering behind, was involved in their doom. Through his daughters he became the ancestor of Moab and Ammon, nations which caused great trouble to the Israelites in the course of their history (19:30-38). The state of life in Sodom, as revealed by the story in this chapter, gives some idea of the wickedness for which the Canaanites were afterwards condemned to destruction at the hands of Israel.

Another lapse of Abraham's faith occurred when he was sojourning in the south; he deceived Abimelech king of Gerar as he had deceived Pharaoh (ch. 20). At last, when Abraham was a hundred years old, the child of promise was born to him, and he called his name Isaac (21:1-7). Soon after that, on Sarah's insistence, Abraham had to cast Hagar and Ishmael out of his home (21:8-21). At that time Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba and continued to sojourn there (21:22-34).

4. The Covenant Confirmed by the Oath of God (Chs. 22-23). The supreme trial of Abraham's faith came when he was dwelling in Beersheba. God commanded him to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah (22:1-8). This story is to be read in the light of the fact that human sacrifice was demanded by the false religions of the nations around. Could Abraham stand the same test when required by his God? His obedience in this case was rewarded by God's provision of a sacrifice in place of Isaac (22:9-14). The story is told with the calm and objective detachment that marks the style of the inspired writers of Scripture. The heart of the whole scene is depicted in the twice-repeated words: "They went both of them together".

The experience brought to the heart and mind of the aged patriarch a new revelation of God. This was no doubt what Jesus referred to when He declared that Abraham "rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). The whole incident was a typical foreshadowing of the sacrifice the Lord God Himself was to make through the offering of His only begotten Son, that He might fulfil the covenant He had made with His friend Abraham. Abraham's faith having now been proved and perfected, the Lord confirmed all His promises to him in a peculiarly solemn way: "By myself have I sworn" (22: 15-18; Heb. 6:13-18).

When Abraham returned to Beersheba, he heard news of the family of his brother Nahor whom he had left in Haran (22:19-24). After this Sarah died at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron, which Abraham purchased as a burying place from Ephron the Hittite in the presence of the people of the land (ch. 23).

#### ISAAC (Chs. 24-26)

Isaac was the longest-lived of the patriarchs (35: 28-29); yet his life was the least eventful. His character was gentle and peace-loving; he is an illustration of the meek who inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). He followed in the wake of his father, doing the things his father did. His life was spent in the south among the wells that Abraham had digged.

This section tells how Abraham sent his trusted and faithful servant to seek a wife for Isaac among his own kindred (24:1-9); how the servant, seeking

the Lord's guidance in the matter, met Rebekah at the well, was entertained by her brother Laban, and won her consent to come back with him (24: 10-60); and how Isaac received her and brought her into his mother's home (24: 61-67). The story goes on to tell of the death and burial of Abraham at the age of a hundred and seventy-five (25:1-11), and to record the generations of Ishmael (25:12-18). Then it takes up the family of Isaac and tells of the birth of his twin sons (25:19-26). The difference in their character, as they grew up, is manifested in Esau's sale of his birthright to Jacob, showing his lack of any sense of the unseen and the spiritual (25:27-34). He was a "profane person", a man of this world alone (Heb. 12:16). The birthright carried with it the inheritance of the Divine promise.

Isaac followed his father's footsteps in going down to Abimelech during a famine, and he fell into the same sin of deception (26:1-11). He became very prosperous and was envied by his Philistine neighbours. But he refused to fight for the wells which they took from him (26:12-25); and at last Abimelech made a covenant of peace with him (26:26-33).

On two occasions the Lord appeared to Isaac and renewed with him the promises He had given to Abraham (26:2-5, 23-25). On the second occasion Isaac built an altar to the Lord—the only time this is recorded of him. In the meantime, Esau brought grief into the peaceful family of Isaac and Rebekah by marrying women of Canaan (26:34-35).

JACOB  
(Chs. 27-36)

In Jacob's character there was a conflict between two natures. His natural character was cunning and deceitful, but behind this was an appreciation of the unseen and a capacity for the spiritual. In the course of the discipline of life through which God led him, Jacob ("the self-reliant") finally became Israel ("one who has power with God"). His history as recorded in these chapters may be considered in four stages, each of which was marked by a crisis in his experience.

1. The Vision at Bethel (Chs. 27-28). In Isaac's old age Jacob obtained the patriarchal blessing from his father by deceit, at the instigation and under the direction of Rebekah (27:1-29). The incident brings out the characteristic faults of all the four parties in the story. Jacob thereby incurred the hatred of his brother Esau for whom Isaac had intended the blessing (27:30-45). He was sent away from home to seek a wife among his mother's kindred at Haran (27:46-28:9). At a certain place on the way, as he lay asleep, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, renewing the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, and giving him a special promise of personal care (28:10-17). In response to this promise Jacob marked the spot with a memorial stone, calling the place Bethel, "the house of God", and made a solemn vow, dedicating himself to the Lord (28:18-22).

2. The Discipline at Haran (Chs. 29-31). During a long exile, in which Jacob served his uncle Laban for twenty years, he married Leah and Rachel, and became possessed of a large family and

great wealth in flocks and herds (chs. 29-30). Incurring the enmity of Laban and commanded of God to return to the land of his birth, he departed with his family and flocks without Laban's knowledge (31:1-21). Laban, when told of it, pursued after Jacob and overtook him in Gilead; and there the two men had an angry dispute (31:22-42). It ended in their making a covenant and setting up the watchtower of Mizpah as a witness of separation between them (31:43-55).

3. The Blessing at Peniel (Chs. 32-33). As Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him, and he recognized in this incident a sign of Divine help and protection (32:1-2). As he approached the land where Esau lived he sent him a message of conciliation, but when word came back that his brother was coming to meet him he became greatly alarmed and took precautions against his possible vengeance. Then he turned to God in a humble and earnest prayer (32:3-12). At the same time he went on with his own devices and made an elaborate plan to appease Esau with presents (32:13-21).

When about to cross the border into his brother's territory, the Angel of God met him in the lonely night and wrestled with him, opposing his further progress. His confidence in his own strength was at last broken down, and he clung to the One whom he found to be stronger than himself (32:22-26). As a token of the new spirit of reliance on God which arose in him that night, his name was changed to Israel, "powerful with God"; and, as a token of the new blessing he had received, he called the place Peniel, "the face of God" (32:27-32).

Jacob soon found that his carefully laid scheme was not needed, for Esau came to meet him with a

generous welcome (33:1-16). Jacob went on into Canaan and encamped at Shechem, purchasing a piece of ground and erecting an altar there (33:17-20).

4. The Return to Bethel (Chs. 34-36). Jacob had settled down too near the city of Shechem, and his family became defiled with the sin and shame of the Canaanites, who sought to intermarry with them (ch. 34). At the command of God, he purified his household of idolatry, and went up to Bethel and built an altar there where God had first met him in the time of his need (35:1-8). There God appeared to him again, reminding him that his name was no longer Jacob but Israel, and renewing His promise. Then Jacob renewed the vow he had made at Bethel before (35:9-15). Jacob had not been living up to his new name, but after this he is more often called by his new name in the narrative.

Jacob journeyed on farther south, and near Bethlehem Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, the last of Jacob's twelve sons. Then the names of them all are given (35:16-26). Jacob reached his father at Hebron, and there Isaac died at the age of a hundred and eighty and was buried by his two sons (35:27-29). At this point the narrative pauses to record the generations of Esau (ch.36), before going on with the rest of Jacob's life, which is henceforth taken up mainly with the story of his son Joseph.

#### JOSEPH (Chs. 37-50)

Joseph's life is interesting and instructive from two points of view. (1) It is an illustration of the ways of Providence. Joseph had none of the Divine



revelations granted to the three preceding patriarchs. The course of his life was governed by the over-ruling providence of God through seemingly fortuitous events. (2) It was a foreshadowing of the experience of Jesus Christ. Joseph went down into deep humiliation, and was exalted to be a prince and saviour of his people. His history may be taken in three parts, showing three stages in the providential ordering of his life.

1. Events Leading Joseph to Exaltation in Egypt (Chs. 37-41). Jacob's partiality for Joseph roused the hatred of his brothers, and this was increased when the ingenuous boy told them of the dreams he had—dreams which foreshadowed his future greatness (37:1-11). When they were tending their father's flock in Shechem, Jacob sent Joseph from Hebron to visit them, and, after plotting his death, they sold him to a caravan of merchants travelling down to Egypt (37:12-28). Then they sent back Joseph's coat, blood-stained, to deceive their aged father, who wept for Joseph and refused to be comforted (37:29-36). In the meantime the story of Judah and his family reveals the moral corruption which threatened the children of Israel through contact with the Canaanite life around them (ch. 38).

In Egypt Joseph was bought as a slave by Potiphar, a high officer of Pharaoh's, and served in his master's house. There his administrative ability was discovered (39:1-6) and his moral purity was tested and proved (39:7-12). He was cast into prison on a false accusation, and there he won the favour and confidence of the keeper of the prison, who discovered his capacity for governing men (39:13-23). The narrative points out that in all these

experiences "Jehovah was with Joseph" (vs. 2, 21), and "made all that he did to prosper" (vs. 3, 23).

After this two state prisoners, Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, were put under Joseph's special care, and he had an opportunity to interpret dreams which they had, and his interpretation was verified in each case (ch. 40). Two years afterwards, the chief butler, who had forgotten Joseph all this time, spoke to Pharaoh about him when the king had two dreams which the magicians could not interpret (41:1-13). Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once and told him his dreams. Disclaiming any credit for the interpretation himself, Joseph said that God had revealed to Pharaoh in these dreams what He was about to do. There would be seven years of great plenty in Egypt and then seven years of famine. Joseph followed up his interpretation of the dreams with a practical suggestion for dealing with the matter (41:14-36).

Pharaoh had the insight to recognize Joseph's practical wisdom and administrative genius, and he appointed him to a position of supreme authority in Egypt to prepare for the coming famine (41:37-45). Joseph was only thirty years old when he was promoted to this post. He was given an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife and two sons were born to him. The narrative goes on to give an account of his wise administration (41:46-57). The story of Joseph's career in these chapters is one of the most remarkable in all human history.

2. Events Leading Jacob to Settle in Egypt (Chs. 42-47). When the famine reached the land of Canaan, Jacob sent his ten oldest sons down to Egypt for grain. Joseph recognized them and proceeded to test them by treating them as spies (42:1-17).

He kept Simeon behind till they should bring down Benjamin. Then he had their money put back into their sacks and provisions given them for their journey home. His conference with them was carried on through an interpreter, and he was deeply affected when he heard them talking among themselves about their old sin against their young brother. His discipline of them was having its effect (42:18-25). Then comes an account of their journey home, their report of the treatment they had received, the finding of their money in their sacks, ending with Jacob's determination that Benjamin should not go down to Egypt (42:26-38).

When their grain was exhausted, the sons refused to go back to Egypt without Benjamin, and Judah finally secured their father's consent by pledging himself to be surety for him. Jacob commended them all to the mercy of "God Almighty", and also showed his characteristic quality in sending a present to secure a favourable reception from "the man" (43:1-15). When they arrived Joseph commanded his steward to take them to his own house where they should dine with him at noon. They were alarmed and tried to explain themselves to the steward, who set their minds at rest by telling them that their God and the God of their fathers had been caring for them. He also restored Simeon to them. The words of the steward throw light on the religious influence that Joseph exerted over his own household (43:16-25).

When Joseph arrived and enquired for his father and greeted Benjamin he was deeply affected, and had to retire in order to recover himself. Then he entertained his brethren at a feast, during which Benjamin was given a special mark of honour. He

was thus testing his brothers to see whether they would envy Benjamin as they had formerly envied him. They gave no sign of envy but entered fully into the enjoyment of the feast (43:26-34).

Next day, when they were sent away, Joseph applied his last test of their feeling for Benjamin. He had his steward put their money in their sacks as before, and also put his own silver cup into Benjamin's sack. Then he sent the steward after them to search for the missing cup. To the alarm and consternation of them all it was found in Benjamin's sack (44:1-12). They returned at once to the city and prostrated themselves before Joseph as penitents appealing to his mercy. Judah proved himself the noblest character among them by the way he acted as their leader and spokesman. He made a pathetic and eloquent plea for Benjamin in behalf of his aged father—one of the noblest pleas in all literature (44:14-34).

Joseph could restrain himself no longer. He gave expression to all his pent up emotions and made himself known to his brethren with manifest tokens of deep affection. He assured them that God had sent him before them and made him a ruler of Egypt in order to preserve their lives. Then he urged them to bring their father back and promised to nourish them all in the land of Goshen during the remaining five years of famine (45:1-15).

Pharaoh heard of what had happened and added his invitation to that of Joseph. He commanded Joseph to provide wagons for his brothers and have his father and all his family brought down to Egypt. When the brothers returned to Canaan with the wagons and the news about Joseph, Jacob was overwhelmed and the spirit of the old man revived (45:16-28).

Before leaving Canaan Jacob offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac at their old home in Beersheba. Then God appeared to him again, bidding him not to fear to go down to Egypt and renewing the old promises of the covenant. Encouraged by this Divine assurance, Jacob and all his family went on their way into Egypt (46:1-7). A list of their names is then given, seventy souls in all (46:8-27). This is followed by an account of their arrival in Goshen and their reception by Joseph. He instructed them to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds, so that they might be given the land of Goshen to dwell in and thus be saved from mixing with the native Egyptians who disliked shepherds (46:28-34).

Joseph announced their arrival to Pharaoh and presented five of his brothers to him. Pharaoh gave them a welcome to the best of the land. Joseph then brought in his aged father, and the patriarch blessed the king (47:1-12). The narrative goes on to give an account of Joseph's administration in Egypt while the famine continued (47:13-26). Jacob lived seventeen years longer in Egypt and the children of Israel began to multiply greatly. As the time of his death drew near he secured a promise from Joseph to bury him with his fathers in Canaan (47:27-31).

3. The Last Days of Jacob and Joseph in Egypt (Chs. 48-50). When Joseph learned that his father was sick, he went to visit him taking his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. Jacob gathered his strength to meet his son, told him of the blessing that "God Almighty" had given him at Bethel, and handed it on to Joseph and his sons (48:1-7). Then Joseph brought his sons before his father, and the

patriarch blessed them both, but gave the blessing of the first-born to Ephraim the younger one. Thus Joseph received a double portion of the patriarchal blessing in the family of Israel, and two of the tribes that formed the nation sprang from him (48:8-22).

Jacob uttered a prophecy over his own sons, forecasting the destiny of the twelve tribes of Israel (49:1-27). In the midst of it he handed on the promise of the coming Redeemer to Judah (v. 10), and also gave expression to a momentary prayer which came from the deepest desire of his heart (v.18). When he was dying, he gave instructions to his sons to bury him with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah (49:28-33). After a touching exhibition of love for his father, Joseph had his body embalmed, and obtained permission from Pharaoh to bury it in Canaan (50:1-6). Accompanied by a splendid procession of Egyptian officials and elders of Israel, which passed around to the eastern side of the Jordan and aroused the wonder of the Canaanites, Joseph and his brethren buried their father in the cave which Abraham had purchased as a burying place (50:7-14).

When Jacob was dead, Joseph's brethren feared that he might now take vengeance upon them and they besought his mercy. He gave them a comforting assurance and continued his kindness to them. He lived to the age of a hundred and ten years, and at his death he assured them that God would yet visit them and bring them into the land which He had promised to their fathers, and he had them take an oath that they would carry up his bones with them (50:15-26).

## THE PROMISE OF A REDEEMER

The promise of a Redeemer begins in Eden and runs through Genesis, becoming more specific as it is passed down from age to age. In the light of the New Testament it may be drawn out as follows:

1. The Redeemer was first announced as the Seed of the woman (3:15). He was to belong to the human race. He would suffer in the conflict with Satan, but would be victorious over him and destroy his power (Luke 22:53; John 14:30; Rev. 12:3-5; Rom. 16:20)≠

2. He was to belong to the race of Shem (9:26). This is implied in the nature of the blessing pronounced on Shem. Through Shem the knowledge of the Lord God was to be preserved and made known to the world. The Redeemer would be the revealer of God.

3. He was to come from the family of Abraham (22:18), and Isaac (26:4), and Jacob (28:14). In their seed all the nations of the earth were to receive a blessing. The Redeemer was to be the Saviour of the world (Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:73; Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3: 14)≠

4. He was to belong to the tribe of Judah (49:10). The phrase, "until Shiloh come", should be rendered "until he come whose it is" (see marg.). The Redeemer would come as the One to whom the sceptre belonged and who had the right to rule. He would win the obedience of the peoples of the world (Psa. 110:1-3; Ezek. 21:27; John 12:31-32; Rev. 5:5-6).

Here the Kingdom of God begins to appear on the horizon of prophecy. This aspect of the promise is seen again in Balaam's prophecy of "a Star out

of Jacob and a Sceptre out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). The promise is finally deposited in the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12-13; 1 Chron. 17:11-12), where it remains till the coming of Christ Himself (Luke 1:32-33).



## THE BOOK OF EXODUS

EXODUS continues the narrative of Genesis, but a long period of time intervenes between the two books. Genesis ends with the family of Jacob settled in Egypt; when Exodus begins, the family has become a nation. Instead of family records and biographies as in Genesis, we have now national history. The book records the first stage in God's fulfilment of His promise to the patriarchs regarding their seed. The name "Exodus" refers to the "going out" of the Israelites from Egypt. But the theme of the book is wider than this, for it includes both the nation's deliverance from Egypt and its separation to God at Mount Sinai.

On the basis of these two ideas, the book may be divided into two nearly equal parts and outlined as follows:

- I. Israel's Deliverance from Egypt—Chs. 1-18
  1. The Preparation for Deliverance (Chs. 1-6)
  2. The Conflict with Pharaoh (Chs. 7-12)
  3. The Journey to Sinai (Chs. 13-18)
- II. Israel's Separation to God—Chs. 19-40
  1. The Giving of the Law (Chs. 19-24)
  2. The Directions for the Tabernacle (Chs. 25-31)
  3. Israel's First Failure (Chs. 32-34)
  4. The Construction of the Tabernacle (Chs. 35-40)

THE PREPARATION FOR DELIVERANCE  
(Chs. 1-6)

These opening chapters show how the children of Israel had sunk into servitude in Egypt and were coming to realize the misery of their condition and their need of deliverance, and how, at the same time, God was raising up a deliverer for them and was preparing to redeem them from their bondage.

1. The Egyptian Oppression (Ch. 1). After a reference to the great increase of the Israelites in Egypt (vs. 1-7), we are told of the changed attitude of the rulers of Egypt towards them after Joseph's time, and of the new policy of oppression, and how it only resulted in multiplying and spreading them (vs. 8-14). Even the attempt to destroy the men children among the Israelites failed: "The people multiplied, and waxed very mighty" (vs. 15-22).

2. The Training of Moses (Ch. 2). The great figure of the book now comes into view. Moses' parents belonged to the tribe of Levi. He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, who discovered the babe among the flags by the river's brink (vs. 1-10). His life falls into three periods of forty years each (cf. Deut. 34:7; Exod. 7:7; and Acts 7:23). During the first two periods he was being trained and disciplined for the great work of his life, first in Egypt and afterwards in Midian. All that is recorded here is his unsuccessful attempt to deliver his people by his own method and his consequent flight to Midian (vs. 11-15), and his subsequent sojourn with the priest of Midian, whom he served as a shepherd and whose daughter he married (vs. 16-22). In the meantime the children of Israel

were crying to God in their extremity, and He was preparing to answer their cry (vs. 23-25).

3. The Call of Moses (Chs. 3-4). At length the Lord appeared to Moses, told him that He was the God of his fathers and had heard the cry of His people in Egypt, and announced His purpose to deliver them out of that land and bring them into Canaan, and then called Moses to undertake the task (3:1-10). Moses shrank from it at first and proceeded to make excuses. God gave him an assurance that He Himself would be with him in the mission on which He was sending him (3:11-12).

Moses raised the question, what he should tell the people when they asked for the name of the God of their fathers, and the Lord went on to explain the significance of His name "Jehovah". It is from the future of the verb "to be" or "to become", and means "the One who will be" (see marg.). Thus it carried an assurance to His people that He would fulfil the promises which He had made to their fathers. Although known and used before, it was now to become the covenant and distinctive name of Israel's God, "my memorial unto all generations" (3:13-15). Moses was to gather the elders of Israel and tell them that the Lord God of their fathers had appeared unto him, promising to bring them up out of their affliction in Egypt into the land of Canaan. Moses and the elders of Israel were then to request the king of Egypt to let them go out into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord their God (3:16-22).

Moses still hesitated, fearing that the people would not believe him, and God gave him authority to perform certain miraculous signs (4:1-9). Holding back still on the ground of lack of eloquence,

and showing his secret reluctance by asking God to send some one else on such a mission, Moses incurred the Divine anger and was told that Aaron his brother, who was coming to meet him, would act as his spokesman (4:10-17). Thus Moses was deprived of part of the honour that might all have been his. Moses then set out for Egypt, met Aaron on the way, and told him of his call. The two brothers gathered the elders of Israel and told them how the Lord had begun to visit the people in their affliction (4:18-31).

4. The Mission to Pharaoh (Chs. 5-6). The first appeal of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh met with the king's refusal and caused him to increase the burdens of the people (5:1-14). They accused Moses and Aaron of being the cause of their sufferings (5:15-21). Moses then turned to the Lord, who reminded him of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and renewed His promise of deliverance, grounding it on His own Divine character: "I am Jehovah . . . . I will bring you out . . . . and I will bring you in" (5:22—6:8). Moses passed the Lord's message on to the people, but they were sunk in anguish of spirit and Moses himself was discouraged (6:9-13). All this serves to bring out the character of the various parties in the story: the hardness of Pharaoh, ripe for judgment; the unbelief of Israel, needing discipline; and the weakness of Moses, needing encouragement.

The section dealing with the preparation for deliverance closes with a summary of the house of Levi, giving the genealogy of Moses and Aaron (6:14-27). The actual story of the conflict with Pharaoh begins with verse 28.

THE CONFLICT WITH PHARAOH  
(Chs. 7-12)

This section tells of Moses' repeated demands upon Pharaoh in the name of the Lord to let Israel go, and of the series of Divine judgments that fell upon Egypt because of his stubborn refusal, which came to a head in a final judgment that broke the power of Egypt. The story is introduced by a summary of the instructions already given to Moses (6:28—7:7).

1. The Judgments of the Plagues (Chs. 7-10). There was order and progress in these judgments. They occurred in three series of three plagues each, the first of each series being introduced by a command to warn Pharaoh "in the morning" (7:15; 8:20; 9:13), and the last falling without any warning at all (8:16; 9:8; 10:21).

The first series—blood, frogs, and gnats (7:8—8:19)—fell upon the land of Egypt and the soil. The second series—flies, murrain, and boils (8:20—9:12)—fell upon the persons of the Egyptians and their cattle. The third series—hail, locusts, and darkness (9:13—10:29) — were great nature plagues.

The plagues became more severe in their effects as they went on. The first series brought the defeat of the magicians (8:18-19); the second ended with their inability to stand before Moses (9:11); and the third issued in Moses' final rupture with Pharaoh: "I will see thy face again no more" (10:28-29). Thus in solemn and deliberate procession the avengers of God marched upon the guilty land.

2. The Passover Night (Chs. 11-12). The Lord announced that He would bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt, and directed Moses

to get the people ready for it. It would cause the death of all the first born in a single night (ch. 11). Instructions were given to Moses and Aaron instituting the Passover (12:1-14) and the feast of Unleavened Bread, to mark the beginning of the nation's history and to be observed as a memorial ever afterwards (12:15-20).

Moses then informed the elders of Israel that a lamb was to be slain for each house in which the people were gathered, and its blood was to be sprinkled around the door, and the whole household were to remain inside till the morning (12:21-28). The phrase translated "in the basin" (v. 22) also means "on the threshold", and might have been so rendered, indicating where the lamb was slain. Every household was sheltered by a symbol which foreshadowed the Lamb of God standing, as it were, at the door (1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:6). At midnight the judgment fell, and the Egyptians, under the first shock of it, sent the Israelites away out of the land in haste (12:29-36). The children of Israel were followed by a mixed multitude as they travelled with their flocks and herds, thrust out of the land on a night to be observed as a watch-night ever afterwards (12:37-42). The section closes with some further instructions about the ordinance of the Passover (12:43-51).

NOTE: The date of the Exodus may be placed about 1440 B.C., for recent archæology tends to show that the fall of Jericho occurred about 1400 B.C. The time of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt may be gathered from Paul's statement in Gal 3:17 that the Law came four hundred and thirty years after Abraham received the promise. Abraham was

seventy-five years old when he entered Canaan, and twenty-five years afterwards Isaac was born (Gen. 12:4; 21:5). Isaac was sixty years old when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was a hundred and thirty years old when he entered Egypt (Gen. 47:9). This makes a total of two hundred and fifteen years for the sojourn of the patriarchs in Canaan, the period between the receiving of the promise and the entering into Egypt. This would leave the same period of time for the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt.

The period mentioned in Exod. 12:40 for the sojourn in Egypt may have originally included the preceding sojourn in Canaan. The Septuagint version of this verse reads: "The sojourning of the children of Israel which they sojourned in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan was four hundred and thirty years". Stephen's statement in Acts 7:6 is a quotation of the prediction in Gen. 15:13, where the four hundred years may refer to the whole period of sojourning as well as to the affliction of Israel.

#### THE MARCH TO SINAI (Chs. 13-18)

These chapters describe the three months' journey of the Israelites from the night of the Passover until they arrived on the plain before Mount Sinai (cf. 12:51 and 19:1-2).

1. The Departure from Egypt (Chs. 13-14). The sparing of the firstborn of Israel meant that all the firstborn hereafter belonged to God and were to be set apart for Him (13:1-16). The people were led by a pillar of cloud and fire by day and by night, a symbol of the Lord's own guiding and pro-

tecting presence (13:17-22). The Egyptians pursued after them and caused a panic among them, which Moses stilled with the assurance that God would fight for them (14: 1-14). At the Lord's command, Moses lifted up his rod, and the waters of the Red Sea were driven back by a strong wind, making a way for the Israelites to pass over in safety. The Egyptian host, going in after them, were discomfited and destroyed (14:15-31).

2. The Stages of the March (Chs. 15-17). The march of the redeemed people began with the triumph song of Moses and Miriam (15:1-21). In the wilderness of Shur, they had a two-fold experience: bitter waters at Marah, and rest and refreshment at Elim (15:22-27). In the wilderness of Sin, quails were sent one evening and manna was spread upon the desert floor in the morning (ch. 16). Manna was henceforth their daily food till they arrived in the land of Canaan (Josh 5:12). In the valley of Rephidim, water was provided out of the rock (17:1-7). There also they met their first foe in Amalek, who fought with Israel, opposing their advance. Amalek was defeated by Joshua and doomed by the Lord to ultimate destruction (17:8-16).

At every stage of the journey the people murmured at something (15:23-24; 16:2-3; 17:1-3, 7), and in every case God abundantly provided for their need. Thus early in the story we see the persistent unbelief and failure of Israel and the patient grace and mercy of God.

3. The Advice of Jethro (Ch. 18). The father-in-law of Moses came to meet him (vs. 1-12), and, seeing how he was wearing himself out in acting as judge for the whole people, he advised him to



appoint assistant judges and divide the people into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (vs. 13-23). This was the origin of the organization of Israel for judicial purposes, which Moses subsequently carried out (vs. 24-27; Deut. 1:9-18).

### THE GIVING OF THE LAW (Chs. 19-24)

This section contains the account of the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai and records the Covenant of the Law. It is the centre of the Old Testament revelation and the origin of the whole Jewish dispensation.

1. The Manifestation of the Lord (Ch. 19). Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel encamped in the wilderness of Sinai before the mount where God had revealed Himself to Moses (vs. 1-2; 3:12). Moses now became the agent of communication between the Lord and Israel. Through him God appealed to them on the ground of what He had done for them, and promised to make them His own people—"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"—if they would obey Him and keep His covenant (vs. 3-6). They promised obedience, and Moses prepared them for the revelation which the Lord was about to give them (vs. 7-15). Then there came such an overwhelming manifestation of supernatural power as to impress them with the unapproachable glory and holiness of the Lord and prepare them for receiving His Law (vs. 16-25).

2. The Moral Law (Ch. 20). "And God spake all these words" (vs. 1). The Scriptural expression used hereafter to designate the Moral Law or the Ten Commandments is literally, "the ten words"

(marg. of Exod. 34:28, Deut. 4:13, and 10.4). Hence the term, Decalogue. They were spoken directly out of the mount in the hearing of the people (Deut. 5:23). The New Testament refers to the Law as having been "spoken through angels" (Heb. 2:2; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19).

The introductory statement (v.2) contains the basis on which the Law rests. The Divine Law-giver presents Himself first as the Redeemer of Israel before He declares the Law. It was given on the basis of grace—not as the means of salvation, but as the standard of life for a people already redeemed. The Ten Commandments express in concise form the whole duty of man to God and to his fellow man (vs. 3-17). They are all summed up in love to God and love to man (Matt. 22:37-40, Luke 10:26-28). They are not to be interpreted as taking cognizance of external acts only, but as extending to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

After the Decalogue had been promulgated it was given to Moses inscribed on two tables of stone (24:12; 32:15-16, 19; 34:1). These tables may have divided the Law according to the twofold relation of man to God and to his neighbour, but no indication is given as to where the division was made, whether after the fourth or after the fifth commandment. By applying to the Decalogue the principle of love, the ten commandments may be analysed as follows:

Love to God (vs. 3-11). First: worship should be given to the Lord God alone. Second: the mode of worship should recognize His essential nature as unseen Spirit. Third: His name, meaning everything by which He makes Himself known, should be treated with reverence. Fourth: the Sabbath, which commemorates His finished work of creation,

should be set apart as the special day for worshipping Him.

Love to God and man (v. 12). Fifth: parents should be honoured as God's earthly representatives. This commandment links the two tables as being a kind of transition between them.

Love to man (vs. 13-17). This will ensure respect for all that pertains to one's neighbour. Sixth: his life. Seventh: his family. Eighth: his property. Ninth: his character. Tenth: the heart should be conformed to the Law as the test of love.

The manifestation on the mount and the voice from the midst of it had a profound effect upon the people. It inspired them with a reverential fear of the unseen God of heaven, and they appealed to Moses to become their intermediary (vs. 18-21; Heb. 12:18-21). Henceforth they were to approach God in worship by the use of no image, but only by an altar of earth or of unhewn stones (vs. 22-26).

3. The Civil Law (Chs. 21-23). These ordinances were given through Moses as the final preparation for the Covenant which was about to be ratified. They are various applications of the Law to the social life of the people. They relate to the rights of persons (21:1-32), the rights of property (21:33—22:15), the administration of justice (22:16—23:9), and the feasts of the Lord (23:10-19). The section closes with a promise that the Angel of the Lord would go before Israel and bring them into the land, and a warning to hearken to His voice (23:20-33).

4. The Ratification of the Covenant (Ch. 24). All was now ready for the final act in establishing the Covenant of the Law, and the most important transaction in Israel's national history is recorded in this

chapter. The people promised to obey all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and Moses recorded them in a book, called "the book of the covenant". He then built an altar at the foot of Mount Sinai, and set twelve pillars around it representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then a sacrifice of oxen was offered, and half the blood was sprinkled on the altar of the Lord and half upon the people, representing the two parties in the Covenant (vs. 1-8).

By this one sacrifice, which was never repeated, Israel was formally set apart as the people of the Lord. It foreshadowed the one sacrifice of Christ, and marked the fact that expiation was needed to bring man into fellowship with God (Heb. 9:18-22). It was followed by a sacrificial meal, symbolizing that fellowship. In this the people were represented by Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (the future priests), and seventy of their elders. It took place up on the mount, and some manifestation of the glory of God was granted them which gave them a sense of security in His immediate presence: "they beheld God, and did eat and drink" (vs. 9-11).

After this Moses was called up into the mount to receive the tables of stone with the Law written upon them. He took Joshua with him, and left Aaron and Hur in charge of the camp. For six days a cloud covered the sides of the mountain, while the glory of the Lord was seen at the top in the sublime and majestic appearance of fire. Moses went up into the midst of the cloud and remained on the mount for forty days (vs. 12-18).

### THE DIRECTIONS FOR THE TABERNACLE (Chs. 25-31)

These instructions were given by God to Moses during the forty days he spent in the mount (cf. 24:18 and 31:18). The people were all to make a free-will offering for the construction of a sanctuary that God might dwell among them. It was to be made according to the pattern that Moses was shown in the mount (25:1-9). This meant that it was to have an important typical and spiritual meaning. The New Testament explains it as standing for the spiritual world of heavenly and eternal realities (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:23-24).

1. Its Form and Furniture (Chs. 25-27). The most important sacred vessels of the sanctuary are described first: the ark (25:10-22), the table of shewbread (25:23-30), and the candlestick (25:31-40). Then the curtains of the tent of the Tabernacle (26:1-14), its boards and bars (26:15-30), and its veil and screen (26:31-37). Finally the altar of burnt offering (27:1-8) and the outer court in which it stood (27:9-19). Then follows a command to have pure olive oil for the light in the Tabernacle (27:20-21).

The plan of the Tabernacle was as follows: The actual sanctuary was a covered tent, thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide and ten cubits high. (The cubit was about eighteen inches). It had two compartments. The first, called the Holy-place, was twenty cubits long, and contained the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense. The second, called the Holy-of-holies, or the Holiest-of-all, was a perfect cube, ten cubits each way, and contained the ark of the Covenant. It was the in-

nermost shrine, where the symbol of the divine Presence dwelt.

Around this tent was an outer court, one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, surrounded with a wall of curtains five cubits high. In this court, between the entrance and the tent of the Tabernacle, stood the altar of burnt offering and the laver of purification.

The Tabernacle set forth the presence of God in the midst of His people (25:8; 29:45), and provided a way for them to worship Him. This way of worship set forth symbolically the way of salvation, which was to be wrought out through the coming Redeemer. The steps of approach to God were by the altar of sacrifice (the Cross) and the laver of purification (Pentecost), and then on through the Holy-place with its altar of incense (the ministry of prayer) to the Mercy-seat within the veil, the meeting place of God and man (Heb. 10:19-22).

2. The Institution of the Priesthood (28:1—29:37). Aaron and his sons were to be set apart for the priesthood, and special garments were to be made for them—"holy garments . . . for glory and for beauty"—which they were to wear when ministering in the priest's office (28:1-5). Aaron's garments for the high priest's office comprised the ephod (28:6-14), the breastplate (28:15-30), the robe of the ephod (28:31-35), and a mitre with a golden plate for his forehead (28:36-39), besides the linen garments worn also by his sons as the ordinary priests (28:40-43). Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated by a series of special sacrifices and offerings (29:1-37).

3. The Services of the Tabernacle (29:38—31:18). Provision was now made for the daily burnt

offerings, to keep the people in continual fellowship with the Lord (29:38-46), and for the offering of incense before the Mercy-seat every morning and evening (30:1-10), and for the payment of a personal tax by each Israelite as atonement money for the maintenance of the Tabernacle services (30:11-16). Then follow instructions regarding the use of the laver (30:17-21), and the composition of the anointing oil (30:22-33) and the incense (30:34-38).

The Lord marked the importance of the Tabernacle by naming the master workmen to whom its construction was to be entrusted (31:1-11). A new significance was now given to the Sabbath as a sign of the Covenant between the Lord and Israel (31:12-18).

#### ISRAEL'S FIRST FAILURE (Chs. 32-34)

The natural character of Israel is revealed in what happened in the camp while Moses was absent in the mount. Instead of an inclination for spiritual religion, they showed a propensity for idolatry. This was their character throughout the whole Old Testament age. They were "a stiffnecked people", an expression used here for the first time (32:9) and often afterwards, stubbornly resisting the grace of the Lord (Acts 7:51).

1. The Sin of the People (32:1-29). Their request was for some visible symbol of God to take the place of the pillar of cloud and fire—"make us a god (v. 1 marg.) which shall go before us". They did not mean to forsake the Lord at once, but rather to serve Him under the form of worship to which they had been accustomed in Egypt. However, it

was a violation of their solemn promise to keep the Law, and Aaron showed his weakness in yielding to their demand. It revealed an inclination to idolatry and it resulted in an orgy of heathen worship (vs. 1-6). When the Lord informed Moses of the apostasy of His people and offered to make of him a great nation in their place, Moses showed his true greatness by interceding for them on the ground that they were God's own people because He had delivered them out of Egypt and His own honour was involved in their continued preservation (vs. 7-14).

When Moses came down to the camp and saw what the people were doing, he broke the two tables of the Law he had brought with him, destroyed the calf, and proceeded to deal with the sin (vs. 15-20). Aaron made a pitiful excuse and cast the blame on the people. He incurred the anger of the Lord, but was spared at Moses' intercession (Deut. 9:20). The Levites rallied to Moses' side and were commissioned to carry out a stern act of judgment (vs. 21-29).

2. The Intercession of Moses (32:30-33:16). Moses now offered to make atonement for the people's sin and his greatness as a man of prayer is seen again. He became a true intercessor, confessing the sin of the people and pleading for their pardon. But if God could not pardon them—then Moses would rather perish with them. The Lord's reply meant that Moses could not take upon himself the penalty for the sins of other men. However, God would spare the people under Moses' leadership but He would visit their sin upon them (32:30-35).

The Lord went on to command Moses to lead the people to the land which He promised to their fathers, and He would send one of His angels to go



before them. He would not go with them Himself, for they were a stiffnecked people and would be consumed if He went into their midst. They were dismayed when they heard these evil tidings, and stripped off their ornaments and wore them no longer (33:1-6).

At this point the narrative tells how Moses pitched his own tent away off from the camp that he might have a place of retirement where He could meet God. When Moses entered this "tent of meeting" the pillar of cloud would descend from its place at the top of the mount and stand at the door while Moses communed with God. When the people saw the pillar of cloud at the door of Moses' tent they would stand at their own tent doors and worship (33:7-11).

It was in this tent that Moses renewed his supplication. He reminded the Lord of the favour that He had already shown him, and on this ground he pleaded with God to revoke His decision to send a mere angel and restore His own presence to them. How could it be known that Israel had been separated from all other people by the favour of God unless He went with them Himself? (33:12-16).

3. The Answer of the Lord (33:17-34:9). Moses' importunity was rewarded and his request was granted. Then he made a request on his own behalf: "Show me, I pray thee, thy glory." God could not grant this request in full, for no man could see God and live. But He promised to make all His goodness pass before Moses and proclaim His name before him. Moses was to take his place in a cleft of the rock, where he would be under the protecting hand of God, while a transcendent manifestation of the Divine glory would pass by leaving an afterglow which Moses would be allowed to see (33: 17-23).

Next morning, following instructions given him by the Lord, Moses went up alone into the mount with two new tables of stone to have the Law rewritten upon them, and then the Lord fulfilled His promise. He descended in a cloud and passed by before Moses, proclaiming His name. Moses received a new vision of God and a new revelation of His character as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth." Moses bowed his head in humble and reverent adoration. Then he made his final appeal that the Lord would not only pardon the people and go with them, but also attach them permanently to Himself as His inheritance (34:1-9).

4. The Renewal of the Covenant (34:10-35). This is the Lord's answer to Moses' final prayer. A summary is given of the ordinances contained in chs. 21-23 which were set before the people when the Covenant was first ratified (vs. 10-26). Moses remained in the mount for another forty days, and the ten commandments were written on the new tables of stone which he had brought (vs. 27-28).

When Moses came down from the mount his face shone with the reflection of the glory of God, and he knew it not; but it produced a sense of awe among the people when he spoke to them. It remained hereafter a property of his countenance, and was the crowning mark of his Divine authority. He wore a veil to cover it, which he removed when communing with God or addressing the people (vs. 29-35; 2 Cor. 3:12-18).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE  
(Chs. 35-40)

Everything was now ready for carrying out the instructions given to Moses regarding the Tabernacle, and the last section of the book tells how this was done.

1. The Offerings of the People (35:1—36:7). In view of the work before them, Moses first reminded them of the law about the Sabbath rest (35:1-3), and then called upon them all to bring their free-will offerings for the making of the Tabernacle (35:4-29). He named the men whom the Lord had called to do the work, and the offerings were given to them (35:30—36:7). The people had brought too much and had to be restrained from giving.

2. The Accomplishment of the Work (36:8—39:43). It was carried out exactly as the Lord had commanded: the curtains and framework (36:8-38), the sacred vessels of the sanctuary (ch. 37), the altar and the laver and the outer court (ch. 38), and the garments of the priests (39:1-31). When all was finished it was inspected by Moses and received his blessing (39: 32-43).

3. The Erection of the Tabernacle (Ch. 40). The Tabernacle was reared up just one year from the day of the Passover and the departure from Egypt (cf. 12:2 and 40:17). The instructions of the Lord are recorded first (vs. 1-15), and then Moses' fulfilment of them (vs. 16-33). When the work was finished the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle and the cloud abode upon it, thus symbolizing the dwelling of God in the midst of His people (vs. 34-38). A similar scene took place at the dedication of the Temple of Solomon (2 Chron.

5:11-14), which was built for the same purpose and had the same significance as the Tabernacle of Moses.

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#### THE BASIS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION

Three great events recorded in Exodus laid the foundation for the Old Testament dispensation and determined its character. These were the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the Passover (ch. 12), the giving of the Law at Sinai (ch. 20), and the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (ch. 40). In these events there was also foreshadowed the character of the Christian dispensation.

1. The Passover accomplished the redemption of the people from bondage and marked the beginning of Israel's national life. It typified the redemption of the world by the sacrifice of the Cross (1 Cor. 5:7), the event which introduced the New Testament dispensation.

2. The Law was given to Israel as God's standard of life for His redeemed people. It demanded obedience on their part. Under the Christian dispensation the Law is not abolished; its demands still remain; but they are fulfilled through the Holy Spirit in the power of the Resurrection (Rom. 6:4; 8:4).

3. The Tabernacle provided a place and a way for Israel to worship the Lord their God. Thus they would express their love to Him. In the Christian system access to God is provided through the ascended Christ, who as the great High Priest has passed into the heavenly Tabernacle (Heb. 10:19-22).

Thus do these three facts hold deep significance, not only in themselves as providing the basis for the Old Testament dispensation, but as enshrining the secret of the new spiritual dispensation that was to come. They anticipated the three transcendent facts on which Christianity is based: the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

## THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

THE opening words of this book connect it closely with the preceding book. Exodus closes by telling us that when the Tabernacle was finished and set up the glory of the Lord filled it. Leviticus begins by telling us that the Lord called to Moses out of the midst of the Tabernacle and spoke the laws which it proceeds to record. These laws had to do with the worship of God. The title of the book indicates that it contains Levitical or priestly regulations. The Levites are mentioned only in one place, and there only incidentally (25:32-33), but the priests are referred to continually throughout the book. It prescribes the various ceremonies and services which they were to carry on in the Tabernacle as they led the redeemed people of Israel in the worship of the Lord.

The laws of worship may be divided into two groups: those that concerned the way of approach to God (Chs. 1-16), and those that concerned the life of fellowship with God (Chs. 17-27). The one group culminates in the Day of Atonement (ch. 16) and the other in the Year of Jubilee (ch. 25). Under these two divisions we may outline the book as follows.

- I. The Laws of Approach to God—Chs. 1-16
  1. The Sacrifices (Chs. 1-7)
  2. The Priesthood (Chs. 8-10)
  3. The Worshippers (Chs. 11-15)
  4. The Day of Atonement (Ch. 16)

## II. The Laws of Fellowship with God—Chs. 17-27

1. The Law of Holiness (Chs. 17-22)
2. The Holy Seasons (Chs. 23-24)
3. The Holy Years (Ch. 25)
4. Conclusion and Supplement (Chs. 26-27)

## THE SACRIFICES

(Chs. 1-7)

This section contains an exposition of the ritual of sacrifice. The words "sacrifice", "offering", and "oblation", occur about 300 times in the book, and of these nearly 200 are in these chapters. The sacrifices had a two-fold significance. (1) They were acts of worship. They provided the way in which the Old Testament worshipper could approach God. (2) They were types. They prefigured the spiritual worship of the Christian dispensation. They have all been fulfilled and done away in "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

The first three sacrifices in the list (chs. 1-3) were free-will offerings, presented by the free-will of the worshipper. They are all described as offerings "of a sweet savour unto Jehovah". The other two (4:1—6:7) were prescribed for cases of sin and trespass among the people.

1. The Burnt Offering (Ch. 1). The victim was slain and its blood was sprinkled round the altar; and then the whole was burnt upon the altar. A choice of victims was allowed, so that even the poorest could present a burnt offering. The worshipper thus signified the consecration of his person to the Lord.

2. The Meal Offering (Ch. 2). It was composed of fine flour, cooked or uncooked, or of the first ears

of new grain, and was burnt upon the altar. The offerer thus signified the consecration of the fruit of his labour to the Lord.

3. The Peace Offering (Ch. 3). In this case the fat of the victim alone was burnt upon the altar, the best part, as it were, being given to God: "all the fat is Jehovah's" (v. 16). The rest of the flesh was eaten in a sacrificial meal of thanksgiving (7: 15). The fundamental idea of this offering was fellowship with the Lord.

4. The Sin Offering (4:1—5:13). This sacrifice was to be offered for sins committed "unwittingly" or "through error", that is, such sins as did not spring from a spirit of rebellion against God (4:1-2). For wilful and high-handed sin which set at nought the Law there was no provision of pardon (Heb. 10: 28). The victim was slain and its blood was presented before the Lord in the tent of the Tabernacle. The fat was then burnt upon the altar, and the rest of the flesh was burnt without the camp.

This offering brought into peculiar prominence the idea that in order to have sin pardoned there must be expiation of guilt by the sacrifice of a victim substituted for the sinner. In the different victims that were prescribed for the offering, there was a recognition of graded responsibility. The anointed priest (4:3-12) and the congregation of Israel (4: 13-21) must offer a young bullock. A ruler must offer a he-goat (4:22-26), and one of the common people a she-goat (4:27-31) or a she-lamb (4:32-35). Special instructions were added for sins of neglect or rashness (5:1-13) and less costly victims were allowed for the poor (5:7-13).

5. The Trespass Offering (5:14—6:7). This sacrifice was prescribed for sins where some wrong



had been done to another involving a misappropriation of property or a breach of trust. Together with the offering of the victim which was to be a ram, restitution was to be made by the offerer with a fifth part added.

6. Supplementary Laws of the Offerings (6:8—7:38). A manual of additional directions for the guidance of the priests in offering the various sacrifices. The fire on the altar was to be kept burning continually; it was never to go out (6:9-13). Certain portions of the offerings were to be given to the priests (6:14-18; 7:8-10, 28-36). No fat or blood was to be eaten (7:22-27).

### THE PRIESTHOOD (Chs. 8-10)

This is a historical section, containing an account of the setting apart of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood and their entrance upon their holy office. The word "priest" does not occur in these chapters, though it is used very often in the rest of the book. The expression used here is "Aaron and his sons", or "Aaron's sons". Aaron himself was set apart to be the high priest, and his sons were to perform the ordinary daily service of the regular priesthood.

1. The Consecration of Aaron and his Sons (Ch. 8). Everything was done by Moses, acting for the Lord, in the presence of the assembled congregation. Aaron and his sons simply yielded themselves. The ceremonies consisted of washing, robing, and anointing (vs. 1-13), and sacrifices of a sin offering, a burnt offering, and a peace offering, called here a "ram of consecration" (vs. 14-32). The ceremonies lasted seven days, and Aaron and his sons were

commanded not to leave the sacred enclosure of the Tabernacle court during that period (vs. 33-36).

2. The Inauguration of the Tabernacle Services (Ch. 9). Aaron offered a sin offering and a burnt offering for himself and his sons (vs. 1-14), and a sin offering, a burnt offering, and peace offerings for the people (vs. 15-21). He then blessed the assembled people, and the glory of the Lord appeared when fire came forth and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar (vs. 22-24). Thus did the Lord indicate His acceptance of the sacrifices, and thus the worship of the Tabernacle was begun.

3. The Judgment upon Nadab and Abihu (Ch. 10). Their sin is described as offering incense before the Lord with "strange fire", fire not kindled on the altar of burnt offering (v. 1). Its essence consisted in following self-will in the worship of God and ignoring God's revealed will. It was punished by a signal act of God's displeasure, intended to overawe the people with a sense of His unapproachable holiness (vs. 2-5). Aaron and his other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were commanded to show no outward signs of mourning (vs. 6-7). Thus they were to recognize the justice of the Divine judgment.

The prohibition of wine and strong drink, which immediately follows (vs. 8-11), was a warning against any fleshly excitement in the worship of God (Eph. 5:18), and may indicate the probable cause of the rash act of the two priests. It would also seem from 16:1-2 that they had dared to go into the Holy-of-holies within the veil. Further instructions were given by Moses regarding the priests' portions of the sacrifices (vs. 12-15). The incident which follows brings out the wholesome

effect which the tragic event produced upon Aaron (vs. 16-20).

### THE WORSHIPPERS

(Chs. 11-15)

This section is concerned with the laws regarding ceremonial cleanness. It is distinguished by the words "clean" and "unclean", which occur more than 150 times out of about 200 times in the whole book. These laws were intended (1) to promote the health and morals of the Israelites, and also (2) to keep them separate from other nations. Besides this they embodied deep moral and spiritual teaching.

The worshippers of Him who is holy should be holy themselves. They should keep their bodies free from defilement, even in the matter of eating (ch. 11). These laws also emphasized the fact that the very sources of human life have been infected by sin (chs. 12 and 15). The regulations about leprosy (chs. 13-14) set it forth in a striking way as a symbol of the corruption and defilement of sin. The leper in the midst of Israel was a living death, to be shunned and abhorred by all (13:45-46). Such was sin in God's sight.

### THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Ch. 16)

The whole sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law culminated in the ceremonies described in this chapter, which took place on what was known as the annual Day of Atonement (23:27). They were performed by the high priest alone. It was the only occasion in the year when he could enter into the

presence of the Mercy-seat in the Holy-of-holies. The conditions for doing so are first stated: the sacrifices he was to bring for himself and the garments he was to wear are described (vs. 1-4). He did not wear his ordinary official raiment, but only the white linen garments he had in common with the other priests.

The special and peculiar significance of the day lay in the sin offering for the congregation, consisting of two goats, which were first presented at the door of the Tabernacle and chosen by lot for separate purposes (vs. 5-10). One was for the Lord, to be offered for a sin offering; the other was "for Azazel", to be sent away alive into the wilderness "for a scapegoat" (A.V.). While they stood there before the Lord, the high priest made atonement for himself and his house to prepare himself for making atonement for the people (vs. 11-14). He then slew the goat chosen by the Lord's lot as a sin offering for the people, and carried its blood into the Holy-of-holies and sprinkled it upon the Mercy-seat (vs. 15-19). Next he confessed the sins of the nation over the head of the live goat and sent it away into the wilderness, where it was to be left in a place from which it could not come back again (vs. 20-22). The expression "for Azazel" describing this goat, rendered "for a scapegoat" in the A.V. and given literally in the R.V., is obscure. Most probably it means "for complete removal".

The ceremony of the two goats thus set forth symbolically a two-fold truth: the means of atonement in the sacrifice of life by the shedding of blood and the result of atonement in the removal of sin from the presence of God. After that the high priest bathed himself and changed his garments and

offered the burnt offerings for himself and for the people, and the services of the day were brought to an end (vs. 23-28). These ceremonies were to be observed yearly, on the tenth day of the seventh month, for the purpose of making atonement for the sins of the year. It was to be a day of humiliation, when the sense of sin was deepened to its utmost in the mind of Israel (vs. 29-34).

The spiritual significance of these ceremonies is explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews (8:1—10:18). The work of the high priest in the Mosaic Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement was typical of the atoning work of Jesus Christ as the great High Priest in the heavenly Tabernacle.

## THE LAW OF HOLINESS

(Chs. 17-22)

This section deals with the kind of life which the redeemed people were to live in maintaining their fellowship with God. It is marked by the words "holy" and "sanctify", which occur in one form or another about 80 times out of about 150 times in the whole book. Its key note is, "Ye shall be holy: for I Jehovah your God am holy" (19:2; 20:7, 26). The phrase, "I am Jehovah" or "I am Jehovah, your God", occurs again and again. The section may be summarized as follows:

1. Holiness in Personal and Family Life. (Chs. 17-18). The slaughter of beasts for food was to be performed at the Tabernacle, and the eating of blood was forbidden (ch. 17). Heathen impurities were forbidden, and all forms of personal defilement (ch. 18).

2. Holiness in Social Relations (Chs. 19-20).

Rules were given about various matters of conduct towards God and man (ch. 19), and heathen abominations and unholy practices were forbidden (ch. 20).

3. Holiness in the Priesthood (Chs. 21-22). General precepts and laws of cleanness were prescribed for the priests. Some of these were intended to show that a special separation or a higher degree of holiness was expected on their part.

### THE HOLY SEASONS (Chs. 23-24)

Israel's religious festivals were occasions (1) for thanksgiving to God for the blessings of the soil and the harvest, and (2) for commemorating past events in their history. They had also (3) a spiritual significance as symbolically foreshadowing various aspects of redemption. A list of the holy seasons of the year, called "the set feasts of Jehovah", is contained in ch. 23. There are many references and allusions to them in the New Testament. They are as follows:

1. The Weekly Sabbath (vs. 1-3). The seventh part of time was God's. This was the basis of the whole system of sacred seasons.

2. The Passover (vs. 4-5). On the fourteenth day of the first month, commemorating the deliverance from Egypt and foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ the Lamb of God (1 Cor. 5:7).

3. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vs. 6-8). For seven days after the Passover, setting forth Christ as sustaining the life of His redeemed people (1 Cor. 5:8).

4. The Feast of First Fruits (vs. 9-14). On the

first day of the week after the Passover, signifying the consecration of the harvest to the Lord and typifying Christ as the first-fruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

5. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (vs. 15-22). On the fiftieth day after First Fruits, a thanksgiving to God for the bounties of His providence and prophetic of the Church as the first-fruits of the new creation (Jas. 1:18).

6. The Feast of Trumpets (vs. 23-25). On the first day of the seventh month, ushering in the sacred month and consecrating it to the Lord. It was prophetic of the Messianic age and the triumphant appearing of Christ (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16).

7. The Day of Atonement (vs. 26-32). The tenth day of the seventh month, the only fast day in the whole year. It foreshadowed the atoning work of Christ as the great High Priest and was prophetic of the present age of grace and salvation.

8. The Feast of Tabernacles (vs. 33-44). It began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and continued for seven days. It commemorated the sojourn in the wilderness and was a time of thanksgiving for the ingathering of the fruits of the year. It was typical and prophetic of the blessings of redemption and the final ingathering of the redeemed (Jno. 7: 37-39; Rev. 7:9-17).

Ch. 24 forms a kind of appendix to the laws of the set feasts. It contains commands and instructions about three holy things connected with the worship of God: the holy oil for the candlestick (vs. 1-4), the holy bread for the table (vs. 5-9), and the holy Name, which must not be blasphemed (vs. 10-23). In these three holy things we have intima-

tions of the three Persons of the Trinity in the worship of Israel, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father.

### THE HOLY YEARS (Ch. 25)

The system of sacred seasons culminated in the seventh or Sabbatic Year (vs. 1-7), and beyond that in the sacred fiftieth year or Year of Jubilee (vs. 8-55).

1. The Sabbatic Year (vs. 1-7). Every seventh year the land was to be allowed to rest. There was to be no tilling of the soil, no sowing or reaping, during that period. The land, originally given by God, was, as it were, given back to Him.

2. The Year of Jubilee (vs. 8-55). After seven Sabbatic periods the fiftieth year was called a Jubilee. The land was to be at rest as in the Sabbatic year, and liberty was proclaimed to all its inhabitants (vs. 8-12). Every man was to be restored to his original inheritance, and land that had been sold was to be restored to its original owners (vs. 13-34). Servants and all who had become bondsmen were to be given their original freedom, for all the children of Israel belonged to the Lord and were His servants (vs. 35-55). The Jubilee was a time of universal restoration and was a type and prophecy of the final "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).

The fundamental principle on which the whole legislation of this chapter rested was God's ownership of the land: "for the land is mine" (v. 23). All the soil belonged to the Lord, and all purchasers of land were leasehold tenants. It was not capitalism,



under which the soil is owned by individuals in perpetuity. It was not socialism or communism, under which all the land belongs to the people or the state. It was the divine and unchanging fact that "the earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof" (Psa. 24:1).

### CONCLUSION AND SUPPLEMENT (Chs. 26-27)

The real conclusion of the book is ch. 26, which begins with a brief summary of the whole Law in its fundamental principles (vs. 1-2), and goes on to state the promises and threatenings attached to it. Ch. 27, which contains some supplementary laws, seems to have been added as an appendix (cf. 26:46 and 27:34).

1. Blessings upon Obedience (26:3-13). These included the fruitfulness of the soil, peace and prosperity in the land, victory over enemies, and the presence of God in the midst.

2. Judgment upon Disobedience (26:14-39). This is first stated in a general way (vs. 14-17). Then follow four series of threatenings, cumulative in severity, each conditioned by the supposition that the nation would not repent notwithstanding previous experiences of the Lord's judgment. These four series are vs. 18-20, vs. 21-22, vs. 23-26, and vs. 27-39. The whole passage is prophetic; it describes what has actually happened in the nation's history.

3. Restoration upon Repentance (26:40-45). This passage is also prophetic, for it declares that however severe the Divine judgment should be and however long Israel's impenitence should

continue, the nation would never be utterly destroyed or pass out of existence. God promises to remember His covenant with their forefathers when the nation repents.

4. The Law of Vows (Ch. 27). Various instructions to be carried out by those making voluntary vows, including the vowing of persons (vs. 1-8), the vowing of domestic animals (vs. 9-13), and the vowing of houses and fields (vs. 14-25). The chapter goes on to specify three classes of property which could not be dedicated by a special vow, for they already belonged to the Lord (vs. 26-33). The book then closes with a formal declaration of the Divine authority and the Mosaic origin of the laws it contains (v. 34).

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#### THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LEVITICAL RITUAL

The ritual laws of Leviticus embodied, in ceremony and symbol, fundamental truths which lie at the heart of New Testament Christianity.

1. The fact of sin. The structure of the Tabernacle and its whole system of worship were designed to show that man was separated from God by sin. Sin must be atoned for and put away before man could be restored to the fellowship of God. Salvation from sin is man's first and deepest need.

2. The need of mediation. Sinful man could not come to God himself. The priest must act for him. The high priest alone could appear for him in the presence of God. There is but one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

3. The method of redemption. The worshipper could draw near to God only by offering a victim whose life was given for his own. He died, as it were, at the altar, and could approach no farther. The only way back to God is through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

4. The condition of fellowship. Acceptable worship was offered to God, and communion with Him was maintained, only by holiness and cleansing. The redeemed people must be separated to God and sanctified. Salvation from sin involves sanctification of life.

## THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

THIS book contains the story of the Israelites in the wilderness from the time the Tabernacle was set up to the time they reached the Jordan and were ready to enter the land of Canaan. It begins one month after the close of Exodus and extends over a period of thirty-eight years and nine months (cf. Num. 1:1 and Deut. 1:3). The book is named from the event with which it opens, the census taken at Mount Sinai. The word "numbers" occurs nearly one hundred times in the first four chapters. Its theme is the pilgrimage of Israel. The object in view throughout is the Promised Land, and towards this the nation is moving (10:29).

It may be divided into three parts, corresponding to the three stages of the sojourn in the wilderness. In the first part (Chs. 1-10), the Israelites are encamped at Mount Sinai, making preparations for the journey. In the second part (Chs. 11-21), they are journeying in the wilderness. In the third part (Chs. 22-36), they are encamped on the plains of Moab, making preparations to enter the Land. The first part covers twenty days (10:11), the second part somewhat over thirty-eight years (33:38), and the third part several months. On this basis we get the following outline of the book:

- I. The Encampment at Mount Sinai—Chs. 1-10
  1. The Outward Order of the Camp (Chs. 1-4)
  2. The Inward Order of the Camp (Chs. 5-6)
  3. The Last Events at Sinai (7:1—9:14)
  4. The Movement of the Camp (9:15—10:36)

- II. The Journey in the Wilderness—Chs. 11-21
  - 1. From Sinai to Kadesh (Chs. 11-14)
  - 2. From Kadesh to Kadesh Again  
(Chs. 15-19)
  - 3. From Kadesh to the Plains of Moab  
(Chs. 20-21)
- III. The Encampment on the Plains of Moab—  
Chs. 22-36
  - 1. Attempts to Destroy Israel (Chs. 22-25)
  - 2. The New Beginning (Chs. 26-30)
  - 3. The Eastern Settlement (Chs. 31-32)
  - 4. Concerning the Western Settlement  
(Chs. 33-36)

#### THE OUTWARD ORDER OF THE CAMP (Chs. 1-4)

These chapters tell of the arrangements made for organizing the host of Israel. In this book Israel is regarded as the army of the Lord, preparing for and going forth to war.

1. The Numbering of the Men of War (Ch. 1). This was done at the command of the Lord, and they were numbered from twenty years old and upward (vs. 1-3). Moses and Aaron were assisted by the heads of the tribes (vs. 4-19). The number of the men of war in each tribe is given separately (vs. 20-43), and then 603,550 is recorded as the total (vs. 44-46). The Levites, being set apart for the service of the Tabernacle, were not included in this census (vs. 47-53). They were numbered from a month old and upwards, and their number is given later (3:39).

2. The Arrangement of the Tribes (Ch. 2). They were encamped around the Tabernacle in four

divisions, three tribes on each side. On the east was the camp of Judah with Issachar and Zebulun (vs. 1-9). On the south was the camp of Reuben with Simeon and Gad (vs. 10-16). On the west was the camp of Ephraim with Manasseh and Benjamin (vs. 18-24). On the north was the camp of Dan with Asher and Naphtali (vs. 25-31). According to Jewish tradition, the standard of Judah (v. 3) was a lion, the standard of Reuben (v. 10) a man, the standard of Ephraim (v. 18) an ox, and the standard of Dan (v. 25) an eagle.

The order of the march was as follows: The camp of Judah went first, and then the camp of Reuben. The Levites came next with the Tabernacle (v. 17). Behind the Tabernacle came the camp of Ephraim (Psa. 80:1-2), and in the rear the camp of Dan. Thus the host of the Lord was thoroughly ordered and organized both for the camp and for the march. The chapter closes with a summary of the census (vs. 32-34).

3. The Organization of the Levites (Chs. 3-4). The tribe of Levi, to which Moses and Aaron belonged, was taken for the special service of the Lord instead of the firstborn of all Israel (3:1-13; Exod. 13:2). They were to have charge of the Tabernacle, and were numbered from a month old and upward (3:14-20). They were organized according to the families of the three sons of Levi, and were encamped immediately around the Tabernacle. The Gershonites had charge of the drapery, and were encamped on the west (3:21-26). The Kohathites had charge of the ark and the sacred vessels, and were encamped on the south (3:27-32). The Merarites had charge of the framework, and were encamped on the north (3:33-37).

Moses, Aaron, and the priests were encamped on the east, in front of the Tabernacle, "keeping the charge of the sanctuary" (3:38). The number of the Levites was 22,000 (3:39), and the number of the firstborn in whose place they were taken was 22,273 (3:40-43). There follows an account of the redemption of the 273 firstborn that were over and above the number of the Levites (3:44-51). The various duties of the three groups of Levites are explained in ch. 4: the Kohathites (vs. 1-20), the Gershonites (vs. 21-28), and the Merarites (vs. 29-33). They served in the work of the Tabernacle from the age of thirty to fifty. There were 8,580 Levites of this age numbered (vs. 34-49).

#### THE INWARD ORDER OF THE CAMP (Chs. 5-6)

Special laws were given for preserving purity and holiness in the fellowship of the camp (ch. 5), especially in the case of secret sins and hidden evil, "that they defile not their camp, in the midst whereof I dwell" (v. 3). The law of the Nazirite ("the separated one") was provided for those who wished to make a special vow of separation (6:1-21). The peculiar character of this vow was separation from the natural joys and sorrows of life which were quite legitimate for others.

After this comes the three-fold blessing which Aaron and the priests were commanded to pronounce over the children of Israel (6:22-27). It was a foreshadowing of the blessing of the Trinity, the Christian blessing of the New Testament Church (2 Cor. 13:14).

THE LAST EVENTS AT SINAI  
(7:1—9:14)

Three final acts of worship before the departure of Israel from Sinai are here described.

1. The Offerings of the Princes (Ch. 7). The twelve princes of the tribes who had taken part in the census brought their gifts in six covered wagons with twelve oxen. The wagons were disposed of to the Levites, two to the Gershonites and four to the Merarites. The Kohathites did not require any, for they carried the vessels of the sanctuary upon their shoulders (vs. 1-11). The offerings of the twelve princes were brought on twelve successive days. They were all identical; yet each of the twelve is separately and fully recorded in the sacred narrative (vs. 12-83). Thus does the Spirit delight to record the gifts of God's people. They were the dedication gifts for the service of the altar and the worship of the Lord (vs. 84-89).

2. The Separation of the Levites (Ch. 8). After a brief direction was given to Aaron about the lighting of the lamps in the golden candlestick (vs. 1-4), Moses was instructed to set apart the Levites for the service of the Tabernacle by special ceremonies of cleansing and consecration and formally place them under the priests (vs. 5-19). When this was done the Levites entered upon their official duties. They were to serve in the Tabernacle from the age of twenty-five to fifty (vs. 20-26), probably engaging in the lighter parts of their office up to the age of thirty, when their full duties began (4:3, 23, 30). No separate law is recorded as to the age when the sons of Aaron began and ended their priestly service, probably because the same rule applied to them.



3. The Observance of the Passover (9:1-14). This was Israel's second Passover, and the first observed in the wilderness. It takes us back into the first month of the second year (cf. 9:1 and 1:1). New regulations were now added to make provision for members of the congregation who could not observe the Passover at the regular time.

#### THE MOVEMENT OF THE CAMP (9:15—10:36)

This section describes the way the movements of the camp were controlled, and gives an account of the departure from Sinai. The march of Israel was by Divine appointment.

1. The Cloud (9:15-23). This symbol of the divine Presence presided over the host of Israel, resting over the Tabernacle when encamped and leading the tribes when journeying. The elaborate manner in which the movements of the cloud are described shows the great importance attached to the Lord's guidance of Israel (Psa. 78:14; Isa. 4:5). All this was typical of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian dispensation.

2. The Silver Trumpets (10:1-10). The instructions regarding the trumpets form a beautiful and fitting conclusion to all the preparations for the march. They were appointed to give all the signals for the congregation and for the movements of the various divisions of the camp (vs. 1-7). They were to be used in the Land also, down through the generations of Israel, both in time of war and in days of gladness (vs. 8-10).

3. The Departure from Sinai (10:11-36). On the twentieth day of the second month in the second

year the march began. The cloud led them towards the wilderness of Paran, just south of Canaan (vs. 11-13). The order of the march is fully described (vs. 14-28). Hobab seems to have responded to Moses' second appeal though not to his first (vs. 29-32), for he is afterwards found among the children of Israel (Jud. 1:6; 4:11). He went with Israel because of the good he could do rather than because of the good he would get. The journey towards the Promised Land begins under the protecting care of the Cloud and the leadership of the Ark of the Lord (vs. 33-36).

#### FROM SINAI TO KADESH (Chs. 11-14)

These chapters record the incidents of the journey from Sinai to the southern border of the Land at Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:2, 46), in the wilderness of Paran (10:12; 12:16), and then give an account of Israel's failure there and refusal to enter in. The story brings out the unbelieving and rebellious character of the people and the patient and faithful spirit of Moses.

1. The Murmuring of the People (Chs. 11-12). Their spirit of discontent and unbelief showed itself very early (11:1-3). "The people were as murmurers", doubtless because of the difficulties of the march (1 Cor. 10:10). The mixed multitude among them (Exod. 12:38) lusted for the things of Egypt (11:4-9). Moses in his grief and displeasure appealed to the Lord for help in carrying the burden of the people, and he was commanded to bring seventy of the elders of Israel before the Lord that He might put the Spirit upon them and so enable them to share the burden with Moses (11:10-30).

Quails were sent in such abundance that a plague broke out among the people as a judgment upon their lust for flesh (11:31-35). Even Aaron and Miriam in their criticism of Moses showed the same spirit that infected the camp (12:1-3). Moses was vindicated by the Lord in a special judgment upon Miriam, who had probably instigated the complaint against him (12:4-16).

2. The Mission of the Spies (Ch. 13). At the Lord's command, Moses sent twelve men, one from each tribe, to spy out and report upon the land of Canaan (vs. 1-20). After forty days they returned, bringing a good report of the fruitfulness of the Land but an evil report of the difficulties and dangers to be encountered in it (vs. 21-33).

3. The Rebellion of the Nation (Ch. 14). At this report the people broke out into insurrection against Moses and Aaron, and refused to listen to Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful spies, who urged upon them the Lord's promise to give them the Land (vs. 1-10). The Lord at once threatened to disinherit the people and make of Moses a greater and mightier nation. But Moses showed his greatness again by pleading with God to pardon them on the ground of His own character, and the Lord answered his prayer at once, but declared that those who had failed Him should not see the Land. They were now commanded to turn back into the wilderness (vs. 11-25).

Then the Lord solemnly pronounced His judgment upon them. All that generation over twenty years, except Caleb and Joshua, were condemned to die in the wilderness (vs. 26-38). When this was announced to the people, they went to the other extreme and made a presumptuous and futile attempt

to enter the Land against Moses' warning and without the Divine leadership (vs. 39-45).

FROM KADESH TO KADESH AGAIN  
(Chs. 15-19)

This section covers more than thirty-seven years of wandering. The development of Israel's history and the accomplishment of God's purpose had been put back a whole generation. The nation was simply marking time, waiting on death. The history of these years is summed up in a list of camping places, most of which are quite unknown (ch. 33). It is probable that during this period Israel became a nomadic people, the tribes being scattered up and down and the Tabernacle forming a kind of central camp. At the end of the period they were assembled at Kadesh again (20:1).

1. Further Instructions for Canaan (Ch. 15). The Lord gave Moses some supplementary laws regarding the sacrifices for the purpose of reviving the hopes of the new generation that was growing up and directing their minds to the Promised Land (vs. 1-21). The law of the sin offering was to apply not only to the children of Israel but also to the strangers sojourning among them. But the soul that sinned in defiance of the Law and despised any commandment of the Lord was to be cut off (vs. 22-31). The incident of the punishment of a man found breaking the Sabbath law is probably recorded here as an illustration of sinning, not in ignorance, but in defiance of the law (vs. 32-41).

2. The Rebellion of Korah (Chs. 16-17). This was a serious breach of the divine order in Israel, and it affected the whole congregation. Its motive

was jealousy and disappointed ambition. It was directed against the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron (16:1-3). The Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, who were associated with Korah in the movement, were jealous of the one, and Korah was jealous of the other. Moses referred the matter to the arbitrament of the Lord Himself (16:4-19).

The Lord vindicated His servants and punished the rebels by an act of judgment in which He made "a new thing": the ground opened and swallowed them up (16:20-40). The next day the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron because of it. They were smitten with a plague, which was stayed when Aaron, at Moses' command, made atonement for them by carrying incense into their midst (16:41-50). The confirmation of Aaron's priesthood by the budding of his rod in the sanctuary sobered the people into a recognition of the righteous judgment of God (ch. 17).

3. Instructions for the Priests and Levites (Ch. 18). The confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his family is appropriately followed by special regulations concerning the official duties of the priests and Levites (vs. 1-7). Then an account is given of the revenues that were to be assigned both to the priests (vs. 8-20) and to the Levites (vs. 21-32).

4. The Water of Purification (Ch. 19). A special provision was made for purification from defilement by contact with the dead. A red heifer was to be sacrificed and burnt, and its ashes, mingled with running water, were to be used for the purpose (Heb. 9:13). The enactment of this ordinance at this time may have been due to the extraordinary

mortality which the Israelites had suffered because of the rebellion of Korah (16:49).

FROM KADESH TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB  
(Chs. 20-21)

Thirty-seven years had passed away since the rebellion at Kadesh, and a new generation had arisen. The whole congregation of Israel were now brought back to the same place (20:1). At the point where the nation failed it was to take up its life again and make a new start. From this point they journeyed south of Edom round to the east of the Jordan and encamped on the plains of Moab (22:1). The main incidents of the journey are these:

1. The Failure of Moses and Aaron (20:2-13). In an outburst of anger at another complaint on the part of the people because of lack of water, they considered only their own position (v. 10), and failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people (v.12). As a judgment they were not given the honour and privilege of bringing Israel into the Promised Land.

2. Edom's Refusal of a Passage (20:14-21). This was the beginning of the bitter and implacable hostility which the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, always showed towards their brother nation Israel. Edom's doom was announced by the prophet Obadiah some centuries later.

3. The Death of Aaron (20:22-29). This took place on Mount Hor. At the command of the Lord, Moses solemnly stripped Aaron of his high-priestly robes and put them on Eleazar his son. Moses and Eleazar came back alone, showing that Aaron was

dead and the office had passed on to another. The congregation mourned for Aaron for a month.

4. The Sign of the Brazen Serpent (21:1-9). Because of the continued murmuring of Israel on the difficult journey round the land of Edom, the Lord sent a plague of fiery serpents. When the people came to Moses and acknowledged their sin, he prayed for them, and at the Lord's command he provided a remedy in the form of a brazen serpent, to which they were to look in faith (John 3:14-15).

5. The Journey to Mount Pisgah (21:10-20). The route of the march up the eastern side of the Dead Sea through the borders of Moab is given with considerable detail, probably because of the increasing interest in approaching the Promised Land. Nothing is known of "the book of the wars of Jehovah" (v. 14) from which the bits of song in this passage are quoted. This collection of war songs and "the book of Jashar" (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) belonged to Israel's national literature, but were not included in their sacred Canon.

6. The Defeat of Sihon and Og (21:21-35). Their kingdoms comprised the country east of the Jordan, known afterwards as Gilead and Bashan. These were the last kingdoms that barred the way into Canaan. Sihon had refused a passage to Israel, and Og had come out against Israel.

#### ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY ISRAEL (Chs. 22-25)

The Israelites were now encamped on the plains of Moab preparing to enter the land of Canaan. They had come through the perils of the wilderness, but greater perils now threatened them. Balak,

king of Moab, made attempts first to curse, and then to corrupt Israel.

1. An Attempt to Curse Israel (Chs. 22-24). Balak sent to Mesopotamia for the soothsayer Balaam and hired him to pronounce a curse upon the camp of Israel (22:1-20). On the way, Balaam received a warning from the Angel of the Lord to speak only the word that God gave him (22:21-40). Balak took him to one hill top after another from which to view the camp of the Israelites, but each time the Spirit of the Lord compelled him to utter a blessing upon them instead of a curse (22:41—24:9).

Finally, after three such attempts on the part of Balak, Balaam uttered a prophecy that a king should arise in Israel and "smite through the corners of Moab" (24:10-25). This was a Messianic prediction, which was partially and typically fulfilled when David conquered Moab (2 Sam. 8:2).

Balaam was a gifted man and had a certain amount of enlightenment. He is a witness to the fact that fragments of the primitive revelation of God still lingered in the world at that time. But he was self-willed and had a greed for gain (2 Pet. 2:15-16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). He perished soon after this in the slaughter of the Midianites (31:8).

2. An Attempt to Corrupt Israel (Ch. 25). Unable to curse Israel, Balaam advised Balak to invite the people to the idolatrous feasts of Moab and Midian (vs. 1-3; 31:16). This resulted in gross sin on the part of Israel, which the Lord commanded Moses to punish with a stern act of judgment (vs. 4-5). A plague followed which carried off a great number of the people, before it was stayed by an act of jealous zeal for the honour of the Lord performed



by Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, who was given a special promise because of it (vs. 6-15). Moses was then commanded to destroy the Midianites (vs. 16-18).

### THE NEW BEGINNING (Chs. 26-30)

The plague by which the sin of Israel was punished probably swept away the last of the old generation (26:1). A new start was now made with the new generation in preparation for entering the Land.

1. A New Census (26:1-27:11). A new numbering of the tribes was made in the same way as before (26:1-50). The total number of the men of war, as recorded on this occasion, was 601,730 (26:51). These were the numbers of the new generation of Israel and it was among them that the Land was to be divided by lot in proportion to the size of the tribes (26:52-56). The Levites were numbered separately as before, and their number was 23,000 (26:57-62). All the men numbered at Mount Sinai had died in the meantime except Caleb and Joshua (26:63-65).

At this point an incident occurred which led to the enactment of a special law that the daughters of a man who had died in the wilderness without leaving any son should be given a possession in Canaan in order to preserve their father's family inheritance (27:1-11).

2. A New Leader (27:12-23). Moses, being warned of his approaching death (vs. 12-14), asked the Lord to appoint a man over the people, and was instructed to ordain Joshua as his successor before

the high priest and the whole congregation (vs. 15-20). Joshua was to get his instructions from the Lord, not directly as Moses did, but through the high priest "by the judgment of the Urim" (v.21; Exod. 28:30). The Urim and the Thummim, meaning "the lights and the perfections", were objects of some unknown nature carried in the breast-plate of the high priest by which he was enabled to learn the Divine will on special occasions. Moses accordingly carried out these instructions and gave Joshua a charge (vs. 22-23).

3. New Laws (Chs. 28-30). In view of the coming settlement in Canaan, some new regulations were given regarding the various offerings for maintaining Israel's witness to the Lord in the Land, including the continual burnt offering (28:1-10), and the offerings at the set feasts throughout the years (28:11-29:40). Some new laws were also given regarding vows (ch. 30).

#### THE EASTERN SETTLEMENT (Chs. 31-32)

The last commission given to Moses was the execution of the judgment which the Lord had already pronounced upon the Midianites (25:16-18). A thousand men from each tribe were chosen for the purpose. In the battle that followed all the kings and all the male members of Midian were slain (31:1-24). The spoil was divided equally between the men who had fought and the rest of the congregation (31:25-47). When the officers found that not a single man had been lost in the battle, they presented all the golden articles they had received as booty as an offering to the Lord (31:48-54).

Then the tribes of Reuben and Gad came to Moses and Eleazar asking that the conquered territory east of the Jordan be given to them because it was a suitable land for the cattle which they had (32: 1-5). Moses rebuked them at first for making such a request, but they promised to help their brethren to conquer the land west of the Jordan (32:6-19). Moses then granted their request, and the land which comprised the kingdoms of Sihon and Og was divided between these two tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh, and was settled by their families (32: 20-42).

#### CONCERNING THE WESTERN SETTLEMENT (Chs. 33-36)

The final preparations were now made for the conquest and settlement of the country west of the Jordan.

1. A Survey of the Wilderness Journey (33: 1-49). This passage summarizes the forty years of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. It begins with the day they left Egypt (vs. 1-4), and gives the stages of the march to Sinai (vs. 5-15). Then comes a list of the encampments from Sinai to Kadesh (vs. 16-36), and from there to Mount Hor where Aaron died (vs. 37-40), and finally from Mount Hor to the plains of Moab (vs. 41-49).

2. Instructions for the Conquest (33:50-34:29). Moses was now commanded of the Lord to tell the Israelites what to do when they crossed the Jordan. They were to drive out all the inhabitants of the Land and destroy all their idols and all the centres of their idolatry. Then they were to divide the Land by lot for their own inheritance according to

their families (33:50-56). Then follow specific directions as to the borders of the land of Canaan to be divided among the nine tribes and a half (34:1-15), and the names are given of the men from these tribes who were to make the division (34:16-29).

3. Cities for the Levites (Ch. 35). The Israelites were to give out of their inheritances forty-eight cities with their suburbs for the Levites to dwell in (vs. 1-8). Six of these were to be cities of refuge for the manslayer, and instructions were given for their appointment (vs. 9-15). The law was then stated for distinguishing between a murderer, who was to be put to death (vs. 16-21), and a manslayer who had killed some person unwittingly, who was to be given protection in a city of refuge (vs. 22-28). The Israelites must not allow the Land to be polluted by blood (vs. 29-34).

4. The Preservation of Inheritances (Ch. 36). Another deputation approached Moses on this matter, following the one already recorded in 27:1-11. He was then led to give instructions that heiresses were to marry within their own tribe, so that the original inheritance allotted to each tribe in Israel would be safeguarded and preserved intact.

\* \* \* \*

#### WILDERNESS TYPES OF CHRIST

The story of Israel in the wilderness is used in the New Testament to illustrate the experience of the Christian Church. The Apostle Paul regarded the events of the exodus from Egypt as having spiritual significance and as typical of the redemp-

tive work of Jesus Christ. This is evident from 1 Cor. 10:1-4. In the same passage he goes on (vs. 5-12) to refer to the failure of the Israelites in the wilderness and to use it as a warning against backsliding in the present Christian dispensation. In Heb. 4:1-9, a warning of the consequence of unbelief in the Gospel is based upon the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness and the failure of that generation to enter the Promised Land.

It is clear, therefore, that the apostolic writers regarded this part of Israel's history as full of typical significance. Seven types of Christ, mentioned in the New Testament by direct reference or indirect allusion, are to be found in the book of Numbers: 1. The pillar of cloud and fire (9:15-23; Jno. 8:12). 2. The manna (11:7-9; Jno. 6:48). 3. Aaron's rod that budded (17:8-11; Heb. 9:4). 4. The red heifer (19:1-10; Heb. 9:13). 5. The rock that gave forth water (20:8; Jno. 7:37; 1 Cor. 10:4). 6. The brazen serpent (21:8-9; Jno. 3:14-13). 7. The cities of refuge (35:9-15; Heb. 6:18).

#### THE NUMBER OF THE ISRAELITES

The numbering of the Israelites as recorded in chs. 1 and 26 presents a difficulty. The total number of the men among the Israelites in the wilderness is mentioned five times. Exod. 12:37 gives 600,000 as the round number of those who left Egypt. Exod. 38:26, Num. 1:46 and 2:32 give 603,550 as the number at Mount Sinai. Num. 26:51 gives 601,730 as the number at the end of the forty years. If these figures were the numbers of the adult men, it would mean, according to the ordinary average of one man for every four or five persons, a total of between

two and a half and three million for all Israel, including men, women, and children.

The total number of the firstborn males was 22,273 (Num. 3:43). Allowing the same number for firstborn females makes 44,546 mothers in Israel. In a total of two and a half or three million, this would mean an average of between fifty and sixty persons in each family. This is so much out of all proportion that it is evident that something has gone wrong with the original numbers as they were handed down in the sacred record.

No explanation has been given which clears up all the difficulties; but the most likely key is found in Num. 1:16, where the R.V. margin reads "families" for "thousands". The Hebrew word translated "thousand" means also "clan", and is sometimes rendered "family". It has clearly this meaning in Jud. 6:15 and Micah 5:2. The tribes of Israel were divided into clans or "families", and in each "family" there would be many households, or families in our sense of the term.

Applying this key to the numbering of the tribes recorded in ch. 1, we get the following result: Reuben, 46 clans and 500 warriors (v. 21); Simeon, 59 clans and 300 warriors (v. 23); and so on through the chapter, till we get a total for the twelve tribes of 598 clans and 5,550 warriors. Applying the key in the same way to the numbering in ch. 26, we get a total of 596 clans and 5,730 warriors. The average in modern countries where conscription prevails is one man in every fourteen or fifteen of the population being available for war. According to this proportion, 5,730 men of war in Israel would make a total of about 85,000 for all the tribes, exclusive of the Levites.

Applying the same key to the numbering of the Levites in ch. 3, we get the following result: Gershonites, 7 clans and 500 males (v. 22); Kohathites, 8 clans and 600 males (v. 28); Merarites, 6 clans and 200 males (v. 34). This would make a total of 1,300 males in the tribe of Levi. If we allow the same number for the female members of the tribe, we get a total of 87,600 for all the tribes. If this should be the true explanation of the method of numbering the people, it would go to show that at the most, the whole host of Israel numbered not more than about 100,000.

## THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

DEUTERONOMY means "a second law". The book contains a repetition of the Ten Commandments and an exposition of the Law. A new epoch had arrived in the history of Israel and in God's dealing with the nation. Their wanderings were over and they were about to enter the Land of Promise. The leadership of Moses was coming to an end but the Covenant with God was to abide. A new generation had grown up who had not seen the theophany on Mount Sinai or heard the Ten Words uttered there. It was fitting, therefore, that before Moses departed he should review God's goodness to Israel and give the new generation a restatement of the Law of the Lord and enforce upon them the duty of obedience and consecration.

This is the theme of the book. Taken as a whole, it is an exposition of the great commandment: "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (6:5). The expressions, "Jehovah our God" and "Jehovah thy God", occur about 300 times. It may be classed with the Psalms and Isaiah for its spiritual quality among the books of the Old Testament. When Jesus met the temptations of Satan in the wilderness by appealing to the Word of God (Luke 4:1-12), His quotations were taken from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:13, 16).

The book is unlike any of those that precede it, although it rests upon them. It is composed of ad-



dresses delivered by Moses to Israel, together with an account of the closing events of his life. It can be divided into the following four parts:

- I. Moses Reviewing the Way—Chs. 1-4
- II. Moses Reviewing the Law—Chs. 5-26
- III. Moses Renewing the Covenant—Chs. 27-30
- IV. Moses' Farewell to Israel—Chs. 31-34

### REVIEWING THE WAY (Chs. 1-4)

Moses' first address contains a review of God's goodness to Israel during the sojourn in the wilderness and an earnest plea for obedience and loyalty to Him. The introduction to it, and to the book itself (1:1-4), marks the occasion as one for both warning and encouragement. A journey of eleven days, which might have led them into the Land of Promise, had been stretched into forty years. The recent conquest of the nations that had barred Israel's entrance into Canaan was a pledge of future victory.

1. The Guidance of God from Horeb to Kadesh (Ch. 1). Moses begins with the Lord's command to them to set out on their journey, and tells of his appointment of assistant judges over the people (vs. 5-18). Then he gives an account of the arrival at Kadesh-barnea, the sending of the spies at the request of the people and the rebellion that followed their return (vs. 19-33), the consequent anger of the Lord and the judgment He pronounced upon that generation, and their presumptuous attempt to go up after His warning (vs. 34-46).

2. The Guidance of God from Kadesh to Moab (Chs. 2-3). After thirty-eight years more in the

wilderness they arrived at the border of Moab (2: 1-15). Heshbon, the kingdom at Sihon who refused Moses' request for a passage through his country, was conquered (2:16-37); and then Bashan, the kingdom of Og who came out to fight against Israel (3:1-11). The land thus taken was given to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (3:12-22). Moses then tells of his own request of the Lord to be allowed to go in and see the good Land, and of the answer the Lord gave him (3:23-29).

3. Exhortation and Warning (Ch. 4). Moses follows up his review of God's goodness to Israel with an earnest exhortation to obedience: "Hearken that ye may do" (vs. 1-8); "Take heed lest ye forget" (vs. 9-24). Then he gives a solemn warning against apostasy (vs. 25-31), which he enforces by pointing out the wondrous grace of God to Israel (vs. 31-40). At the end of this address Moses set apart three cities of refuge for the east of the Jordan (vs. 41-43).

#### REVIEWING THE LAW (Chs. 5-26)

In this address, which occupies more than half the book, Moses restates the Law that was delivered by the Lord on Mount Sinai, and then goes on to give an extended exposition and enforcement of it. It is introduced by the statement contained in 4:44-49.

1. The Ten Commandments (Ch. 5). Moses repeats the Ten Words of the Covenant made in Horeb, with some differences in the fourth and fifth (vs. 1-21). The ground of the Sabbath law as given

here is the redemption of Israel. In Exodus it was the creation of the world. Thus the Jewish Sabbath had a two-fold significance: it was a memorial of creation and a witness of redemption. When it became the Christian Sabbath and was changed to the first day of the week, it took on a third significance as a mark of the new creation. Obedience to parents, enjoined by the fifth commandment, is enforced with a promise of prosperity added to that of long life. Moses then tells of the people's dread at hearing the voice of God and their appeal to him to be their intermediary (vs. 22-33).

2. Israel's Loyalty to the Lord (Chs. 6-11). These instructions are based on the first two commandments. Moses first appeals to the people to love the Lord with all their heart (ch. 6), and then commands them to separate themselves entirely from the heathenism of the land. The nations of Canaan were doomed to destruction because of the nature of their idolatry (7:1-5). Israel was a holy people, chosen by the Lord and set apart for Him (7:6-16), and He would give them victory over these nations (7:17-26).

They were to remember God's goodness in the discipline of the wilderness (8:1-10), as a warning against highmindedness and forgetfulness of Him amidst the blessings of the Land (8:11-20). As a warning against self-confidence and self-righteousness in the Land (9:1-5), they were to remember their own failures in the wilderness: their apostasy at Horeb (9:6-21), their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (9:22-29), and the mercy of God in restoring the tables of the Law and hearkening unto Moses' intercession for them (10:1-11).

Then Moses gives another exhortation to obedi-

ence, urging upon them the greatness of the Lord their God (10:12-22), His great works which they have seen (11:1-7), and the great blessings He has promised them (11:8-17). Therefore, let them lay up His words in their hearts and study them diligently (11:18-25), and consider the blessing and the curse of the Law (11:26-32).

3. Israel's Religious Life (12:1—16:17). These instructions are based on the third and fourth commandments. Monuments of idolatry were to be destroyed and one central sanctuary was to be maintained for the worship of the Lord (12:1-14). Directions were given regarding the sacrifices and the worship to be carried on at this central sanctuary (12:15-32). False prophets, dreamers of dreams, and any other enticers to idolatry, were to be put to death (13:1-11). If a city should fall into idolatry, it was to be destroyed (13:12-18). As a holy people, Israel was to avoid all heathen practices and eat no unclean food (14:1-21).

The law of the tithe was explained (14:22-29). Instructions were given for the release of debtors and bond-servants every Sabbatic year (15:1-18), and for the dedication of firstlings to the Lord (15:19-23). At the three principal yearly feasts—the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and Tabernacles—all the men of Israel were to appear before the Lord at the central sanctuary (16:1-17).

4. Israel's Civil Life (16:18—18:22). These instructions are based on the fifth commandment. Moses now commands the people about the appointment of judges and magistrates, and explains their duties and the principles of judgment for their guidance (16:18—17:7). Cases too hard for local judges were to be referred to the priests and Levites

at the central sanctuary (17:8-13), who were to have charge of the written Law (31:24-26.) He goes on to instruct and warn them about the king they will want to set up. When on his throne, he is to make the Law of the Lord his life-long study (17:14-20).

Further instructions are given regarding the provision to be made for the priests and Levites (18:1-8), and concerning the people's relation to the prophets. Divination and necromancy, such as the nations of the land carried on, were forbidden (18:9-14). The Lord would raise up a true prophet from among themselves, like Moses himself, who would speak the words of God (18:15-22). This was a prediction of the subsequent rise of the prophetic order. It had its complete and final fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the perfect Prophet (Heb. 1:1-2).

5. Israel's Social Life (Chs. 19-22). These instructions are based on commandments six to ten. They include the special laws regarding manslaughter and murder, which had to do with the cities of refuge (ch. 19), and the rules of warfare and exemptions from military service (ch. 20). These are followed by a long list of minor laws and regulations, applying the principles of the commandments to various matters in the domestic life of the people (chs. 21-22).

6. Supplementary Instructions (Chs. 23-26). These have in view the perfecting of Israel as the people of the Lord. They concern the congregation of the Lord: certain persons are to be excluded (23:1-8). They have to do with the army of Israel when in camp (23:9-14), and with the life of the people when at home in the land (23:15—25:19). Direc-

tions are given for the offering of the first-fruits (26:1-11), and for the giving of the tithes (26:12-15). Moses then closes this address with another exhortation to obedience, reminding the people that the Lord has chosen them for His own possession to be a holy nation (26:16-19).

### RENEWING THE COVENANT (Chs. 27-30)

In this group of addresses, Moses gave instructions for setting up the Law in the Land, and then he renewed the Covenant of the Law with the generation that was entering the Land.

1. The Recording of the Law (Ch. 27). A monument of stone was to be erected on Mount Ebal with sacrifices of thanksgiving, and the Ten Words were to be written upon it "very plainly" (vs. 1-10). Thus the Law of the Lord was to be established as the law of the Land. The blessings and the curses of the Law were to be pronounced in the hearing of the tribes, while they stood on the slopes of Mounts Gerizim and Ebal during the ceremony (vs. 11-26). The great alternatives were to be put before them in the most impressive way. The actual fulfilment of these instructions is recorded in Josh. 8:30-35.

2. The Obligations of the Law (Ch. 28). Moses now described the blessed results of obedience (vs. 1-14), and went on to give warning of the disastrous consequences of disobedience (vs. 15-68). This long passage contains one of the most notable prophecies in the Old Testament. It depicts the actual sufferings that befell the people of Israel in their subsequent history because of their apostasy, in-

cluding the blight and barrenness of the land (vs. 15-24), their subjection to foreign foes (vs. 25-46), the siege and capture of their city (vs. 47-57), and their dispersion and homelessness among the nations (vs. 58-68).

The fulfilment of all this came to pass, first, with the fall of Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.), and finally, after their rejection of Christ, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A.D. 70), and in the age-long tribulation of the Jews since that time.

3. The Renewing of the Covenant (Chs. 29-30). The Law having been reviewed and explained, Moses renewed the Covenant with the new generation of Israel (29:1). He appealed to them to keep the Covenant on the ground of all that the Lord had done for them (29:2-13), and warned them of His punishment if they failed to keep it (29:14-29). He promised that the Lord would restore them if they should repent and return to Him (30:1-14), and closed with a most solemn appeal to them to be faithful to Him (30:15-20).

#### MOSES' FAREWELL (Chs. 31-34)

These chapters record Moses' final messages and narrate the closing incidents of his life. With the passing of the great lawgiver of Israel, the Books of the Law come to an end.

1. His Final Charges (Ch. 31). He addressed words of encouragement both to the people and to Joshua the new leader of Israel (vs. 1-8). His charge to both was, "be strong and of good courage—fear not". Having written the Law, Moses

delivered it to the priests and elders, and instructed them to read it every seven years in the hearing of the people (vs. 9-13).

The Lord then gave a charge to Moses in view of his approaching death, and to Joshua in view of his leading Israel into the Land (vs. 14-23). Moses charged the Levites with the care of the book of the Law, and commanded them to keep it beside the ark of the Covenant as a witness against the people when they should turn aside from the Lord (vs. 24-29).

2. His Farewell Song (Ch. 32). The Lord had instructed Moses to write this song and teach it to the children of Israel as His witness against them (31:19, 22, 30). Its theme is the unchangeable faithfulness of the Lord contrasted with the perversity of His faithless people (vs. 1-43). Moses uses the term "Rock" as a name for God several times (vs. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31), in order to emphasize the fact that He was the foundation of Israel's life.

In vs. 8-9 he declares that God had His purpose with Israel in view in the dispersion of the nations. They were so distributed and located in the world that each might have its opportunity of seeking the Lord in due season through contact with His people (Acts 17:26-27). When Moses finished the song, he made a final appeal to the people regarding the Law (vs. 44-47), and was summoned by the Lord to ascend Mount Nebo that he might see the Land before he died (vs. 48-52).

3. His Farewell Blessing (Ch. 33). This is Moses' final message. It is a poem in three parts: an introduction, describing the majesty of God as He revealed Himself to Israel (vs. 1-5); the blessings pronounced upon the various tribes (vs. 6-25); and a conclusion, describing the excellency of God



as the Keeper and Helper of Israel (vs. 26-29). Moses uses the term "Jeshurun" as a name for Israel (vs. 5, 26). He had used it in the preceding chapter (v. 15), and it occurs again in Isa. 44:2. It means "the upright one", and represents God's ideal for Israel.

4. His Lonely Death (Ch. 34). The manner of Moses' exit from the world was the crowning of his life. This chapter records the fulfilment of the instructions given to him when he had finished his song (32:48-52). It is an appendix, and quite distinct from the rest of the book. It bears evidence of being written after the settlement of the tribes in Canaan. Joshua as Moses' minister may have accompanied him into the mount until the Lord removed him, and would thus be able to describe the particulars of the view which Moses was shown (vs. 1-4). The prospect spread before him of the far-stretching land towards which he had led his people was symbolical of the spiritual vision of the heavenly places which Christ was to prepare for His people (Eph. 1:3; Isa. 33:17).

A veil of dignified reserve is drawn over Moses' death and burial (vs. 5-8). He suffered death, it is declared, and was buried, but probably his body was not allowed to see corruption. The reference in Jude 9 to Michael contending with the devil over the body of Moses would seem to mean this. His presence with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration would indicate that he had been raised from the dead. These two men, representing the Law and the Prophets in preparation for the coming redemption, had been received into glory on the ground of, and in anticipation of, the work of the Redeemer.

When the days of mourning for Moses were

ended, Joshua took up the task of leading Israel to which Moses had ordained him. The book then closes with a statement about the greatness of Moses which must have been written well on in Israel's history (vs. 9-12).

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### THE GREATNESS OF MOSES

The massive character of Moses stands out in Deuteronomy, on the background of the previous books, in all its sheer greatness and grandeur. The book could not have been compiled from any traditional source. The addresses it contains ring with the voice and accents of reality. It was most natural that Moses should address the younger generation before his departure, and it would have been strange if his words had not been recorded. There was no difficulty about their being written down, for there were trained scribes and tenacious memories in those days, before man's memory was weakened by the habit of relying on written records. The framework of the addresses is probably due to a later hand, but their author is Moses. They reflect the vast variety of his greatness.

Moses towers above all other figures in the Old Testament. He is mentioned in the New Testament more often than either Abraham or David, the two great ancestors of the Redeemer. He was endowed by nature with intellectual gifts of the highest order, which were developed by the training he received as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, being "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). He had a greatness of soul never

surpassed. He combined comprehensiveness of mind and clearness of judgment with great promptness and energy of action. Stephen summed up his natural qualities in the concise statement that he "was mighty in his words and works". Above all this he was endowed with the Holy Spirit in a pre-eminent degree for the special work to which God had called him (Num. 11:17, 25). He was peculiarly "the man of God" and "the servant of Jehovah". These titles are applied to him again and again in the subsequent books of the Old Testament.

Moses occupied a unique place in Israel in three respects: (1) As leader. It was "by the hand of Moses" that God took His people out of Egypt and led them like a flock through the wilderness. (2) As lawgiver. "The law was given through Moses", not as originating it, but as mediating it, as explaining and expounding it, as enforcing and applying it in all relations of life among the people. (3) As prophet. No other prophet had the close and intimate intercourse with God that Moses enjoyed. The Lord knew him "face to face". Of him it is said more frequently than of all other prophets together, "God talked with him", or "God spake to him."

As the founder of the religion of Israel and the dispensation of the Law, Moses is the supreme Old Testament type of our Lord Jesus Christ. The mediator of the Old Covenant pointed the way to the New Covenant, and prepared the ground for the Redeemer of the world.

Moses was fitted to be a true mediator because of his two most notable qualities: (1) His absolute devotion to God. "My servant Moses", declared the Lord, "is faithful in all my house" (Num. 12:7).

He had the highest conception of the glory of God. The honour of the Lord was always the ground of his plea in prayer, and the goodness of the Lord was the ground of his constant appeal for loyalty on Israel's part. (2) His unfailing sympathy for the people. Though they continually murmured and repeatedly rebelled, yet he interceded for them on every occasion and patiently bore with them. Rather than that they should be destroyed and he should be chosen to found a new nation in their place, he would have God reject him and blot his name out of His book (Exod. 32:32). Thus Moses was a true type of the "one mediator between God and men", not only in the work he did, but also in the spirit with which he did it.



**THE OLD TESTAMENT**  
**HISTORICAL BOOKS**



## THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

THE twelve books from Joshua to Esther contain the story of the Israelites from the time they entered the land of Canaan to the time the Old Testament ends, a period of a thousand years. It was about 1400 B.C. when Israel crossed the Jordan (recent archæology places the fall of Jericho at that date), and Old Testament history closes shortly before 400 B.C.

It is not history in the ordinary sense that we find in these books. What they record is rather the dealings of God with Israel as His chosen people and the development of His redemptive purpose through their national life. They show us how the Law, which had been given to the redeemed people at Sinai, was manifested in the corporate life of the nation.

Israel's special function among the nations as the Lord's covenant people was to bear witness to Him as the true God. It was in order to fulfil this purpose the more effectively that Israel was placed in the land of Canaan, which was on the cross-roads of the ancient world. There the people were to live out their national life in the midst of the nations, not by developing a civilization of their own as the other nations were left to do (Acts 14:16), but by carrying out the will of God as revealed in the Moral Law given to them at Mount Sinai and in the social and economic system that was based upon it.

This accounts for the peculiarities of these historical books. It explains why large blanks are left



in some periods, and why other periods are given such extensive treatment and some events are narrated with such elaborate detail. Old Testament history is a revelation of the mind and will of God as He moved down through the ages in Israel, while at the same time it exposes the nature and heart of man as seen in the character of the Israelites. The men who composed the historical sections of the Bible made a careful selection from the material available. They were co-ordinating historical events with divine revelation.

It is not known who the writers of these books were. None of them claims any specific authorship. Six of them are included under the general division of "the Prophets" in the Hebrew Bible, namely, Joshua, Judges, and the double books of Samuel and Kings. This indicates that they came from a prophetic source and were written from the prophets' point of view.

Statements occur which show that historical records were added from time to time to "the book of the law" which Moses had left. When Joshua made a covenant with the people shortly before his death, he wrote the words of it "in the book of the law of God" (Josh. 24:26). When the monarchy was established, Samuel explained the new constitution to the people, "and wrote it in a book and laid it up before Jehovah" (1 Sam. 10:25). The Books of Chronicles mention a number of prophets and seers as having written the acts of the kings from David onward (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22).

All this goes to show that inspired men belonging to the prophetic order were the original authors behind the historical books of the Old Testament.

More important than knowing the names of the writers is seeing the evidence which these books give of the presence of God in the history of Israel. The men who wrote them were manifestly led by the Spirit of God to record the history in such a way as to reveal His purpose of redemption moving on, even through the failure of Israel, towards the coming of the promised Redeemer.

The history of Israel in these books is recorded in two different ways. A break occurs at the end of Second Kings. Up to that point the books of the Old Testament fit into one another in chronological order. They contain a continuous story from the Creation to the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. The Books of Chronicles begin the record over again, and carry it down to the close of the captivity and the eve of the return.

The books from Joshua to Second Kings deal with the nation as a whole, and their story comes to an end with its failure and dispersion. The Books of Chronicles are concerned only with that part of the nation that remained faithful to the Covenant. The two subsequent historical books, Ezra and Nehemiah, deal with the remnant that returned from the exile. It was through this remnant alone that God continued to carry on His redemptive purpose in Israel. Esther, the last of the historical books, takes us back to the Jews that remained in the dispersion and gives us a glimpse of them before Old Testament history finally closes.

These twelve historical books fall into three progressive groups, according to the three successive epochs through which Israel passed during the thousand years which they cover. These epochs, dated in round numbers, are as follows:

I. The Age of the Conquest and Settlement of Canaan (1400-1100 B.C.). The Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. During this era Israel was a theocracy. The tribes were under the direct government of God through judges raised up by Him from time to time.

II. The Age of the Monarchy (1100-600 B.C.). The Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. They deal with the rise of the kingdom of Israel in its united form, and with its decline and fall in its divided form. During this era Israel was a monarchy, ruled by kings whose duty was to carry out the will of God.

III. The Age of the Dispersion of Israel and the Restoration of the Remnant (600-400 B.C.). The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Israel had now passed into the era of Gentile rule. The Historical Books close with a small remnant restored to the land to await the advent of the Messiah, and with the masses of the Jews scattered through the Gentile world.

## THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

THE theme of this book is the conquest and settlement of Canaan. This was accomplished under the leadership of Joshua, and from him the book gets its name. It bears evidence of coming from the generation in which the events took place (5:1; 6:25; 14:14; 24:26), although there are also signs of editing by a later hand (7:26; 15:63).

Joshua came first upon the scene in Exod. 17:9, without a word of introduction, as the captain of Israel in the fight against Amalek. His next appearance was at Sinai as Moses' minister or assistant when he went up into the mount (Exod. 24:13; 32:17). He continued to act in this capacity throughout the forty years in the wilderness (Exod. 33:11; Num. 11:28; Josh. 1:1). He represented his own tribe, Ephraim, among the twelve spies (Num. 13:8, 16). At the end of the forty years, he was appointed Moses' successor by the command of the Lord. Moses solemnly ordained him to that office in the presence of the whole congregation (Num. 27:15-23), and gave him a special charge (Deut. 31:7-8). Thus was Joshua prepared for the great task of his life, and after Moses' death the people at once recognized him as their leader (Deut. 34:9).

The book falls naturally into two equal parts, one dealing with the conquest of the land and the other with its distribution among the tribes. Thus we get the following outline:

- I. The Conquest of the Land—Chs. 1-12
  1. Entering into Canaan (Chs. 1-4)
  2. The First Campaign (Chs. 5-8)
  3. Completing the Conquest (Chs. 9-12)
- II. The Distribution of the Land—Chs. 13-24
  1. The First Allotment (Chs. 13-17)
  2. The Final Allotment (Chs. 18-22)
  3. Joshua's Farewell (Chs. 23-24)

### ENTERING INTO CANAAN (Chs. 1-4)

These chapters tell the story of the crossing from the eastern to the western side of the Jordan. By this way Israel passed out of the wilderness life into the Promised Land.

1. The Call to Advance (Ch. 1). The book begins with the Lord's call of Joshua to his new task and the Divine promise and assurance given to him (vs. 1-5), together with the conditions of success (vs. 6-9). This is followed by Joshua's charge to the people (vs. 10-15), and their promise of obedience (vs. 16-18). The words of Moses' previous charge to Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage" (Deut. 31:7), are repeated four times in the chapter.

2. The Mission of the Spies (Ch. 2). Two men, sent by Joshua to Jericho as spies to view the land, were received by Rahab and concealed in her house (vs. 1-14), and then secretly sent away (vs. 15-21). When they returned, they brought back a very different kind of report from that of the first spies (vs. 22-24; Num. 13:31-33). Rahab showed her faith by the way she received them (Heb. 11:31), by her confession regarding the Lord God of Israel

—"I know . . . for we have heard"—, and by throwing in her lot with His people. She married into the tribe of Judah, and her name has a place in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

3. The Crossing of the Jordan (Chs. 3-4). The narrative in these two chapters is composed of an introductory account of the preparation of the people for the crossing (3:1-6), and three sections, each commencing with a Divine command, which is followed by Joshua's communication of it to the people and an account of its execution. Each stage of the great event is thus directly connected with the Lord Himself.

(1) The bearing of the Ark into the Jordan (3:7-17). It was carried by the priests into the waters of the river ahead of the people, and they stood with it in the midst of the river till all the people passed over. It was the Ark, the symbol of God's presence and a type of Christ, that divided the waters. The miracle may have had a natural cause, but this was its spiritual significance.

(2) The placing of the memorial stones (4:1-14). Twelve stones taken out of the Jordan by twelve men, one from each tribe, were set up where Israel first encamped in Canaan, as a perpetual memorial of the great miracle (Psa. 114). They were also symbols of the nation. There were apparently two sets of stones, one placed in the bed of the river (v. 9), symbolizing the old Israel of the wilderness, the other set up in Gilgal (v. 20), representing the new Israel now ready for the possession of the land.

(3) The bringing of the Ark out of the Jordan (4:15-24). The Ark is prominent throughout the whole narrative; it is mentioned sixteen times in the two chapters. The people came up out of the

Jordan and encamped in the land of Canaan on the tenth day of the first month, exactly forty years from the day preparations began for the first Passover (Exod. 12:3).

### THE FIRST CAMPAIGN (Chs. 5-8)

These chapters record the opening events of the war of conquest. They tell of the first victory and the first defeat.

1. The Preparation for the War (Ch. 5). The new generation was circumcised at the command of the Lord, marking them as His covenant people (vs. 1-8). Now that the Israelites were actually in the land which God had promised them when He redeemed them from Egypt, they were no longer under "the reproach of Egypt" (v. 9). The Egyptians could no longer cast ridicule upon them for their life in the wilderness (Isa. 25:8). The Passover was now observed for the first time in Canaan. The people partook of the old corn of the land, and the manna of the wilderness ceased (vs. 10-12).

Then Joshua was given a vision of the Prince of the Lord's host, who was none other than the Angel of the Covenant, now come to take command of the campaign (vs. 13-15). The wars of Israel in Canaan are always represented in the Old Testament as "the wars of Jehovah" (Num. 21:14). The conquest of Canaan was a Divine enterprise, in which the Israelites were the human instruments employed by God for executing His judgment upon the Canaanites.

2. The Fall of Jericho (Ch. 6). The first city in Canaan fell before the Ark of the Lord. The method

of attack followed the Divine instructions, which were first given (vs. 1-7). The whole scene was an expression in symbolic action of the Lord making war upon Jericho: the seven days' march round the walls with the blowing of the seven trumpets (vs. 8-14), and the seven circuits of the city on the seventh day (vs. 15-19). The way the walls fell down showed that the Lord was giving the city to Israel. Their faith was manifested in their complete obedience to the Divine instructions (vs. 20-21; Heb. 11:30).

The city was "devoted" to the Lord as the first fruits of the conquest, only Rahab and her father's household being saved (vs. 22-25). A "devoted" thing was not to be employed for any man's use, but was either put away and destroyed to vindicate the justice of God, as the men and beasts in this case, or was consecrated to the special service of God, as were all the precious and useful vessels. A curse was laid upon the man that would rebuild Jericho, and Joshua's fame spread all over the land (vs. 26-27; 1 Kings 16:34).

3. The Trespass of Achan (Ch. 7). This consisted in taking for himself what belonged to God, and the secret sin of one man was the sin of the nation (v. 1). It resulted in the withdrawal of the Lord's blessing from Israel and their defeat at Ai (vs. 2-5). In distress and humiliation, Joshua cast himself before the Lord (vs. 6-9), and it was revealed to him that there was sin in the midst of Israel, which must be judged and put away before the Lord would be with them any more and give them victory again (vs. 10-15). The method of the Lord's judgment slowly drew the net of detection around the guilty man. His confession was worth-



less, for it was made only after he was discovered (vs. 16-21). The punishment of Achan was such as to be a warning to Israel ever afterwards (vs. 22-26; Hos. 2:15).

4. The Taking of Ai (Ch. 8). This victory was given to Israel after judging and putting away the wrong committed in the trespass of Achan, and was achieved according to Divine instructions (vs. 1-2). The story shows how Joshua made use of military strategy (vs. 3-29). Victory is given to those living in obedience to God; and obedience to God includes the use of reason and common sense.

The campaign closed with the building of an altar on Mount Ebal, and the recording and reading of the Law there (vs. 30-35), according to Moses' instructions (Deut. 27).

#### COMPLETING THE CONQUEST (Chs. 9-12)

These chapters record the results of the subsequent campaigns, in which the whole land was finally subdued. The opening campaign had driven a wedge into the centre of the country, separating the north from the south. Joshua now proceeded to conquer the southern portion first and then the northern portion.

1. The Conquest of Southern Canaan (Chs. 9-10). This was brought about when Joshua went to the help of the Gibeonites, one of the southern nations, who had beguiled the Israelites into making a covenant with them.

(1) The covenant with the Gibeonites (ch. 9). While the kings of the Canaanites prepared for common action against Israel (vs. 1-2), the Gibeon-

ites sent an embassy to Joshua asking for an alliance (vs. 3-6). The Israelites were deceived by the wiles of the Gibeonites, because they "asked not counsel at the mouth of Jehovah" (vs. 7-15). Having made a covenant with them, they were obliged to keep it when they discovered the deceit. The Gibeonites were preserved from destruction but condemned to perpetual servitude (vs. 16-27). It is interesting to note that the binding nature of this treaty was recognized in the subsequent history (2 Sam. 21:1-6), and that the Gibeonites never seem to have had any corrupting influence upon the Israelites.

(2) The battle of Gibeon (10:1-28). Joshua responded to the appeal of the Gibeonites and came to their help against the southern confederacy of five kings who had attacked the city; and he utterly defeated them (vs. 1-11). The daylight was miraculously prolonged during the battle, enabling the Israelites to complete the destruction of their foes. This is the real significance of what happened. Its actual nature is unknown, and speculation about it is useless. The story is related in a passage quoted from the Book of Jashar (vs. 12-15), which was apparently a collection of national songs (2 Sam. 1:18). Joshua followed up his defeat of the confederate host and the five kings were all captured and destroyed (vs. 16-27).

(8) The extent of the southern conquests (10:28-43). Joshua followed up the victory at Gibeon by taking all the cities of the south and destroying their inhabitants (vs. 28-39). Then comes a summary of all the conquests of the southern part of Canaan (vs. 40-43). Nothing is said as to the length of time over which the events recorded here extended.

2. The Conquest of Northern Canaan (Ch. 11). A confederacy of northern kings, which was more formidable than that of the south because of their horses and chariots, gathered at the waters of Merom, and it was completely destroyed by Joshua (vs. 1-15). A general statement follows, describing the way Joshua completed the conquest of the whole land, even driving out the Anakim who had discouraged the spies at the first (Num. 13:33), till at last "the land had rest from war" (vs. 16-23).

The narrative emphasizes the fact that Joshua was carrying out Divine commands which he had received from Moses (vs. 15, 20, 23). The instructions given by Moses (Deut. 7) meant that the Canaanites were to be exterminated when the Lord delivered them up to the Israelites, and that all traces of their idolatry were to be destroyed. No covenant was to be made with any of them. This was stern treatment of conquered peoples, but its purpose is explicitly declared. It was not merely a judgment upon their abominable wickedness, of which Sodom was an example; but it was also necessary for the moral safety of the chosen people themselves, whom the Lord was now preparing for the ultimate salvation of the world.

3. A List of the Conquered Kings (Ch. 12). Here we have a summary of the conquests both east (vs. 1-6) and west (vs. 7-24) of the Jordan. From a comparison of 14:10 with Deut. 2:14, it may be inferred that the conquest of the land occupied seven years.

THE FIRST ALLOTMENT OF THE LAND  
(Chs. 13-17)

This distribution was made while the headquarters of Israel were still at Gilgal (14:6). It comprised the central and southern conquests, which were divided among the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh. In each case the territory is described, its general features and boundaries being carefully laid down.

1. The Inheritances of the Eastern Tribes (Ch. 13). The chapter begins with the Lord's command to Joshua to divide the land that remained to be possessed among the nine and a half tribes (vs. 1-7). This is followed by a description of the territories which had been conquered east of the Jordan and were already given to the two and a half tribes (vs. 8-14). Reuben was given the southern section (vs. 15-23), Gad the central (vs. 24-28), and half Manasseh the northern (vs. 29-31).

2. The Inheritance of Judah (Chs. 14-15) There is first a statement of the way the land of Canaan was divided by lot among the nine and a half tribes (14:1-5). It was done by Eleazar and Joshua acting with the heads of the tribes. Eleazar the high priest is named first, because in the theocratic government established by Moses the priest had the legislative authority while the executive power rested with the judge (Num. 27:21; Deut. 17:8-9).

In the midst of the tribe of Judah came Caleb with his noble request for the hill country of Hebron to be given to him, that he might drive out the remnants of the Anakim (14:6-15). Then the territory of the tribe of Judah is described with its cities (ch. 15). In the course of it is an account of the

way Caleb drove out the foes that were left in his inheritance (vs. 13-19), a passage which is repeated with slight variations in Jud. 1:10-15.

3. The Inheritance of the Children of Joseph (Chs. 16-17). After their territories had been allotted to the tribes of Ephraim (ch. 16) and Manasseh (17:1-13), they came to Joshua expressing dissatisfaction and received from him a characteristic answer (17:14-18). This is the first sign of the proud and arrogant spirit which Ephraim so often manifested in the later history.

Each tribe had the task of driving out the Canaanites that still remained in its territory, and in every case there was failure to do this (15:63; 16:10; 17:12-13).

#### THE FINAL ALLOTMENT OF THE LAND (Chs. 18-22)

This distribution was made at Shiloh (18:1), where the Tabernacle had been set up to be the central place of worship for all the tribes. Here the headquarters of the nation were now established.

1. The Inheritance of the Remaining Tribes (Chs. 18-19). The land yet to be possessed was first surveyed by three men from each tribe and divided into seven portions (18:1-10). It was then distributed by lot among the seven remaining tribes: Benjamin (18:11-28), Simeon (19:1-9), Zebulun (19:10-16), Issachar (19:17-23), Asher (19:24-31), Naphtali (19:32-39), and Dan (19:40-48). A special inheritance was given to Joshua in the midst of Ephraim (19:49-51).

2. The Cities of Refuge (Ch. 20). These were to be a refuge for the manslayer who had killed

someone unwittingly (vs. 1-6), according to the law already given by Moses (Num. 35:9-15). The cities set apart for this purpose were Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron west of the Jordan, and Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan east of the Jordan (vs. 7-9).

3. The Cities of the Levites (Ch. 21). The Levites, who received no inheritance in the Land like the other tribes, now applied for the cities that Moses had commanded to be given to them (Num. 35:1-8). The Israelites gave twenty-three cities to the Kohathites, thirteen to the Gershonites, and twelve to the Merarites (vs. 1-7). Then follow the names of the cities given to each group of families: the Kohathites (vs. 8-26), the Gershonites (vs. 27-33), and the Merarites (vs. 34-42), **forty-eight cities** in all, including the cities of refuge. The chapter closes with a statement that, in giving them possession of the Land, all the promises of the Lord to Israel had been fulfilled (vs. 43-45).

4. The Return of the Eastern Tribes (Ch. 22). Joshua commended the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh for helping their brethren in the conquest of Canaan, and then sent them away to their homes beyond the Jordan with a blessing (vs. 1-9). On their way they built a great altar in the region of the Jordan, and this caused offence to the rest of Israel, who feared they were turning away from following the Lord (vs. 10-20). The two tribes and a half explained that they had no such intention, but rather to erect a witness to the fact that their worship was identical with that of their brethren (vs. 21-34).

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL  
(Chs. 23-24)

These chapters record the closing events of Joshua's life. On two occasions in his old age he called an assembly of Israel, that he might exhort them to obedience and renew their covenant with the Lord before he died.

1. His Charge to Israel (Ch. 23). He makes very little reference to himself. The burden of his message is the goodness and faithfulness of God to them in driving out the nations before them. Not one thing had failed of all the good things which He had promised them and now he warns them before he leaves them of the evil that will come upon them if they turn away from the Lord.

2. His Renewal of the Covenant (24:1-28). The second assembly was gathered at Shechem. Joshua traces the history of Israel from the call of Abraham to the present moment (vs. 1-13). He puts it in the form of an address of the Lord to the people, declaring His dealings with them. In the course of the short passage the Divine pronoun "I" occurs seventeen times. Everything of greatness in Israel's history is of God. Joshua then goes on to appeal to them to choose the Lord and serve Him, and shows his own devotion by the pledge he gives for himself and his house (vs. 14-15). The people give their promise, and the Covenant is renewed and a record of it made (vs. 16-28).

3. His Death and Burial (24:29-33). He died at the age of a hundred and ten, the same age as Joseph. The book closes with the record of the burial of the bones of Joseph, which had been brought up from Egypt in fulfilment of his wish

(Gen. 50:22-26), and the death and burial of Eleazar the high priest.

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#### THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CANAAN

The Promised Land into which Joshua led the children of Israel is regarded in Heb. 4:1-9 as foreshadowing the "rest" which Christ gives to those who believe the Gospel. It was a type and symbol of Heaven, not as the future state of bliss, but as the spiritual world into which believers are introduced by their union with Christ (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). It corresponds to "the heavenly places" of the Epistle to the Ephesians (1:3; 2:6).

The warfare of Israel against the Canaanites is an Old Testament counterpart of the warfare of the Christian Church against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in that world (Eph. 6:12). Israel was commanded by the Lord to wage that war, and there was to be no compromise in it (Num. 33:50-56). The driving out of the Canaanites and the destruction of their idolatry was not the arbitrary action of hatred and cruelty, but the deliberate execution of Divine justice. The Lord had waited long (Gen. 15:16), and now "the iniquity of the Amorite" was full (Lev. 18:24-28; Deut. 12:31). Recent archæology has brought evidence to light that their worship was most debasing and their morals were most corrupt. The Israelites clearly understood that it was because of their wickedness and abominable idolatry that these nations were to be exterminated. They were threatened with the same judgments themselves if they became guilty of the sins of



these nations on whom they were executing the justice of God (Deut. 7:1-5; 8:19-20).

The land of Canaan, according to the borders described in Num. 34:1-12, was limited to the territory west of the Jordan. This was the Promised Land, and it was peculiarly fitted to serve God's purpose with Israel, both by its position and its nature. It was enclosed within natural boundaries on all sides, which gave it a secluded position and made it easier for Israel to be a separated people as commanded in the Law (Lev. 20:24-26). On the other hand, its central situation in the midst of the nations of the ancient world, and the great highways that led past its borders, gave a special advantage to Israel as God's witness to the other peoples of the world. The fertility of the land depended entirely upon the bounty of God's providence and His blessing upon the soil through the seasons of the year. This fitted it in a peculiar way for training Israel to trust in the Lord (Deut. 11:10-12).

## THE BOOK OF JUDGES

THE Book of Joshua closed with the chosen nation established in the Land of Promise and renewing their Covenant with the Lord. The Book of Judges exhibits them in the first period of their life as a settled nation under the Law. They were given no king of their own such as the other nations had, for they were to look to God as their King. They were being trained in the obedience of faith. This was the significance of the discipline under which they were now to live. Would they keep the Covenant and live as the Law directed? While Joshua's influence remained they did so, and went on with the task of driving out the Canaanites. But before long backsliding began, and this characterized the whole age with which the Book of Judges deals.

It was an age of unfaithfulness and failure. The expression, "the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah", occurs seven times in the course of the narrative (2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). It is followed in each case by a statement that God delivered them into the hand of an oppressor. When they cried unto the Lord out of these oppressions, He raised up deliverers for them, who "judged" Israel in the sense of defending the national cause against foes. For this reason they are sometimes called "saviours" (3:9, 15; Ob. 21). These were the judges, and from them the book gets its name.

It was written after the commencement of the monarchy (19:1; 21:25), but before the reign of

David (1:21; 2 Sam. 5:6-9). It stretches over nearly three centuries, covering the period between Joshua's death and Samuel's judgeship. It falls into three main parts:

- I. Israel's Unfaithfulness to the Lord—Chs. 1-2
- II. The Outward Result: National Servitude—  
Chs. 3-16
- III. The Inward Result: National Corruption—  
Chs. 17-21

### ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS

(Chs. 1-2)

The book begins by describing the state of Israel after Joshua's death, and goes on to show how unfaithfulness to the Covenant began, and then gives a general view of the times of the judges.

1. National Failure (Ch. 1). The Israelites made a good beginning: they "asked of Jehovah" (vs.1-2). They consulted the high priest at Shiloh to know the Lord's will, and under the leadership of Judah went at the work in earnest (vs. 3-10). One of their exploits is recorded in the story of Othniel and Achsah (vs. 11-15), which is repeated from Josh. 15:13-19. But gradually they weakened and let some of the Canaanites remain (vs. 16-28). This was true virtually of all the tribes (vs. 29-36). The statement, "did not drive out", occurs seven times in the chapter.

2. National Apostasy (Ch. 2). The nation was rebuked by a visit from the Angel of the Lord, who "came up from Gilgal to Bochim". This statement probably means that the Angel who had been sent to lead the host of Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 23:20-23), and who had appeared to Joshua when

the camp was in Gilgal (Josh. 5:10, 13), now came to the new place of assembly in central Palestine. His words seemed to have made a deep impression upon the people (vs. 1-5), but this was only temporary, as the chapter goes on to show. A brief review of the time of Joshua (vs. 6-10) is followed by a summary of the times of the judges (vs. 11-23).

This passage traces the course of Israel's sin and God's method of dealing with it. Having allowed some of the Canaanites to remain, the Israelites soon forgot the Lord and fell in with the idolatry of their heathen neighbours (vs. 11-13). God's anger was kindled and He gave them over to the power of their enemies (vs. 14-15). Then He raised up judges to save them; but when the judges were dead they transgressed again (vs. 16-19). Finally God left a company of nations to prove Israel by using them for the chastening and discipline of His own people (vs. 20-23). A list of these nations follows in 3:1-6.

#### ISRAEL'S SERVITUDE (Chs. 3-16)

The outward result of Israel's unfaithfulness consisted in a series of oppressions or servitudes. The book does not give a continuous history of the period, but contains the story of the men whom God raised up from time to time to deliver the nation out of these oppressions. These judges are not to be confused with the officers appointed by Moses for the administration of justice among the people (Exod. 18:21-26). They were raised up for a specific purpose and endowed with extraordinary powers. The peculiarity of their office lay in its

entire dependence upon the authority of God. Four of them are mentioned among the heroes of faith in Heb. 11:32.

1. The First Group of Judges (Ch. 3). After a list of the nations left in the land to prove Israel (vs. 1-6), we have an account of deliverances by Othniel (vs. 7-11), Ehud (vs. 12-30), and Shamgar (v. 31). What is said of Othniel illustrates two things that were true of the judges as a whole. They were raised up (1) in answer to the cry of the people in the midst of their suffering, and (2) under the power of the Spirit of God. "The Spirit of Jehovah came upon" Othniel. This does not mean an abiding or sanctifying influence, but an extraordinary gift of power and enthusiasm for the occasion.

2. Deborah and Barak (Chs. 4-5). This story illustrates the helpless inefficiency of Israel's religious leaders during this period. There is no mention of the Tabernacle at Shiloh, which should have been the real centre of the national life. God raised up a woman to be prophet as well as judge. Her function was to inspire Barak with courage and enthusiasm for the battle of the Lord (4:1-16). The fact that Jael's deed was used for the destruction of Sisera does not mean that its moral quality was approved. It throws out into relief the moral darkness of the time (4:17-24).

Deborah's song is a grand outburst of impassioned poetry (ch. 5). It is a song of victory, consisting of a prelude (vs. 2-3), and three main sections: the significance of the victory (vs. 4-11), the muster and the battle (vs. 12-23), and the issues of the victory (vs. 24-31). The whole song breathes scorn for the foe who had oppressed Israel so long,

and zeal for the Lord who had thus delivered His people.

3. Gideon (Chs. 6-8). He is the most important of the judges, and his history is full of moral and spiritual significance.

(1) His call (ch. 6). The theocratic character of this early period in Israel's history is manifested in the way Gideon was called. After seven years of Midianite oppression (vs. 1-6), in response to the cry of Israel, an unnamed prophet was sent to rebuke them for their disobedience and ingratitude to the Lord their God (vs. 7-10). After that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, who had evidently maintained his loyalty to God in the midst of the prevailing apostasy, and, commending his devotion and zeal, summoned him to save Israel from the hand of Midian (vs. 11-18). Gideon did not recognize the Divine character of the Angel till an offering presented to him was consumed by fire (vs. 19-24). That night, in obedience to a command of the Lord, Gideon broke down the altar of Baal that belonged to his father's household, and built an altar to the Lord and offered a sacrifice upon it. Next day Joash saved his son from the wrath of the townsfolk by telling them that Baal should be allowed to fight for himself (vs. 25-32). The fact that the vile Baal worship of the Canaanites was now practised amongst the Israelites shows how low they had sunk at this time.

When the Midianites and their allies invaded the land again, the Spirit of the Lord took hold of Gideon and he issued a rallying call to the men of the northern tribes (vs. 33-35). Then he asked for a double sign from God, not because of any lack of faith, but because he knew his own strength was

insufficient for the conquest of the foe and he wished to be assured that God would save Israel through him (vs. 36-40).

(2) The battle (ch. 7). Gideon's army was reduced so that the people might have no occasion of boasting (vs. 1-3). A simple test was used, which revealed those who were most fully devoted to the task in hand. They lapped up the water with their hands while still on the alert with their faces to the foe; but the rest yielded to momentary self-indulgence and bowed down to drink (vs. 4-8). The dream that Gideon heard related and interpreted in the camp of Midian prepared him for the victory. The interpretation was a natural one, for barley bread was the food of the poorest farming classes and fitly represented Israel while the tent fitly represented Midian (vs. 9-14). Praising the Lord, Gideon returned to his little army, and prepared his men to attack the enemy without delay. The victory was accomplished in such a way as to show that it was entirely from God (vs. 15-22). The Israelites who had been sent away before the battle now pursued the Midianites, and Gideon sent word to the men of Ephraim to intercept the flying foe at the Jordan (vs. 23-25).

(3) The issues of the battle (ch. 8). The tribal jealousy and local self-interest in Israel is revealed in Ephraim's complaint after the victory was won (vs. 1-3), and in the refusal of the men of Succoth and Peniel to give bread to Gideon's weary band of pursuers (vs. 4-9). Gideon went on and captured the two kings of the Midianites and then returned and punished the two cities which had refused him food (vs. 10-17). Then he sealed his victory over the Midianites by slaying their princes (vs. 18-21).

Gideon showed his loyalty to the Lord by refusing the kingship (vs. 22-23). But, in usurping the function of the high priest and making his own city a centre of worship, he was yielding to the temptation to glorify himself and sowing the seeds of trouble (vs. 24-28). His pretext may have been that the Lord had appeared to him directly; and besides, the high priesthood at the central sanctuary seems to have sunk into insignificance. After a statement about Gideon's family (vs. 29-32), the record goes on to say that Israel sank into Baal worship again when he was dead (vs. 33-35).

4. Abimelech and his Successors (Chs. 9-10). The slow but sure working of Divine retribution is illustrated in the story of Abimelech, one of Gideon's many sons, whose mother belonged to Shechem. He plotted with the men of Shechem, slaughtered his own brothers, and usurped the rule over Israel (9:1-6). Jotham, who had escaped the massacre, uttered a parable from the top of Mount Gerizim in the hearing of the men of Shechem, depicting the judgment that awaited both them and the king they had chosen (9:7-21). After a short reign of three years, a conspiracy was formed in Shechem against Abimelech (9:22-29). When he was informed of it, he captured and destroyed the city and slew its inhabitants (9:30-49). But he was himself slain ignominiously when attacking a neighbouring city (9:50-57).

After him Tola and Jair judged Israel twenty-three and twenty-two years respectively (10:1-5). After that came another period of idolatry and apostasy, which brought on an Ammonite oppression lasting eighteen years until Israel cried unto the Lord again (10:6-18).



5. Jephthah and his Successors (Chs. 11-12). Jephthah had been cast out by his brethren and had become the head of a band of outlaws (11:1-3). But when the Ammonites made war against Israel the people of Gilead sent for Jephthah and made him their head (11:4-11). He seems to have been a true worshipper of the Lord God of Israel, for he had the agreement with the elders of Gilead ratified before the Lord, and in his subsequent message to the king of Ammon he showed a clear understanding of the Lord's dealings with Israel in the wilderness journey (11:12-28). Under the Spirit of the Lord he won a great victory over the Ammonites (11:29-33).

The vow which Jephthah made before going forth to battle, and which caused him so much grief when he fulfilled it (1:34-38), did not result in the sacrifice of his daughter upon the altar, but in giving her up for life-long service at the Tabernacle (Exod. 38:8; Luke 2:37). This meant that she could not marry; and, as she was his only child, it involved the blotting out of his family and the end of his hopes in Israel. She "bewailed her virginity" because she would have to remain a virgin all her life. As long as she lived the daughters of Israel paid her a yearly visit to "celebrate" her self-sacrifice in fulfilling her father's vow (11:39-40). The inspired historian who records this incident obviously implies that Jephthah was to be commended for not breaking his vow. The inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews enrolls Jephthah among the heroes of faith (11:32). All this is evidence against the idea that Jephthah offered a human sacrifice, which would have been abhorrent to the Lord, and was distinctly forbidden in the Law (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5).

The civil war between Jephthah and the Ephraimites (12:1-6) was caused by the jealous temper of Ephraim, and reveals the national disintegration of Israel. Jephthah judged Israel six years, and after him came Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon in succession (12:7-15).

6. Samson (Chs. 13-16). The account of Samson is longer and more circumstantial than that of any other judge. In a sense he is the most representative of them all. He was a symbol of the nation itself, both in its strength and in its weakness, in its great possibilities and in its tragic failure.

(1) His birth (ch. 13). He could have had no better beginning. The Angel of the Lord came to announce his birth as a gift of God to his parents, who were apparently God-fearing people. He was dedicated to God from his birth. He is the first recorded instance of a Nazirite.

(2) His exploits among the Philistines (chs. 14-15). A Philistine oppression had been going on in the south west (13:1), apparently at the same time as the Ammonite oppression in the east (10:7). The Philistines were not Canaanites, but a foreign people who had migrated into Palestine in an early age. Samson grew up in the border of their territory, and the Spirit of the Lord began to use him against them by coming upon him in sudden, mighty impulses and giving him superhuman bodily strength (13:25; 14:19; 15:14). The Lord was with him as long as he kept his Nazirite vow. But the carnal element in his nature was very strong, and he yielded to it until at last it brought about his downfall. In the meantime the Lord used this conflict between the flesh and the spirit in him for the discomfiture of the Philistines.

(3) His fall, captivity, and death (ch. 16). Here we see the man of carnal lusts yielding up the secret of his strength and sinking into deep degradation and humiliation, and learning at last that without God he was nothing. In the midst of it he cried to the Lord for strength again (v. 28), and in his death he struck the heaviest blow at the oppressors of Israel (v. 30). With Samson the age of the judges comes to an end.

#### ISRAEL'S CORRUPTION (Chs. 17-21)

These chapters form an appendix to the story of the judges. They disclose the depths of corruption and degradation into which the nation had sunk because of its unfaithfulness to the Covenant. Apostasy had brought on anarchy. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25).

1. A Story of Religious Corruption (Chs. 17-18). An Ephraimite named Micah set up an image in his house and hired a Levite to be his priest (ch. 17). The tribe of Dan, on their way north to settle at Laish, stole Micah's image, took his priest with them, and set up image worship there (ch. 18).

2. A Story of Moral Corruption (Chs. 19-21). The infamous conduct of the men of Gibeah is related (ch. 19). The tribe of Benjamin refused to give up the evil doers, and all Israel made war upon it and almost exterminated it (ch. 20). Then measures were taken to restore Benjamin among the tribes of Israel (ch. 21).

THE THEOCRATIC CHARACTER OF THE AGE  
OF THE JUDGES

During the age of the judges there was no central government, but there was a theocracy. The tribes of Israel were settled in the Land as the people of God, and they were to look to the Lord as their King and obey Him. They were expected to seek His mind and will on specific occasions and enquire what He would have them do by consulting the high priest (20:27), who was equipped with the Urim and the Thummim for this special purpose (Exod. 28:30; Num. 27:21).

The theocratic character of the age is manifest in the way the judges were raised up as the agents of the Lord's rule (2:16). It is also brought out by the fact that the Angel of the Covenant appears on four occasions in the course of the book. He rebuked the people for their disobedience at the beginning (2:1-4). In the time of Deborah He pronounced a curse upon a city that had failed to come to the help of the Lord (5:23). He called Gideon to his great task (ch. 6). He charged the parents of Samson, before the birth of their child, to prepare him for the life of a Nazirite (ch. 13). He is mentioned some twenty times in the book.

The Book of Judges may be regarded as a historical commentary on the promises and threatenings of Deuteronomy. It illustrates the principles and methods of God's government in the life of a nation. It shows that religious apostasy brings moral degeneracy and national weakness, that national sin does not go unpunished, that the punishment of a nation is intended to bring it to a sense of its need of God, and that when a nation turns to God He works for its deliverance and blessing.

## THE BOOK OF RUTH

THIS book is named from the chief person in the narrative. It is an appendix to the Book of Judges. It is a story of the best side of life in Israel during that period. It illustrates the truth that even in the darkest times God does not leave Himself absolutely without witness. There were children of faith living simple and beautiful lives in the midst of the strife and apostasy of the times of the judges.

The book also serves as a connecting link between the age of the judges and the age of the kings. Ruth the Moabitess was an ancestor of David (4:17). It is thus a step in the preparation for the coming of Christ. Ruth is one of the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:3, 5, 6), which reminds us that He was a kinsman not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles as well.

The keynote of Ruth's beautiful character was faith. She had come to trust in the Lord God of Israel (2:12). The story may be outlined as follows, showing four stages or aspects of her faith:

1. Ruth Choosing (Ch. 1). During a famine in the land, Elimelech of Bethlehem, with his wife Naomi and their two sons, went to sojourn in Moab, where the sons married Moabite wives. This way of seeking escape from trouble brought them no good, for all the men of the family died. Naomi, bereft of them all, prepared to return to Bethlehem and urged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab. Orpah parted from her, but "Ruth clave unto her",

choosing to leave her own people and take her place with the people of God. The words in which she expressed her decision reveal the utter devotion of genuine love and faith (vs. 16-17). Their arrival at Bethlehem in their poverty moved the city with wonder, and Naomi confessed that the Lord had testified against her and afflicted her.

2. Ruth Serving (Ch. 2). It was the time of barley harvest, and Ruth went out to glean in the fields, as the poor were permitted by the Law to do (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22). God's overruling care of her is marked by the fact that "her hap was to light" on the field of Boaz, a godly Israelite and noble character, who gave her a gracious and generous welcome. The daily life of Israel at its best is seen in the frank and friendly fellowship between Boaz and his men. When Ruth went back at even and told her mother-in-law of the day's experience, she learned that Boaz was one of their near kinsmen.

3. Ruth Resting (Ch. 3). Naomi now sought "rest" for Ruth by appealing to the law which laid a certain important obligation on a kinsman (Lev. 25:25-28; Deut. 25:5-6). This law was designed to prevent the extinction of any family in Israel and the alienation of any family inheritance. Naomi explained to Ruth how to make her approach to Boaz. When Boaz discovered her he addressed her with pious and fatherly tenderness and encouragement, and he promised to do the kinsman's part if a nearer kinsman, who should first be seen about it, refused to do it. Before Ruth went back to her mother-in-law he gave her a very generous supply of barley.

4. Ruth Rejoicing (Ch. 4). Boaz called the other kinsman to meet him at the gate of the city,

where business was done, in the presence of ten of the elders. He presented the case, and asked him if he would redeem the field of Elimelech which Naomi had been obliged to sell and if he would marry Ruth. Being unable to fulfil the kinsman's part, he transferred the right of redemption to Boaz. The transaction was attested in the presence of the elders, according to the recognized custom. Boaz purchased the inheritance of the family and took Ruth to be his wife. The women of the city now rejoiced with Naomi, and Ruth had the joy of becoming a mother in Israel. Her son was Obed, the grandfather of David.

In thus recording the origin of David's family from Boaz of the tribe of Judah and Ruth the Moabitess, this book prepares for the transition from the theocracy to the monarchy, which is the theme of the next book.

## THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE double Books of Samuel and Kings contain a connected history of the kingdom of Israel from its beginning in the days of Samuel to its end in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

The two Books of Samuel tell of the rise and establishment of the monarchy. They are named from the man under whom this change in the nation's history was brought about. Their purpose is not to record a complete and continuous story, but to trace the dealings of God with Israel through this transition period of the nation's development. First Samuel tells how the kingdom was constituted, and gives an account of the way Israel passed from the direct rule of God under the judges to become a monarchy like the nations around. Second Samuel is concerned with the reign of David, the king of God's own choice, under whom the kingdom was finally established.

The First Book of Samuel may be divided into two parts under the names of Samuel and Saul respectively, giving us the following outline:

- I. The Work of Samuel—Chs. 1-12
  1. Samuel's Early Life (Chs. 1-3).
  2. The Reformation in Israel (Chs. 4-7)
  3. The Origin of the Kingdom (Chs. 8-12)
- II. The Reign of Saul—Chs. 13-31
  1. The Failure of Saul (Chs. 13-15)
  2. The Choice of David (Chs. 16-17)
  3. The Friendship of David and Jonathan.  
(Chs. 18-20)



4. Saul's Persecution of David (Chs. 21-27)
5. The End of Saul's Life (Chs. 28-31)

### SAMUEL'S EARLY LIFE (Chs. 1-3)

These chapters tell the story of Samuel's life up to the time when he came to be recognized throughout Israel as a prophet of the Lord. They take us back to the Tabernacle at Shiloh, which had become the national centre again after its long period of obscurity during the age of the judges. There Eli was both high priest and judge.

1. His Birth (Ch. 1). Samuel, whose name means "asked of God", was born in answer to the prayers of his mother Hannah, who dedicated him to the Lord as a Nazirite from his birth (vs. 1-20). His parents presented the child for service in the house of the Lord at Shiloh under the care of Eli the high priest (vs. 21-28). His father Elkanah was a Levite (1 Chron. 6:23, 27-28). The most majestic of the Divine names, "Jehovah of hosts", frequently used in the Prophets, occurs for the first time in this chapter (v. 3).

2. His Childhood (Ch. 2). Hannah's song of thanksgiving (vs. 1-10) has many echoes in the song of the Virgin Mary (Luke 2:46-55). The theme is the same in both. Samuel's growth as a child in the service of the Lord at Shiloh (vs. 11, 18-21, 26) was like that of Jesus in his home at Nazareth (Luke 2: 40, 52). In striking contrast with the life of the young Nazirite was the wicked conduct and unbridled self-indulgence of Eli's sons, the priests (vs. 12-17, 22-25). Eli's failure to restrain them brought a pronouncement of Divine judgment upon

his house, delivered by an unnamed prophet (vs. 27-36).

3. His Call (Ch. 3). "The word of Jehovah was precious in those days": it was rare, very seldom heard. "There was no frequent vision"—no vision spread abroad (v. 1). There was no publicly acknowledged prophet whose word came to all Israel. God revealed Himself to the child Samuel and sent a message through him to Eli about the doom that was to fall upon his house (vs. 2-14). Eli accepted the message, when told of it, with the passive submission of a weak character (vs. 15-18). He would submit to the will of God, but would not rouse himself to do it.

When Samuel grew up, it was recognized through all Israel that the word of the Lord was being revealed through him, and that he had been established as a prophet of the Lord (vs. 19-22). He was the first of the official prophets, who from this time continued in a long line of succession till the end of the Old Testament history.

#### THE REFORMATION IN ISRAEL (Chs. 4-7)

This section tells of the great calamity that fell upon Israel in the Philistine war and brought the predicted judgment upon Eli's house, and of the subsequent reformation in the nation under Samuel's leadership.

1. The Loss of the Ark (Ch. 4). In a war with the Philistines, the Israelites had the Ark brought into their camp from Shiloh, thus revealing a mere carnal confidence instead of a spiritual trust in God

(vs. 1-4). The result was a disastrous defeat, the capture of the Ark, and the death of Eli's sons who had come with it (vs. 5-11). The tragic news carried to Shiloh brought about the death of the aged high priest after a judgeship of forty years. The name given to his grandchild, who was born at the time, marked the significance of the tragedy (vs. 12-22). The destruction of Shiloh is referred to in Psa. 78:59-64, Jer. 7:12 and 26:9.

These events belonged to the Philistine oppression of Samson's time, which was still going on, for it lasted forty years (Jud. 13:1). Samson's judgeship had lasted half that time (Jud. 15:20; 16:31). It probably coincided with the last twenty years of Eli's judgeship at Shiloh, which would be the first twenty years of the oppression.

2. The Return of the Ark (Chs. 5-6). The Philistines placed the Ark in one of their temples, and learned that their God was powerless before the Lord God of Israel (5:1-5). They were also smitten with a great plague, which followed them when the Ark was sent from city to city among them (5:6-12). After seven months, the Philistines put it on a new cart drawn by two milch cows to see if it would return to its own territory. They did this as a supernatural test. If cows unaccustomed to the yoke drew the cart quietly, lowing as they went, deserting their calves, and without human guidance went straight to the nearest Israelite town, the conclusion must be that they were controlled by the God of Israel. And thus it happened (6:1-18).

But the Israelites, too, must be taught to reverence the holy symbol of the divine Presence; and the desecration of the men of Beth-shemesh was severely punished (6:19-21). Awed by this stroke

of Divine judgment, they had the Ark removed from among them to Kirjath-jearim, where it remained for twenty years (7:1-2). This period would coincide with the second half of the Philistine oppression.

NOTE: The statement in v. 19 that more than fifty thousand of the men of Beth-shemesh were slain presents a great difficulty, and that for two reasons. Such a punishment seems inconsistent with the character of God, and the population of Beth-shemesh could not have been as large as that number indicates. There is an unusual construction in the original Hebrew, which may be read as follows: "He smote of the people seventy men, fifty a thousand men". There is no "and" between the numbers. The most probable explanation of this peculiar expression is that it was intended to mean that seventy men were slain, and that this was done on the basis of fifty out of a thousand men. This would indicate that Beth-shemesh had a population of fourteen hundred.

3. The Nation's Return to God (Ch. 7). One of the greatest reformations in the history of Israel took place under the leadership of Samuel. The various steps in it are significant. It began with a national longing after the Lord (vs. 1-2). Then Samuel called upon them to repent and put away the idolatries they had been practising (vs. 3-4). An assembly of the people was held at Mizpah for national confession and for setting wrongs right among themselves (vs. 5-6).

While this was going on, the Philistines proceeded to make an attack. In the face of the peril, Samuel offered a burnt offering in token of the new consecration of the nation, and prayed to the Lord for them. The answer was a great thunderstorm, which

discomfited the Philistines and led to their complete defeat at the hands of the men of Israel (vs. 7-11). Samuel set up a memorial to mark the event, and a period of peace followed (vs. 12-14), during which Samuel continued to act as judge in Israel (vs. 15-17).

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE KINGDOM (Chs. 8-12)

The narrative now passes on to Samuel's old age (8:1), and describes the events which led to the appointment of a king and the establishment of the monarchy.

1. Israel's Request for a King (Ch. 8). Samuel's sons, whom he had appointed judges, were perverting justice, and the elders of Israel asked him to appoint a king for them "like all the nations" (vs. 1-5). This request was not wrong in itself, for the instructions given by Moses concerning the Law had made provision for a future king (Deut. 17:14-20). It was its motive and spirit that made it wrong.

Under the judges Israel was being taught to rely upon the Lord God as their unseen King, who raised up deliverers for them when they cried unto Him. They were being trained in faith. God had chosen them to be a people governed directly by Him, unlike the other nations. It was His purpose to teach them that their national life depended on a moral and spiritual order administered by their invisible King. While the misgovernment of Samuel's sons was the occasion for their request for a king "like all the nations", yet its real cause lay deeper. It was a rejection of God's invisible Kingship. Samuel took the matter to the Lord and was told to accede to their request, "for they have not rejected thee,

but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them" (vs. 6-9). Samuel then warned them of what was involved in having a king of this kind (vs. 10-18), but the people persisted and their demand was granted (vs. 19-22).

2. The Appointment of Saul (Chs. 9-10). These chapters contain a circumstantial account of the way Samuel was brought in touch with Saul, and they throw an interesting light upon the civil and religious life of the people at the time. Saul, the choicest young man in Israel in outward appearance, on a search through the country for his father's lost asses, came to consult the seer (9:1-14). Samuel, having been prepared by the Lord for the meeting, honoured him as the guest at a public feast, and then communed with him in his own house (9:15-27).

Next day Samuel anointed Saul privately as the ruler of Israel and gave him three signs, each with its own proper meaning, to assure him that God would be with him (10:1-6). Then he gave him specific directions for his conduct as king (10:7-8). When occasion arose to consult the will of God, he was to go down to Gilgal and wait for Samuel to perform the sacrifice. Gilgal was the religious centre of the nation at this time, and apparently the Tabernacle had been brought there from Shiloh (7:16; 11:14-15). Afterwards the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, and all the signs Samuel had announced came to pass (10:9-16). Samuel called the people together at Mizpah, and there Saul was publicly chosen by lot as their king (10:17-27).

3. Saul Confirmed as King (Ch. 11). Saul proved his ability as a leader and warrior by winning a great victory over the Ammonites, who had

attacked Jabesh-gilead (vs. 1-11). This silenced all opposition to Saul. Samuel then called the people together at Gilgal, and there Saul was confirmed in the kingship with great rejoicing (vs. 12-15). Israel now had a king after their own heart. The age of the judges was at an end; that of the kings had begun.

4. Samuel's Farewell (Ch. 12). Samuel now solemnly laid down his office as judge (vs. 1-5), and then gave his farewell address to the people. He reviewed "all the righteous acts of Jehovah", from the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt up to the present time, and gave them a solemn warning against forsaking Him (vs. 6-18). He would still continue to exercise the office of prophet and would cease not to pray for them (vs. 19-25). Samuel was the first to apply the title, "Jehovah's anointed", to the king (v. 5), though the term had been used before prophetically in Hannah's song (2:10). This was the origin of the title Messiah applied to the promised Redeemer.

#### THE FAILURE OF SAUL (Chs. 13-15)

It is not a history of Saul's reign that we have from now on, but an account of the events that revealed his wrong attitude toward God and led to his rejection. These events took place during a war with the Philistines (chs. 13-14) and a war against the Amalekites (ch. 15). As it was in war Saul had shown his strength, so it was in war he showed his weakness. The secret of his failure was persistence in self-will; he would not follow the will of God. Three qualities of his self-willed character

are revealed by the incidents that are recorded here.

1. His Impatience (Ch. 13). In the face of the peril from the Philistines and the panic that had taken possession of the Israelites (vs. 1-7), Saul could not wait to learn the counsel of God through the prophet Samuel as he had been instructed to do (10:7-8), but showed his impatience and self-assertion by offering the sacrifice himself (vs. 8-9). Samuel, arriving immediately afterwards within the appointed time, pronounced the Divine judgment upon his act. Saul had shown himself unfitted to be the representative of the invisible King. He should not be the founder of the kingdom; the Lord would appoint a man after His own heart (vs. 10-14). Saul's self-willed impatience availed nothing, and devastating raids by the Philistines continued to oppress Israel (vs. 15-23).

2. His Rashness (Ch. 14). Jonathan, Saul's son, performed an exploit of valour against a Philistine garrison (vs. 1-14). What seems to have been an earthquake occurred at the time and caused a terror of the supernatural among the Philistines (v. 15). This led to a battle in which the Israelites completely routed the Philistines (vs. 16-23). Saul was so intent upon his own selfish vengeance that he grudged his men the necessary time for rest and refreshment, and placed a curse upon any man who would stop for a moment to take food (v. 24). This resulted in an innocent transgression on Jonathan's part during the day (vs. 25-30), and the violation of the Law by the people under the stress of hunger at the end of the day (vs. 31-35). When the transgression of the vow was discovered (vs. 36-42), the people rescued Jonathan from Saul's attempt to carry it out to its fatal consequences (vs. 43-46).



The chapter closes with a summary of Saul's wars; he was valiant in them all, but he failed to subdue the Philistines (vs. 47-52).

NOTE: The occurrence of the word "ark" in this chapter (v. 18) needs to be explained, for the Ark at this time was not with Israel, but was still in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim, where it remained till the reign of David (1 Sam. 7:1; 2 Sam. 6:1-3). The Septuagint rendering of this passage reads: "Saul said unto Abijah, Bring hither the ephod. For he wore the ephod in that day before Israel". This doubtless represents the original text. What Saul did was to summon the high priest, who was present "wearing an ephod" (v. 3), to enquire the will of God by means of the Urim and the Thummim for the occasion that had arisen. But when he saw the confusion among the Philistines increasing, he stopped the priest, saying, "Withdraw thy hand", and decided himself what to do. God's displeasure was revealed by His silence when, later on, Saul sought His counsel again (vs. 36-37).

3. His Disobedience (Ch. 15). Saul was commanded to execute the curse long before pronounced upon Amalek (Exod. 17:14-16); but instead of carrying it out fully, he spared the king and the best of the spoil for purposes of self-glorification (vs. 1-9). Samuel met him on his triumphal, vain-glorious return journey, exposed his hypocrisy, and pronounced God's judgment upon him. He was now rejected from being king (vs. 10-23). Saul acknowledged his disobedience, but was not so much concerned about his sin against God as about the effect upon the people if Samuel openly disavowed him (vs. 24-31). Samuel himself carried out the judgment upon Agag, and from that day he came no

more to see Saul (vs. 32-35). Saul was no longer king of Israel in God's sight.

### THE CHOICE OF DAVID (Chs. 16-17)

The narrative now proceeds to show how God raised up a man of His own choice who would do His will, and how He prepared him for the kingdom.

1. David Chosen and Anointed (Ch. 16). While Samuel was mourning over the rejection of Saul, he was commanded of the Lord to go to Bethlehem and anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse (vs. 1-5). They were brought before him, and passed by one by one until the youngest was sent for, who had been keeping the sheep (vs. 6-12). David was chosen on a different principle from that on which Saul was chosen—not the outward appearance, but the heart. Samuel immediately anointed him, and from that day forward the Spirit of the Lord came upon David (v. 13).

A providential chain of events now began to prepare him for the throne, the first of which brought him into the court of Saul (vs. 14-23). Fits of melancholy had begun to seize the king, and David, being a skilful player on the harp, was appointed to play before him, and became his armour-bearer.

2. David Tried and Proved (Ch. 17). Another war with the Philistines provided the occasion that revealed the qualities of David's character. The challenge of the giant, Goliath of Gath, had dismayed Saul and the men of Israel (vs. 1-11). Young David, who had been sent by his aged father from his home in Bethlehem to visit his three eldest brothers in the camp, heard the giant's challenge,

and enquired why he should be allowed to defy the armies of the living God (vs. 12-30).

Saul heard of David's words and sent for him. The interview brought out David's complete confidence in the Lord and his perfect naturalness. He undertook to fight the Philistine with the simple weapons he had learned to use as a shepherd lad (vs. 31-40). David entered the duel "in the name of Jehovah of hosts", confident of the issue, declaring that "the battle is Jehovah's"; and the disdainful and boasting giant was promptly overthrown. The death of their champion caused a panic among the Philistines, and they fled before the men of Israel (vs. 41-54). When David returned from the battle he was brought again into Saul's court (vs. 55-58). Here he was thrown into the company of Jonathan, and at once Jonathan's love for David began (18:1-2).

NOTE: The account of David's victory over Goliath is recorded in such a circumstantial way that it abounds in repetitions and appears to be inconsistent in some places with the last part of the preceding chapter. The Septuagint omits several parts of it in what seems to be an attempt to make a continuous story. The critical theory that the Hebrew text, from which our version is translated, is a compilation from two contradictory traditions reflects on the intelligence of the compiler and explains nothing. The real question has to do with the purpose of the writer. This event was the turning point in David's life and the first step on his way to the throne. Hence the story is told with such fulness of detail as to show that all the circumstances were overruled by God Himself. It is a peculiar characteristic of Hebrew narrative to pur-

sue a leading idea to its ultimate issues and then go back and fill in the details. Thus the statement in 16:21 that David became Saul's armour-bearer probably refers to the position that David was given in Saul's court after his victory over Goliath.

#### THE FRIENDSHIP OF DAVID AND JONATHAN (Chs. 18-20)

At this point David was thrown into the company of Jonathan, whose qualities of high courage and true faith have appeared in the narrative already (13:3; 14:6-7). Other qualities in his character, one of the noblest in all Scripture, are now to be seen in his unselfish and genuine devotion to David. His influence upon David was one of the chief means of refining and enriching the life of the young shepherd and preparing him for the kingdom. The story of Jonathan's love for David is all the more beautiful in being set against the dark background of Saul's jealousy of David. And yet through it all Jonathan never betrayed any disloyalty to his father.

1. Jonathan's Love for David (Ch. 18). The soul of Jonathan went out to David at once when he heard him being interviewed by his father. David was retained in Saul's service and the two young heroes entered into a covenant of friendship. David was given a post of command in Saul's army, and was sent on military expeditions. In all these he "behaved himself wisely", showing prudence and valour and winning the favour of the people (vs. 1-5).

Saul's anger was aroused by the public acclaim given David after his victory over the Philistine, and in a fit of madness he made an attempt on David's life as he was playing before him (vs. 6-11).

When he saw that the Lord was with David he regarded him with fear and awe, and all the time David was gaining the affection of the nation (vs. 12-16).

Saul had promised to give his daughter to the man who would defeat Goliath (17:25), and now he proceeded to fulfil this promise with a crafty hope that making David his son-in-law would increase the chances of his death at the hands of the Philistines. David in his humility shrank from Saul's offer, but finally married his younger daughter Michal (vs. 17-27). In all the engagements with the Philistines David was the most successful of all Saul's servants, and his reputation kept growing (vs. 28-30).

2. Saul's Enmity to David (Ch. 19). Saul's fear of David at last settled into deadly enmity, and he gave orders to slay David. Jonathan warned David to hide himself while he interceded with his father on his friend's behalf. He succeeded by his earnest appeal in changing Saul's mind for the time being (vs. 1-7). But another great defeat which David inflicted upon the Philistines excited Saul to such a pitch of madness that he made another attempt on David's life. David had been playing before the king and at once slipped out of his presence. Saul sent messengers to his house to slay him there, but Michal saved her husband from them (vs. 8-17).

Then David fled to Samuel at Ramah and reported all that Saul had done. Samuel had established a school of the prophets there, and David dwelt with Samuel in the buildings which they occupied. (This is the meaning of the word, "Naioth"). When Saul heard that David was there he sent messengers to fetch him, but when they arrived and saw the company of prophets with Samuel at their head the

spirit of prophecy took possession of them. When Saul was told of it he sent two other bands of messengers one after the other, and the same thing happened to them. Then Saul went himself and was seized and overcome by the spirit of prophecy so completely that he lay prostrate all day and all night (vs. 18-24). This experience should have taught Saul that in raging against David he was fighting against the Lord. But Saul went on hardening his heart against the Spirit of God.

3. David's Parting from Jonathan (Ch. 20). After that David left the school of the prophets and went to Jonathan and poured out his heart to his friend. He asked him why his father sought his life, and implored him to find out his father's intention at a feast of the new moon which Saul was to hold next day (vs. 1-10). The two friends went out into the open country to escape observation. Jonathan first renewed his covenant with David and then fixed upon a sign by which he would let David know the state of his father's mind (vs. 11-23).

When the new moon came David remained hidden in the open country and Jonathan made an apology for his absence from the king's table. Saul was so enraged by it that he hurled his spear at his son. When Jonathan saw that his father was resolved to put David to death he left the table in anger and grief (vs. 24-34). Next morning Jonathan went out into the country and let David know what had occurred by the sign agreed upon. Then the two friends had an affectionate meeting and farewell. They pledged themselves to each other in the name of the Lord, and then parted—David going away as a fugitive and Jonathan going back to his father's court (vs. 35-42).

SAUL'S PERSECUTION OF DAVID  
(Chs. 21-27)

David now passed through a long period of discipline and trial at the hand of Saul. These experiences drew out his faith and patience, ripened his inner life, and helped to prepare him for his life-work as king. In the midst of this period, the aged prophet Samuel died (25:1), and David was thrown more than ever upon God alone. All this time David maintained his characteristic life-principle of seeking and following the will of the Lord (23:2, 9).

1. David as an Outlaw (Chs. 21-22). He sought refuge from Saul, first with Abimelech the high priest at Nob, where the Tabernacle was at the time (21:1-9), then with Achish the king of Gath (21:10-15). In the cave of Adullam he became the head of a body of men who gathered about him because of the distress which Saul's reign had caused among the people (22:1-2).

From there David took his parents over to the king of Moab, and then came back to the land of Judah (22:3-5). In the meantime Saul had been told by Doeg the Edomite, an enemy of David, how he had been received at Nob; and Saul had Abimelech and the priests slaughtered and Nob destroyed (22:6-19). Abiathar, one of Abimelech's sons, escaped and joined himself to David (22:20-23). He had taken the ephod with him, and David recognized him thereafter as the high priest (23:9).

2. David as a Freebooter (Chs. 23-25). David's great capacity for leadership was developed by the very situation into which Saul's persecution threw him. His band of men grew from four hundred to

six hundred (23:13; 27:2; 30:9), and he used them for the protection of the cities of Judah against their foes and not for plunder, while all the time Saul kept on seeking his life.

We find him at Keilah, delivering it from the Philistines (23:1-13); in the wilderness of Ziph, where he and Jonathan met for the last time (23:14-29); in the wilderness of En-gedi, where David by a chance happening had Saul in his power but restrained his men from slaying him (ch. 24). The story of Nabal and Abigail (ch. 25) shows that David and his men were exerting a powerful influence, and that the devout and God-fearing people in Israel believed that David was the Lord's anointed on whom the kingdom should devolve.

3. David as a Man of Faith (Chs. 26-27). Still another experience of betrayal and persecution awaited David, another trial of his faith. He had come into the wilderness of Ziph again, and the Ziphites informed Saul, who at once went after him with three thousand men (26:1-5). David and his nephew Abishai stole into the camp by night and found Saul and all his men asleep. For the second time David had Saul in his power, and again he was presented with the tempting and plausible argument that God had thus delivered his enemy into his hand. But again he refused to take things into his own hand and serve his own interest by doing what he knew to be wrong; he left Saul's fate in the hands of the Lord (26:6-12).

David possessed that deep and patient faith which not only trusts in God's help, but also waits on God's time. By his subsequent actions that night he convinced Saul that he had spared his life, and moved Saul for the moment to acknowledge his folly (26:



13-25). This was the last meeting of the two men. When David realized that it made no change in Saul's attitude toward him, his faith seemed to falter, and he went over among the Philistines out of Saul's reach altogether (27:1-4). Then he was given Ziklag to dwell in, and from there he made raids upon the foes that lay along the border of Judah (27:5-12).

### THE END OF SAUL'S LIFE (Chs. 28-31)

Saul's self-willed life ended in utter ruin and disaster during a final war with the Philistines (28:1-2), the events of which are recorded in these chapters.

1. Saul and the Witch of Endor (Ch. 28). This incident shows the utter spiritual darkness and despair into which he had sunk (vs. 3-7). The narrative indicates that Samuel really appeared, but that it was not the woman's necromancy that brought him forth, for she herself was startled beyond measure (vs. 8-14). Samuel brought God's last warning to Saul, and only confirmed the judgment already pronounced upon him by announcing the doom that was to fall upon him on the morrow (vs. 15-19). The result upon Saul was utter collapse. The man who had made self-will his rule of life had no power of will left (vs. 20-25).

2. David and the Philistines (Chs. 29-30). David and his men had accompanied the Philistine army in the invasion of the land of Israel, but the princes of the Philistines, distrusting him, had their king send him away (ch. 29). On returning to Ziklag, they found that it had been raided and destroyed

by the Amalekites (30:1-6). After consulting the mind of the Lord through Abiathar the high priest, David pursued the band of raiders with four hundred of his men, leaving two hundred behind (30:7-10). He overtook them, scattered and destroyed them, and recovered all the captives and the spoil (30:11-20).

It was characteristic of David that he had the spoil divided with those who had been left behind on a principle of equality; and that became a law in Israel (30:21-25). He also distributed some of the spoil among the elders of the various cities in Judah that had sheltered and befriended him during his wanderings (30:26-31).

3. The Death of Saul (Ch. 31). Only a single verse is given to the battle of Gilboa; the narrative is concerned with the tragic death of Saul, which also involved the fate of the sons who had been faithful to him to the end (vs. 1-7). The gratitude which he had inspired among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead at the beginning of his reign by his relief of the city from the Ammonites (ch. 11), now led them to rescue the bodies of Saul and his sons and give their bones a respectful burial (vs. 8-13).

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#### THE GREAT FIGURES OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Three great figures stand out in the story of First Samuel, each of whom had special significance at this stage of Israel's history.

Samuel: He was the last of the judges, and the first of the prophets to be generally recognized by

the nation (3:20). Hence it may be said that he established the prophetic office in Israel. The line of prophets, called of God to that office, continued from Samuel's time to the end of the Old Testament age. He founded the schools of the prophets, which appear in this book for the first time (10:5, 10-11; 19:20-21; cf. 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7; 4:38; 6:1). The child of many prayers (1:10-11, 20, 27), Samuel lived a life of prayer and was known as a man of prayer (7:5, 8-9; 8:6; 12:19, 23; 15:11). This was the secret of his character and the source of his power and influence. He had no new truth to declare and no light to throw on old truths. His office was to preserve the truth taught by Moses, and to be God's representative in the last stage of the theocracy.

Saul: He was the kind of king the people asked for, who wanted Israel to be like the nations around them (8:4-5, 19-20). No more suitable man could have been chosen according to their standards. He had a commanding outward appearance (9:2; 10:23), and he was a valiant soldier and an able leader in war (11:11). His character had elements of modesty (9:21; 10:21-22) and generosity (11:12-13). The secret of his failure was his persistent self-will. This brought on deterioration in his character and confusion in his kingdom. The tragedy of his life was all the greater because he dragged his loyal and noble-hearted son Jonathan in his own ruin.

David: He was the kind of man the Lord chose to found the kingdom of Israel, a man after God's own heart (13:14). He trusted God fully. That part of his history which is contained in First Samuel shows how God was training and preparing

him for his life-work as king. The various elements in this training may be summed up as follows: (1) His boyhood as a shepherd lad. (2) His experience in the court of Saul. (3) His friendship with Jonathan. (4) His association with Samuel. (5) His exile and persecution at the hand of Saul. Instead of self-will as in Saul's case, the will of God was the ruling motive in David's life (Acts 13:22, 36). He was being prepared for the throne by learning to follow the will of God and not his own will through a long course of discipline and under all sorts of circumstances.

## THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

THIS book contains the story of David's reign. It follows First Samuel without a break in the narrative. In First Samuel David was being prepared for the kingdom; in Second Samuel he is ruling upon the throne. The book does not give a complete history or a chronological account of the time. Much of the forty years of his reign is passed over in silence, and the events that are recorded do not all come in chronological order. It is not so much David's reign as King David himself that is the theme of the book.

David is one of the most important characters in the Bible. He stands with Abraham and Moses as one of the three pre-eminent figures in the Old Testament. Each of these men occupies a unique place. Through Abraham the covenant of grace was established. Through Moses the Law was introduced. Through David the Messianic kingdom was promised, in which both the covenant of grace and the Law were to be fulfilled. David is thus closely connected with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The book is in three main parts. The first part (Chs. 1-9) deals with David's rule as king, and gives the main features of his reign. The second part (Chs. 10-20) deals with his fall, and tells the story of his great sin and its tragic consequences. The third part (Chs. 21-24) records some of his acts, illustrating the theocratic character of his reign. From this we get the following outline:

- I. David's Rule as King—Chs. 1-9
  - 1. King over Judah Alone (Chs. 1-4)
  - 2. King over All Israel (Chs. 5-9)
- II. King David's Fall—Chs. 10-20
  - 1. His Sin and Repentance (Chs. 10-12)
  - 2. Sin and Crime among his Sons  
(Chs. 13-14)
  - 3. The Rebellion of Absalom (Chs. 15-18)
  - 4. His Restoration to the Throne  
(Chs. 19-20)
- II. David's Theocratic Acts—Chs. 21-24

#### DAVID KING OVER JUDAH (Chs. 1-4)

The events recorded in the first main division of the book (Chs. 1-9) reveal the kingly qualities of David's character, and set forth the significance of his reign in the progress and development of God's purpose with Israel. After Saul's death the tribe of Judah anointed David king at Hebron, and he reigned there seven years and six months (2:11). The first four chapters cover these years, and the incidents they record bring out David's magnanimity.

1. His Grief over Saul and Jonathan (Ch. 1). When the news of their death was brought to him (vs. 1-10), the sorrow he showed was genuine (vs. 11-16). Its depth and sincerity are manifest in the lamentation he subsequently composed over them, which contains a very tender reference to the friendship between himself and Jonathan (vs. 17-27).

2. Made King in Hebron (Ch. 2). David's characteristic principle of life is manifested in his first

act; he sought to know the Lord's will before taking any step (v. 1). When he went up to Hebron the men of Judah came, and there they made him their king (vs. 2-4). His large-hearted and sympathetic nature is revealed in the message he sent to the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had buried Saul (vs. 4-7).

The northern tribes, under the leadership of Abner, Saul's general, adhered to the house of Saul, and, apparently after some time had elapsed, made his son Ishbosheth their king (vs. 8-11). This brought on a conflict at Gibeon between a band of men under Abner and a band under Joab, David's general, in which Abner, though defeated, slew Asahel, Joab's younger brother, who had persisted in pursuing him after the battle (vs. 12-32).

3. Civil War in the Land (Chs. 3-4). A long war ensued between the house of Saul and the house of David, in the course of which Ishbosheth accused Abner of ambitious designs (3:1-11). Indignant at the charge, Abner sought to make a league with David, who demanded first the return of Michal his wife (3:12-16). He used his powerful influence with the elders of Israel, and was arranging with David at Hebron to bring them over to him, when he was treacherously slain by Joab in revenge for the death of Asahel (3:17-27). The grief and distress which David expressed over the murder of Abner was so manifestly genuine that it brought him still greater favour with the people (3:28-39).

After a reign of two years (2:10), Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was treacherously slain by two of his captains, who thought to win David's favour thereby (4:1-8); but David had them at once put to death (4:9-12).

DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL  
(Chs. 5-9)

David had made no attempt to force himself upon the other tribes, but waited on God to bring him to the throne of Israel. He had so commended himself to the people since the tribe of Judah had made him king that at last all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. He made a covenant with them, and was anointed king of the whole nation. His reign continued for thirty-three years more (5: 1-5). This section traces the growth of his kingdom and shows its real greatness.

1. Making Jerusalem his Capital (Ch. 5). David's wisdom and statesmanship were shown in choosing his capital. He captured the stronghold of Zion, which is mentioned here for the first time, and established his house and family in Jerusalem (vs. 6-16). He defeated the Philistines, who came up twice against him when they heard that he had been made king (vs. 17-25). David followed the same principle in his reign over Israel as in his reign over Judah; when some action had to be taken he first "enquired of Jehovah" (vs. 19, 23). He was founding his throne upon the will of God.

2. Making Jerusalem the Centre of Worship (Ch. 6). David now proceeded to make Jerusalem the religious centre for the nation by bringing up the Ark. The failure of the first attempt taught David a lesson: reverence was due to the symbol of the Divine Presence (vs. 1-11). After three months it was brought into the city of David, with manifestations of great rejoicing, in which the king took part (vs. 12-19). Michal, Saul's daughter, revealed her utter lack of sympathy with David's



religious enthusiasm, and was justly punished by him (vs. 20-23).

3. Planning for a Temple (Ch. 7). When his wars were done, David planned to build a temple for the Ark of the Lord, and Nathan the prophet at first commended him for it (vs. 1-3). Afterwards the Lord sent a message through Nathan, telling the king that he was not the chosen instrument for this purpose (vs. 4-7). The Lord had raised him up to be ruler of His people, and would make his name great and establish his house (vs. 8-11). After David's death the Lord would set up his son and establish his kingdom; and his son should build a house for the Lord. Through him David's house and throne should be established for ever (vs. 12-17).

The separate details of this promise show that it was related primarily to Solomon, and had a certain fulfilment in him and his reign; but that it pointed beyond his time to the eternal continuance of David's posterity in Jesus Christ, and, beyond the earthly temple which Solomon was to build, to the spiritual temple of the Church which Christ would build (John 2:19; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5).

David accepted this message by going in before the Ark and offering a humble prayer of thanksgiving and praise (vs. 18-29). His prayer is recorded at length, and it shows that the Lord's promise had made a profound impression upon him. He evidently understood it as giving his house and his throne a peculiar place of everlasting continuance in the great purpose of redemption which God was carrying on through the ages.

The language in which David expressed his wonder at God's great goodness to him contains a re-

markable utterance: "And this too after the manner of men, O Lord Jehovah?" (v. 19). The marginal reading is, "And is this the law of man, O Lord Jehovah?" Literally the words are: "And this the law of the man". No explanation of this obscure passage can account for the depth of feeling in David's heart which does not see here a reference to the coming Redeemer, the promised Messiah. The parallel passage in 1 Chron. 17:17 is also obscure, but it has the same implication. It may be rendered: "Thou hast looked upon me according to the order of the man that is from above", that is, "the man that is to come".

4. David's Conquests (Ch. 8). A summary of his various conquests is now given. His enemies were subdued on every side, and the borders of the kingdom were extended (vs. 1-14). The kingdom of Israel, which had fallen into confusion under Saul, was fully established under David. Twice the statement is made: "Jehovah gave victory to David whithersoever he went". The chapter closes with a list of his officers of state (vs. 15-18).

5. His Kindness to Jonathan's Son (Ch. 9). Success had not spoiled David, nor injured the tender qualities of his spirit. He enquired if any of Saul's house were left; and learning of Mephibosheth, a cripple, he restored Saul's lands to him and gave him an honoured place at his own table.

#### DAVID'S SIN AND REPENTANCE

(Chs. 10-12)

The Bible does not conceal or excuse the sins of its great men, even in the case of the man after God's own heart. It always paints sin in its true

colours. David had been enjoying unbroken prosperity, and he began to take life more easily. During a war with Ammon, he sent Joab out to battle while he yielded to the indulgence of his palace (11:1). This was the beginning of his downfall.

1. Wars with Ammon and Syria (Ch. 10). David's ambassadors, carrying his greetings to the new king of the Ammonites, were treated with a cowardly insult (vs. 1-5). This brought on a war in which the Ammonites secured the help of the Syrians. Joab defeated the allied armies and drove the Ammonites into their capital (vs. 6-14), while David proceeded to bring the Syrians into subjection (vs. 15-19).

2. The Great Sin (Ch. 11). In the campaign of the following year, instead of taking his proper place in the field during the siege of the Ammonite capital, David tarried at Jerusalem, relaxed his watchfulness, and failed to enquire of the Lord as he had done in the past. He yielded to self-indulgence, and then there followed in quick succession covetousness, adultery, treachery, hypocrisy, and murder.

3. The Genuine Repentance (Ch. 12). The prophet Nathan, sent by the Lord to reprove David, brought his sin before him by means of a parable, and announced that it should have a series of dire consequences in his kingdom (vs. 1-12). David repented at once and acknowledged his sin. In this he differed from Saul, who stubbornly refused the Lord's correction. He sinned grievously, but he repented sincerely. His sin was at once forgiven, but its consequences were still to follow (vs. 13-14).

David's ready acceptance of the stroke by which God refused to answer his prayer regarding Bath-

sheba's child, shows both the sincerity of his repentance and the depth of his faith (vs. 15-23). This is followed by the record of the birth of Solomon, which was a token of David's restoration to the Lord's favour (vs. 24-25). In the meantime a message from Joab, implying a rebuke for his self-indulgence, called David to the field to complete the subjugation of the Ammonites (vs. 26-31). The last verse describes the kind of slavery under which David put the inhabitants of the city. He set them to work with saws and harrows of iron and axes of iron, and made them labour at brick-making.

#### SIN AND CRIME AMONG DAVID'S SONS (Chs. 13-14)

Here begin the consequences of David's sin. The same sins he had committed reappear in his own family. Amnon's sin against Tamar, Absalom's sister (13:1-22), was followed by Absalom's murder of Amnon and his exile (13:23-39). Joab resorted to a device to secure Absalom's recall to Jerusalem (14:1-24), and, after two years, his reconciliation with the king (14:25-33).

Signs of weakness in David's character appear in the course of these incidents. When he learned of Amnon's sin he was wroth, but that was all. When he heard of Amnon's murder he was overcome, but made no attempt to punish Absalom or bring him to justice. He received Absalom back into favour with no sign of repentance on the part of the murderer.

NOTE: The meaning of 13:39 is obscure. The Septuagint reads: "King David desisted from going forth against Absalom". This is more consistent

with the context and with the circumstances, and is probably the real meaning of the passage. David ought to have arrested and punished Absalom at once, but Absalom's flight made this difficult. Then as time went by, "David was comforted concerning Amnon". In accordance with this, the more probable meaning of 14:1 is that Joab perceived that "the king's heart was against Absalom". Otherwise his stratagem to obtain the fugitive's recall would have been unnecessary. Joab seems to have repeatedly interceded for Absalom (14:19-22).

#### THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM (Chs. 15-18)

The consequences of David's sin reached their culmination in the temporary loss of his throne as a result of the rebellion of his own son. Both the weakness and the strength of his character are manifested in this story. No event in the Bible, except the crucifixion of Christ, is recorded with so much detail as is found here.

1. Absalom's Conspiracy (15:1-12). For four years he plotted with unscrupulous cunning to draw away the allegiance of the people from David to himself. Then he withdrew to Hebron on the pretext of paying a vow, and sent spies throughout all the tribes to be ready to proclaim him king. Ahithophel, the wisest of David's counsellors, was involved in the conspiracy.

2. David's Flight (15:13 - 16:14). These are the most pathetic scenes in all David's history. He went out accompanied by his friends and overwhelmed with sorrow; and yet he showed his faith in God by sending back the priests with the Ark,

and his foresight by sending back Hushai to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (15:13-37). The cursing and shame heaped upon him by Shimei in the course of his flight was accepted by him as from the chastening hand of God, and he forbade his men to slay Shimei (16:1-14).

3. Absalom in Jerusalem (16:15 - 17:23). He entered the city with all his forces accompanied by Ahithophel, and was received by Hushai. Acting on the counsel of Ahithophel, Absalom established himself publicly in the king's household and in his father's place (16:15-23). Ahithophel urged further that an attack should be made upon David at once, but Hushai persuaded Absalom to reject this counsel as dangerous, for David was now "as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field". Let all Israel be gathered to Absalom first, and then he should lead them to battle himself (17:1-14). Thus Hushai secured time for David to escape over the Jordan; and Ahithophel, seeing his counsel rejected, committed suicide (17:15-23).

4. Absalom's Defeat and Death (17:24 - 18:33). David rallied his forces at Mahanaim, while Absalom gathered the men of Israel and led them over the Jordan into Gilead (17:24-29). David showed his military genius in the way he organized his forces, and his characteristic weakness in urging them, as they went forth into the field, to deal gently with his son (18:1-5). The battle, which spread over the country, came to an end with Absalom's death at the hands of Joab. David's stern and clear-sighted general understood the king's weakness too well. He knew that with Absalom put out of the way the rebellion would collapse, and he called his men back from the pursuit (18:6-18).

When news of the victory reached David, he showed concern only for the fate of "the young man Absalom" (18:19-30). The results of his sin reached their culmination, and his sorrow reached its profoundest depth, in his agonizing wail (18:31-33). Five times in the course of it he repeats the words "my son": the father recognizes himself as reproduced in Absalom. And then comes the deepest cry of all: "Would God I had died for thee".

DAVID'S RESTORATION TO THE THRONE  
(Chs. 19-20)

Joab reproved David for his excessive grief, which was affecting the spirit of his people, and recalled him to his duty as king (19:1-10). But David showed further weakness, and sowed seeds of later trouble, in secretly appealing to his own tribe of Judah alone to bring him back, and in seeking to displace Joab by the appointment of Amasa who had been Absalom's general (19:11-15). He showed the better side of his character in the way he received Shimei (19:16-23), Mephibosheth (19:24-30), and Barzillai (19:31-39).

The manner of his return caused a dispute between the men of Israel and the men of Judah (19:40-43), which gave occasion for Sheba, a Benjamite, to stir up a rebellion (20:1-3). This was the first attempt to divide the country, and it boded ill for the future. David called upon Amasa to rally the men of Judah; but Amasa delayed in carrying out the order, with the result that Abishai and Joab put down the rebellion; and, during the pursuit of Sheba, Joab treacherously murdered Amasa (20:4-22). The section closes with a list of David's officers of state after he was restored to the throne (20:23-26).

DAVID'S THEOCRATIC ACTS  
(Chs. 21-24)

The account of David's reign really ends with his re-establishment on the throne after the rebellion of Absalom. These chapters form a kind of appendix, intended to illustrate some features of his character and some aspects of his reign. Two incidents, those of the famine (ch. 21) and the pestilence (ch. 24), reveal certain principles of justice and retribution in the government of God, of which the kingdom of David was a type, and to which it was closely related. David's reign was really theocratic; his rule was under the direct government of God.

1. The Avenging of the Gibeonites (21:1-14). A famine which continued for three years led David to ask the Lord for the reason of it. It was because of the blood-guilt that Saul had brought upon the land in violating the covenant made with the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua (Josh 9:15). The nation was held accountable for the acts of its ruler. The crime was expiated by the execution of seven of the sons of Saul at the hands of the Gibeonites. This delay in the punishment of a sin that was committed back in Saul's reign emphasized the continuity of the nation's life and its continued responsibility before God from age to age.

2. David's Heroes (21:15-22). Some exploits are recorded here which David's warriors performed against the Philistines, showing the heroic spirit that he inspired in his men.

3. His Psalm of Praise (Ch. 22). This is the 18th Psalm in the Psalter with some variations. It is David's hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord for giving him victory in war and establishing him upon



the throne. Here the deepest things in his character are revealed. The Lord is declared to be the source of all his strength. Everything of value in his life is traced back to God.

4. His Last Words (23:1-7). Following his great hymn comes this testimony of his confidence in the fulfilment of God's promise to him regarding his kingdom (7:12-16). It is a prophetic statement, indicating the spiritual bearing and import of his reign.

5. His Mighty Men (23:8-39). A list of the warriors of David's invincible army and some of their exploits. This passage illustrates one of the elements of his essential greatness. He could attach men to himself by strong personal ties and make heroes of them. He had the great gift of true leadership: he could inspire devotion on the part of his followers.

6. The Numbering of the People (Ch. 24). This was the final mistake of David's reign. He insisted on a census of the people, which Joab carried out under protest. Its motive was pride and vainglory, ambition to found a military monarchy (vs. 1-9). It was trusting in numbers instead of glorying in the Lord. When it was over, David realized his sin in the matter, and made confession and sought forgiveness (v. 10).

The prophet Gad was sent to offer him a choice of three evils as a punishment. David chose the stroke that came most directly from the hand of God, thus showing his faith and his submission to God's chastening (vs. 11-14). The fatal pestilence which swept through the whole land was stayed at the threshing floor of Araunah (vs. 15-17), and, at the command of God, David built an altar there,

thus turning an occasion of judgment into one of worship (vs. 18-25).

All this happened because "the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel" (v. 1). Some national sin, probably the rebellion of Absalom followed by that of Sheba, was the reason why God allowed David to yield to national ambition and set those hidden forces in motion which bring national retribution. In the parallel account in 1 Chron. 21, Satan is revealed as the active agent inciting David's ambition (v. 1). But the sovereign God overruled it for His own purposes of righteousness and judgment.

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#### THE FOUNDER OF THE KINGDOM

This book is occupied entirely with King David. His story is given with a wealth of detail found in the case of no other Old Testament character. David was the national hero, the ideal ruler of Israel, who had no worthy successor except the Messiah Himself.

The qualities of his character which combined to make him so great a king were these: (1) His trust in God. He waited on God's time for coming to the throne. He enquired of God in making his plans and carrying them out. He regarded himself as God's servant, and his office as that of shepherding God's people. (2) His human sympathy. He had a large heart and a many-sided nature. He was tactful and generous in dealing with all kinds of men. He secured the personal devotion of all classes of his people. (3) His sincerity. His motives were not

selfish, nor his purposes self-centred. There was no hypocrisy in his actions. His sorrow and grief, his joy and praise, were sincere; and his people knew this. (4) His contrition. After his great sin his repentance was deep and genuine. He accepted without rebellion the chastening judgment of God.

The Scriptures associate David in the closest way with the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham and David form the two most important links in the ancestry of Jesus (Matt. 1:1). The promise to David regarding his seed (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14) looked forward to Jesus Christ as perpetuating for ever both his house and his throne. David's house was established for ever by the Incarnation, and his throne by the Resurrection and Ascension.

When Jesus was born in the family of David (Luke 1:27; 2:4), "the tabernacle of David", which had fallen down, was thus built again (Acts 15:15-16; Amos 9:11); and his posterity became eternal. The angel who announced the coming birth of Jesus declared that the Lord was to give unto Him the throne of His father David (Luke 1:32-33). On the day of Pentecost, Peter explained the promise about David's throne as having been fulfilled in the exaltation of Jesus Christ to the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-36). The throne of David was not the royal seat on which he sat, but the fundamental and constitutional principle by which he ruled: it was the administration of the will of God. He established his throne upon God's will (Acts 13:22, 36), and not upon his own will as Saul had attempted to do.

Jesus declared that He had come down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of God who sent Him (John 6:36). He carried out this principle throughout His whole earthly life. By His

resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, He has been placed upon the Throne from which the will of God is administered in Heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). This was Peter's meaning, and Paul's teaching agrees with it. In 1 Cor. 15, where the Apostle explains the significance of the resurrection of Christ, he refers to His administration of the Kingdom, and declares that He shall continue to reign till all enemies are put under His feet (vs. 24-25). Thus the New Testament teaches that the promise to David has been already fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

THE Books of Kings continue the history of the monarchy begun in the Books of Samuel, and carry it down to the fall and captivity of both the northern and the southern parts of the kingdom. They cover a period of more than four hundred years, from the accession of Solomon just before 1000 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. While they tell the story of the kings of Israel and Judah, their purpose is not to record a complete history of these reigns, but to set forth the great struggle that went on during all this age between loyalty to the Lord on the one hand and apostasy and idolatry on the other. This explains why long periods and important reigns are often passed over with little notice, while other parts of the history are treated with elaborate detail. In First Kings the monarchy is seen in its glory and power; in Second Kings it is seen in its decline and fall.

The First Book of Kings begins with the accession of Solomon and the death of David, and carries the record down to the death of Ahab, under whom the apostasy of Northern Israel came to a head. It may be taken in two equal parts, the first part (Chs. 1-11) dealing with the reign of Solomon, and the second part (Chs. 12-22) with the divided kingdom. Thus we get the following outline:

- I. The Reign of Solomon—Chs. 1-11
  1. Its Fair Beginning (Chs. 1-4)
  2. Its Crowning Work (Chs. 5-9)
  3. Its Clouded Close (Chs. 10-11)

## II. The Divided Kingdom—Chs. 12-22

1. The Disruption of the Nation (Chs. 12-16)
2. The Ministry of Elijah (Chs. 17-22)

THE BEGINNING OF SOLOMON'S REIGN  
(Chs. 1-4)

This section begins with an account of the events which led to Solomon being proclaimed king before the death of David, and then goes on to tell how his throne was established and to describe the special features of his reign.

1. Solomon's Accession to the Throne (Ch. 1). When David's strength was failing, Adonijah, a son whom he had always indulged, attempted to seize the throne with the support of Joab and Abiathar (vs. 1-10). Bathsheba and Nathan informed the king of the conspiracy (vs. 11-27), and David showed his old-time energy by issuing a royal command to have Solomon proclaimed and anointed king at once. This was carried out amid great public rejoicing (vs. 28-40). The conspiracy collapsed, and Adonijah, in fear of his life, sought refuge at the altar. Solomon treated him with royal clemency and dismissed him to his house with dignified authority (vs. 41-53).

2. Solomon's Throne Established (Ch. 2). Before his death, David gave a final charge to Solomon regarding the throne (vs. 1-4), together with some special commissions (vs. 5-9). After his death, Solomon was securely established on the throne of his father (vs. 10-12). He showed his royal qualities of fairness and decision in the way he dealt with Adonijah, who was showing further signs of ambition (vs. 13-25); with Abiathar and Joab, who

were both involved in the conspiracy (vs. 26-35); and with Shimei, who had shown treachery to David (vs. 36-46). In his acts of judgment there was no vindictive vengeance, and yet no vacillating weakness.

3. Solomon's Gift of Wisdom (Ch. 3). Solomon showed devotion to the Lord early in his reign by a great sacrifice at Gibeon, where the Tabernacle was located at the time. There the Lord appeared to him with a special offer, and Solomon showed true humility in asking to be given the wisdom he needed for the administration of justice and judgment among his people (vs. 1-9). The Lord gave him that in a supreme measure, and riches and honour besides (vs. 10-15). The incident which follows illustrates the kind of wisdom given to Solomon, that intuitive discernment which goes at once to the heart of a matter (vs. 16-28).

4. Solomon's Glory and Greatness (Ch. 4). This chapter describes Solomon's system of government. It names the heads of the various departments of state (vs. 1-6), and the officers who presided over the twelve districts into which the country was divided and made provision for the king's luxurious table (vs. 7-19). It describes the peace and prosperity of the people and the splendour of the court (vs. 20-28), and the wisdom and fame of the king (vs. 29-34).

All this shows how thoroughly Solomon had organized the kingdom and how fully God had made good His promise to David. Now for the first time did Israel enter into full possession and enjoyment of the land promised to Abraham. The literal fulfilment of the outward and earthly promises was a pledge and assurance of the spiritual and heavenly realities of which they were the symbol and type.

THE CROWNING WORK OF HIS REIGN  
(Chs. 5-9)

When Solomon's kingdom was established, he turned his attention to David's plan for the Temple of the Lord. These chapters are almost entirely concerned with the carrying out of this purpose, which was the great work of his reign.

1. The Preparation for the Temple (Ch. 5). His first step was to inform David's friend, Hiram king of Tyre, of his purpose to send to him for timber from Lebanon (vs. 1-6). Hiram gladly responded to Solomon's request, and the two kings made a trade league together (vs. 7-12). Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel to carry out the task of preparing the material for the building (vs. 13-18).

2. The Building of the Temple (Ch. 6). The date when the building began is given as 480 years after the exodus from Egypt (v. 1). The Septuagint reading here is 440 years, which would place this important epoch in Israel's history just about 1000 B.C. The chapter contains a general account of the erection of the Temple (vs. 2-10), the Lord's promise to Solomon concerning it (vs. 11-13), and a special description of the inner sanctuary (vs. 14-36).

This was on the same plan as the Tabernacle and was exactly twice its size. The Holy-place was forty cubits long, twenty wide, and twenty high. The Holy-of-holies, called here the Oracle, was twenty cubits every way. The walls, floor, and ceiling of the sanctuary were all overlaid with gold. The time taken to build the house was seven years (vs. 37-38). The process of building went on in impressive silence, fitly foreshadowing the building of its anti-type, the spiritual temple (v. 7; Eph. 2:19-22).



3. The Furnishing of the Temple (Ch. 7). The account is interrupted here to tell of the building of Solomon's own house, which took thirteen years (vs. 1-12). Then the chapter goes on to give a graphic and elaborate description of the work of the artificer, Hiram of Tyre, in making the brazen furnishings for the Temple. The two pillars of brass set at the porch (vs. 13-22) were not for the support of the roof, but were probably free-standing columns with cressets at the top for holding fire and giving light. They may have been memorials of the pillar of fire.

The great laver, or "molten sea", stood on twelve oxen (vs. 23-26), and there were also ten smaller lavers of brass set on ten bases, five on each side of the court (vs. 27-39). The casting of all the brazen vessels and their ornaments was done in the plain of the Jordan, and no account was kept of the amount of brass used (vs. 40-47). Solomon had the furniture and the vessels used in the actual sanctuary itself all made of pure gold (vs. 48-51).

4. The Dedication of the Temple (Ch. 8). Solomon assembled the elders and representatives of all Israel for the consecration services in the seventh month. Throughout the ceremonies he acted alone, a type of the true "son of David". The Ark of the Covenant was brought up out of the city of David, and, when it was placed in the innermost shrine, the glory of the Lord filled the house (vs. 1-11). Solomon then blessed the assembled people, and told them that in the erection of the Temple the Lord's promise to David his father had been established (vs. 12-21).

Then followed his prayer of consecration as he stood before the altar with hands spread forth toward heaven (v. 22). For sublimity and compre-

hensiveness, for humility and faith, it has no parallel in the Old Testament. It is composed of an introduction recognizing the spirituality and omnipresence of God (vs. 23-30), and seven petitions, each heading up in the same repeated appeal: "Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place" (vs. 31-53). After his prayer Solomon blessed the assembly of Israel again (vs. 54-61). Then came the offerings and the feast; and the people returned to their homes full of joy and gladness (vs. 62-66). This ceremony, which took place in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, was the crowning point of Solomon's reign.

5. Subsequent Events (Ch. 9). When Solomon had finished the Temple and his own palace, God appeared to him for the second time and repeated His promise to establish his throne, adding a warning lest he should turn away from the Lord (vs. 1-9). Solomon gave Hiram king of Tyre twenty cities in Galilee for the help he had received from him, but Hiram was not pleased with them (vs. 10-14). He built many cities for different purposes throughout his kingdom by compelling the remnant of the Canaanites left in the land to perform tributary service (vs. 15-25). He built a navy at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea in the land of Edom and got sailors from Hiram to man his ships (vs. 26-28). Throughout this chapter there is a subdued feeling that behind all the material prosperity of Solomon's reign there were elements of weakness and failure.

#### THE CLOUDED CLOSE OF HIS REIGN

(Chs. 10-11)

The increasing wealth and luxury with which Solomon surrounded himself turned his heart away

from the Lord at last. His very fame led to his undoing.

1. Worldly Glory (Ch. 10). The widespread fame of Solomon brought a visit from the queen of Sheba in the south of Arabia, who was profoundly impressed by what she saw and heard. The story illustrates the magnificent splendour of the court and the wonderful wisdom of the king (vs. 1-13). It is followed by a more detailed account of the glory of Solomon (vs. 14-29). But it was the glory of this world alone.

2. Moral Failure (Ch. 11). Early in his reign Solomon made an alliance with Egypt and married the daughter of Pharaoh (2:1). Now we are told that he took many foreign wives, and that they turned his heart away from the Lord. He set up the abominations of idolatry as places of worship for his heathen wives (vs. 1-8). "His heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God . . . . He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." The Lord was angry with Solomon for his apostasy, and announced, as a judgment upon him, the rending of his kingdom in the days of his son (vs. 9-13).

This judgment began to operate during his own life-time in a number of adversaries being raised up against him: Hadad the Edomite (vs. 14-22), and Rezon (vs. 23-25), and especially Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had been one of Solomon's chief workmen. Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, and he had been told by the prophet Ahijah of the Lord's purpose to rend the kingdom of Solomon and give ten tribes to Jeroboam himself (vs. 26-40).

Solomon died after a reign of forty years, which closed in a cloud of God's displeasure (vs. 41-43). The most highly gifted man of Old Testament his-

tory in natural ability and worldly opportunity proved a failure in the end. The splendid and stately figure of Solomon, who is almost impersonal in his grandeur and magnificence, stands out in the sacred record as the supreme example of the peril of worldly prosperity and the insufficiency of human wisdom.

### THE DISRUPTION OF THE NATION (Chs. 12-16)

This section gives an account of the rebellion of the ten tribes and the origin of the northern kingdom of Israel, and then traces the results of this event in the corruption of the state down to the beginning of the reign of Ahab, a period of about sixty years.

1. The Rebellion of Jeroboam (12:1-24). Its immediate cause was the folly of the new king, Rehoboam, in taking the advice of the companions of his youth and rejecting that of the older and wiser men, and thus refusing the request of Jeroboam and the men of Israel to lighten the burdens imposed upon them in his father's reign (vs. 1-15). Behind it as a further cause was the long-standing jealousy of the northern tribes, especially Ephraim, over the rise and prominence of Judah. They rebelled against Rehoboam with the cry, "What portion have we in David?", and sent for Jeroboam to be their king (vs. 16-20). It was the Lord's way of carrying out the judgment He had foretold through Ahijah the Shilonite (v. 15). Rehoboam was forbidden of God through another prophet to fight against his brethren of Israel (vs. 21-24). From this time on the name "Israel" usually refers to the

northern kingdom to distinguish it from the southern kingdom to which the name "Judah" is given.

2. The Sin of Jeroboam (12:25 - 13:34). This consisted in setting up high places at Bethel and Dan with a golden calf in each of them as an object of worship. He may have got the idea in Egypt where he spent some time after fleeing from Solomon (1 Kings 11:40), for calf worship prevailed there. His purpose was to keep the people of Northern Israel from going up to the Temple at Jerusalem at the stated feasts, and to make worship easy for them (12:25-33). Perhaps he did not intend to set up actual idolatry at once, but he abandoned the appointed way of approach to God with its significant symbolism, and established another "devised of his own heart". From this time he is described as, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin". All his successors followed in his steps, and Israel never returned to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

A warning of Divine judgment was sent him through a man of God from Judah as he was engaged in an act of worship at Bethel (13:1-10). The confusion introduced into the religious life of the nation by the disruption is revealed in the way this unnamed prophet was deceived by an old prophet of Bethel, and met his death through disobeying the instructions of the Lord on his way back to Judah (13:11-32). The warning failed to have an effect upon Jeroboam, for he went on in his evil way (13:33-34).

3. Warnings of National Judgment (Ch. 14). This chapter completes the account of Jeroboam's reign in Israel (vs. 1-20) and Rehoboam's in Judah (vs. 21-31). The sickness and death of Jeroboam's

son was the beginning of judgment upon his house. Judah also was turning away from the Lord into gross idolatry and sin, and Shishak's capture of Jerusalem and plunder of the Temple gave a warning to that kingdom.

4. The Course of National Apostasy (Chs. 15-16). These chapters cover the reigns of Abijam and Asa in Judah (15:1-24), and of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri in Israel (15:25 - 16:28), and carry the story down into the reign of Ahab (16:29-34). It was a dark period, filled with continual war between the two kingdoms, constant revolution and bloodshed in Northern Israel, and deepening apostasy until Ahab's marriage with Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, led to the vile worship of Baal being set up in Samaria, the new city which had been founded by Omri as the capital of the kingdom. It is declared that Ahab "did evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him", and "did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him".

During his long reign of forty-one years in Judah, the good king Asa saw no fewer than eight kings of four rival dynasties on the throne of Israel, most of whom were military adventurers reaching the throne by the murder of their predecessors. There was a remnant in Jerusalem loyal to the Divine government (15:4), and this remnant held in check the development of evil in the southern kingdom (cf. 2 Kings 8:19).

THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH  
(Chs. 17-22)

In the midst of the darkest period of Israel's apostasy, the grand and rugged figure of the prophet Elijah suddenly appeared upon the scene. His mission was to rouse the nation from its sin and seek to bring it back to God. His character is revealed in the characteristic expression with which he made his prophetic announcements: "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand" (17:1; 18:10, 15). From this point onward the prophetic order holds the most important place in God's government of the nation.

1. The Great Drought (Ch. 17). The prophet's sudden appearance and dramatic announcement in the court of Ahab (v. 1) followed a period of fervent prayer on his part (Jas. 5:17), that the Lord would vindicate His own honour in the eyes of the nation by withholding the rain in fulfilment of the warning given in the Law (Deut. 11:13-17). During the drought the Lord provided for His servant, first in the solitude of the brook Cherith where he was daily dependent upon God (vs. 2-7), and then in the home of a poor widow at Zarephath, whose daily bread he shared and miraculously maintained, and whose son he restored to life (vs. 8-24).

2. The Contest on Carmel (Ch. 18). After three years Elijah suddenly reappeared and commanded Ahab to summon the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel (vs. 1-19). Then there occurred one of the grandest and most spectacular scenes in Old Testament history. The story makes the false religious frenzy of the heathen prophets stand out in striking contrast with the calm, confident faith of Elijah.

The Lord was triumphantly manifested in the fire that consumed the prophet's sacrifice (vs. 20-40). After this the rain came in answer to his prayer (Jas. 5:18), and he outran Ahab's chariot across the plain to Jezreel, a distance of about ten miles (vs. 41-46).

3. Elijah's Discouragement (Ch. 19). When Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah's faith and courage faltered under the great physical and spiritual strain through which he had passed, and he fled south to Beersheba, where he was strengthened by an angel, and on to Mount Horeb where the covenant of the Law, now broken by the people, had been given (vs. 1-8). There he received a fresh revelation from God, showing him that the destructive forces of judgment represented by the wind, the earthquake, and the fire were only preliminary to the real work of the Lord which was done by the gentle, silent ministry of the Spirit (vs. 9-14). He was sent back with a new commission, which indicated that judgment was still to continue; and he began to carry it out by calling Elisha as his servant and successor (vs. 15-21).

4. Ahab's Further Failure (Ch. 20). Ben-hadad, king of Syria, invaded Israel two years in succession, and on both occasions God gave the Israelites a remarkable victory. This was an opportunity for Ahab to manifest loyalty to the Lord, for he had received encouragement and warning from one of the prophets, who had told him on each occasion that the Lord would deliver the Syrians into his hand (vs. 1-30). But he failed again. Yielding to vanity, Ahab made an alliance with the man whom the Lord had devoted to destruction and put into his power for that purpose. For this disobedience his



doom was announced by another unnamed prophet (vs. 31-43).

5. The Doom of the House of Ahab (Chs. 21-22). The story of Ahab's crime against Naboth brings out the utter selfishness of his character and the childish petulance of his behaviour (21:1-16). It brought Elijah again upon the scene, with the stern announcement of God's judgment upon the king and his whole house (21:17-26). The Divine mercy, which sought to follow Ahab all along, accepted his show of repentance and postponed the judgment beyond his reign (21:27-29).

Three years afterwards, in a new war with Syria, upon which Ahab entered for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead and in which he got the alliance of Jehoshaphat king of Judah (22:1-4), he showed his craving for the flattery of the false prophets and his unwillingness to consult a true prophet of the Lord (22:5-12). The baseness of his character was revealed in his mean treatment of the prophet Michaiah (22:13-28), and in his cowardly action toward his ally Jehoshaphat (22:29-33). Ahab went to his doom as Elijah had foretold (22:34-40), and Jehoshaphat went back to continue his righteous reign over Judah (22:41-53).

Throughout these chapters there is evidence that during Ahab's reign there were many faithful prophets and followers of the Lord in the land besides Elijah (18:3-4; 19:18; 20:13, 22, 35; 22: 7-8). God has never left himself without witnesses, even in the darkest times.

## THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

THE First Book of Kings ends with Ahab's son on the throne of Israel, continuing in the sins and apostasy of his father. The Second Book takes up the story and carries it down to the overthrow of the two kingdoms and the captivity of the entire nation. It is a story of national failure and Divine judgment. The great military empires of the age, Assyria and Babylon, were the instruments used of God in the chastisement of His chosen people. The northern kingdom was the first to fall, being destroyed by Assyria in 721 B.C. The southern kingdom fell finally at the hands of Babylon in 586 B.C.

Second Kings may be taken in three parts. The progress of apostasy and judgment was arrested for a time during the ministry of Elisha, which occupies the first part of the book (Chs. 1-10). The second part (Chs. 11-17) tells the story of the decline and fall of Israel, while carrying on the history of Judah also. The third part (Chs. 18-25) continues the story of Judah alone, and tells of its decline and fall. This gives us the following outline:

- I. The Ministry of Elisha—Chs. 1-10
  1. Elisha Succeeding Elijah (Chs. 1-2)
  2. Elisha's Beneficent Acts (Chs. 3-7)
  3. The Acts of Hazael and Jehu (Chs. 8-10)
- II. The Downfall of Israel—Chs. 11-17
  1. Reformation in Judah (Chs. 11-12)
  2. Iniquity in Israel (Chs. 13-15)
  3. The Assyrian Captivity (Chs. 16-17)

## III. The Downfall of Judah—Chs. 18-25

1. The Reign of Hezekiah (Chs. 18-20)
2. The Reforms of Josiah (Chs. 21-23)
3. The Babylonian Captivity (Chs. 24-25)

ELISHA SUCCEEDING ELIJAH  
(Chs. 1-2)

Elisha continued the work which Elijah had begun, but carried it on in a different way. He lived and moved among the people and was in closer touch with the common life of Israel than Elijah had been. He was the prophet of mercy and grace, while Elijah had been the prophet of warning and judgment. As Elijah foreshadowed John the Baptist, so Elisha's work foreshadowed the ministry of Him who went about doing good. He must have continued in the prophetic office for about half a century.

1. The Last Acts of Elijah (Ch. 1). They were in keeping with his whole ministry. Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, had ignored the God of Israel by sending messengers to enquire of the Philistine god of Ekron in his sickness. Elijah met them with a message from the Lord that the king would surely die (vs. 1-8). Ahaziah went on to challenge the Lord by sending three captains in succession, each with a band of fifty soldiers, to arrest Elijah. The prophet called down fire from heaven upon the first two captains and their bands, but when the third approached Elijah with due reverence, he went with him and announced the Divine judgment to the king himself; and it was soon fulfilled (vs. 9-18). It was not because of any moral guilt on the part of the captains and their bands that they were de-

stroyed, but because they were instruments of a will which opposed the will of the Lord.

2. The Translation of Elijah (2:1-14). The whole prophetic order was evidently aware that the removal of Elijah was about to take place in some supernatural way, as he made a farewell visit to one after another of the schools of the prophets over which he seems to have presided. Elisha persisted in accompanying his master till they passed over the Jordan, and then he requested a double portion of his spirit, that is, the portion of the first-born among the sons of the prophets, twice as great a share as any of the rest received. Elijah promised him this if Elisha should see him when he was taken from him into the unseen. And so it happened. Elijah was caught up into heaven in a way that was invisible to the common eyes of the sons of the prophets, but was visible to Elisha, who cried out as his master disappeared: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof". Thus he expressed what Elijah had been to the nation.

3. The First Acts of Elisha (2:15-25). When the sons of the prophets saw Elisha come back, dividing the waters of the Jordan as Elijah himself had done, they knew that the spirit of his master now rested upon him, and they recognized him at once as their head (vs. 15-18). The opening of his prophetic ministry was signalized by two miraculous acts, one of mercy (vs. 19-22), and the other of judgment (vs. 23-25). The "young lads" (not "little children", A.V.) on whom he invoked a curse showed a pagan irreverence towards the Lord God of Israel in their mockery of the prophet. They were old enough to be aware of the wickedness of their

conduct. They reflected the apostate spirit of the nation.

### ELISHA'S BENEFICENT ACTS

(Chs. 3-7)

Elisha's ministry was in many respects a striking contrast to Elijah's. Instead of appearing suddenly at critical moments with announcements of judgment, he moved up and down throughout the land, doing good and bringing blessing wherever he went. He was at the head of the schools of the prophets, and stood for the righteousness and honour of God against the wickedness and idolatry of the king. His influence overflowed the limits of Israel and extended into Syria.

Elisha's ministry was marked by an abundance of miracles, for it was a time of crisis in the history of Israel. Most of them were acts of mercy and helpfulness. The purpose of his prophetic office was to show that the Lord God of Israel was the living and true God, always able to help and save His people. The present section is composed mainly of a continuous series of Elisha's acts, comprising both public events and private and personal incidents.

The list is as follows: Providing abundance of water during a war against Moab and securing the defeat of the Moabites (ch. 3). Increasing the poor widow's supply of oil (4:1-7). Restoring the Shunammite's son to life (4:8-37). Healing the poisonous pottage and multiplying the loaves (4:38-44). Curing Naaman the Syrian general of leprosy, and smiting Gehazi, his own servant, with it (ch. 5). Recovering the axehead from the waters of the Jordan for one of the sons of the prophets (6:1-7).

Smiting the invading Syrians with temporary blindness (6:8-23).

A siege of Samaria by the Syrians had brought about a terrible state of famine in the city (6:24-31). The calm and strong faith of the prophet was manifest in his assurance of deliverance and in the word he sent to the king (6:32—7:2). His prediction was fulfilled next day when four lepers found that the Syrians had fled from their camp during the night in a great panic, leaving everything behind them (7:3-15). The record goes on to show how the event "came to pass as the man of God had spoken", both in the blessing that provided abundant food for the famishing people, and in the judgment that overtook the captain who disbelieved the words of "the man of God" (7:16-20). Thus did Elisha continually bear witness to the presence and power of the Lord God of Israel in the land.

#### THE ACTS OF HAZAEL AND JEHU (Chs. 8-10)

When the Lord commanded Elijah to call Elisha as his successor, He also commissioned him to anoint Hazael as king over Syria and Jehu as king over Israel (1 Kings 19:15-16). These men were to be used as His instruments of judgment upon the house of Ahab and the apostate nation. The time was now come for the execution of judgment, and Elisha carried out the commission which God had given to Elijah in regard to both these men. These chapters tell how they came to their respective thrones, and how the Divine judgment began to operate through them.

1. The Preparation for Judgment (Ch. 8). The

influence of Elisha at the court of Israel is seen in the restoration of the property of the Shunammite woman whose son he had raised (vs. 1-6). During a visit of Elisha to Damascus, the king of Syria sent Hazael to enquire of the prophet if he should recover from a sickness that he had. Elisha revealed his knowledge of Hazael's secret purpose to murder his master and his fore-knowledge of what he would do to Israel when he became king of Syria. Hazael carried out his treacherous design the next day, and thus usurped the throne of Syria (vs. 7-15). The rest of the chapter tells how the corruption which Ahab had brought upon Israel entered Judah after the reign of Jehoshaphat, through the marriage alliance of the royal house of David with the apostate house of Ahab (vs. 16-29).

2. **The Fall of the House of Ahab (Chs. 9-10).** The hour was now come for carrying out the sentence upon Ahab's house. Elisha sent one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, one of the captains of the army, as king of Israel, that through him the Lord might avenge the blood of His prophets whom Jezebel had slain (1 Kings 18:4), and destroy the whole house of Ahab (9:1-13). Jehu was a man of relentless character and swift action, and he headed a conspiracy which resulted in the death of both Joram king of Israel (9:14-26) and Ahaziah king of Judah (9:27-29). As he entered the gate of Jezreel, where Jezebel was living, she met the horrible doom that Elijah had foretold (9:30-37).

Jehu then proceeded to destroy all that were left of the house of Ahab (10:1-17), and all who worshipped in the temple of Baal (10:18-28). But Jehu followed the calf worship of Jeroboam, and,

although the Lord commended his zeal in destroying Baal worship, He manifested His displeasure by allowing Hazael king of Syria to overrun the land east of the Jordan (10:29-36).

#### REFORMATION IN JUDAH (Chs. 11-12)

After the death of Ahaziah king of Judah, the queen mother Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (8:18), usurped the throne and destroyed all the royal princes, except the infant Joash who was hidden by his aunt Jehosheba (11:1-3), the wife of the high priest Jehoiada (2 Chron. 22:11). After seven years, a revolution was organized and carried out by Jehoiada, in which Joash was made king (11:4-12) and Athaliah was slain (11:13-16). Under Jehoiada's leadership the Covenant with the Lord was renewed and Baal worship was destroyed amid the rejoicing of all the people (11:17-21). This event is significant as showing that the Mosaic priesthood occupied a place of leadership in Judah at this time.

In the course of his reign of forty years, Joash (Jehoash) had the Temple of the Lord repaired and its worship restored, the money for the work being raised by voluntary giving (12:1-16). Before the end of his reign, Hazael king of Syria threatened Jerusalem, and Joash showed great weakness in buying him off with the sacred treasures of the Temple. A conspiracy among his own servants resulted in his assassination (12:17-21). The reformation of Joash's reign arrested the corruption and decline of Judah which had set in under the influence of Athaliah.



INIQUITY IN ISRAEL  
(Chs. 13-15)

In the meantime the sin of the northern kingdom ran on through the reigns of Jehoahaz (13:1-9) and Jehoash (13:10-13) of the house of Jehu. In the reign of the latter occurred the death of the aged prophet Elisha, whose characteristic courage and confidence appear in the rebuke he gave the king in his last interview (13:14-21). In the same reign the Lord showed mercy and compassion to Israel in relieving them of the oppression of Hazael and giving them victory again (13:22-25).

When Amaziah, who had succeeded his father Joash on the throne of Judah (14:1-4), vaingloriously challenged Jehoash to come to battle (14:5-10), Judah was defeated and Jerusalem captured, and the treasures of the Temple and the king's house were taken to Samaria (14:11-16). Amaziah's reign ended, like his father's, with a conspiracy in which he was slain (14:17-22). During the long reign of Jeroboam II in Israel, the northern kingdom was extended to its widest limits and attained the height of its prosperity and power (14:23-29).

The kingdom of Judah enjoyed a long period of prosperity under the righteous reigns of Azariah, who is better known as Uzziah (15:1-7), and Jotham (15:32-38). But during the latter part of this period revolution and bloodshed prevailed in the kingdom of Israel. After the death of Jeroboam II, judgment overtook the house of Jehu (15:8-12). Then anarchy set in. Kings ascended the throne in quick succession through the murder of their predecessors (15:13-31). Of the five reigns in Israel

recorded in this chapter, four ended in conspiracy and violence. The nation was fast hurrying on to its doom.

### THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY (Chs. 16-17)

In the reign of Ahaz, who followed Jotham as king of Judah and introduced the abominations of idolatry into the land again (16:1-4), the kings of Syria and Israel combined to attack Jerusalem (16:5-6). Ahaz paid tribute to the king of Assyria to get his help against them (16:7-9), and went to meet Tiglath-pileser at Damascus. There he saw a heathen altar which took his fancy, and he sent a pattern of it to the high priest at Jerusalem, and had it set up for the sacrifices in the Temple and the brazen altar set aside (16:10-16). Then Ahaz went on to spoil the Temple of its ornamental work in order to provide a present for the king of Assyria (16:17-20). This alliance with Assyria brought dire consequences to Judah at a later date.

In the reign of Hoshea, the last but not the worst of the kings of Israel, the judgment long threatened fell upon the apostate nation. Assyrian kings had already twice invaded the borders of Israel, exacting tribute (15:19), capturing many cities and taking away their inhabitants (15:29). Hoshea stopped paying tribute and conspired with Egypt, and thus brought the Assyrians upon the land again. After a siege of three years, the capital city Samaria was taken, and the whole nation was carried away into the eastern lands of Assyria (17:1-6).

At this point in the story the course of Israel's sin is set forth in a striking passage, in which the

inspired writer points out the true cause of her downfall and doom (17:7-23). "It was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God (v. 7). . . . Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight" (v. 18). National disasters are due to moral and spiritual causes. Foreign people were brought in and placed in the land, and a mixed population grew up with a mixed form of worship (17:24-41). Thus originated the Samaritans of later days.

#### THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH (Chs. 18-20)

This was the crowning period in the history of Judah. Hezekiah was the best and greatest of her kings. He instituted at once a widespread and thorough religious reformation, and purged the land of idolatry (18:1-8). In the sixth year of his reign Samaria was taken and Northern Israel destroyed (18:9-12).

At a later period in his reign, Judah was overrun by the army of Sennacherib king of Assyria, and Hezekiah paid him tribute (18:13-16). Notwithstanding this, Sennacherib threatened to destroy Jerusalem and sent an army to demand its surrender. The city was delivered from this peril by a sudden intervention of the Lord. The story, which is told with elaborate detail, dwells upon the blasphemous and arrogant pride of the Assyrian general before the walls of Jerusalem (18:17-37), Hezekiah's devout appeal to Isaiah and the prophet's prediction of the fate of the Assyrian king (19:1-8), Sennacherib's further threatening message to Hezekiah and the king's humble prayer before the

Lord (19:9-19), the triumphant prophecy and assuring message of Isaiah (19:20-34), the sudden judgment on the Assyrian army and the subsequent assassination of the Assyrian king (19:35-37).

At another time Hezekiah was delivered from a serious illness and his life was prolonged, in answer to his tears and prayer (20:1-11). An embassy came from Babylon to congratulate him on his recovery, and Hezekiah, yielding to vanity, showed them the wealth and treasures of his kingdom (20:12-15). This brought a rebuke from Isaiah and the first prediction of the Babylonian captivity (20:16-21).

#### THE REFORMS OF JOSIAH (Chs. 21-23)

During the long and wicked reign of Manasseh, who succeeded Hezekiah, Judah was plunged into the deepest depths of apostasy and iniquity. The abominations of Baal worship and other idolatries were introduced even into the Temple of the Lord (21:1-9). The prophets testified against him, but Manasseh went on in his wickedness (21:10-18). The conditions of his reign were continued through the short reign of Amon (21:19-26).

Josiah, the last of the good kings of Judah, was only a child of eight when he came to the throne (22:1-2). When he grew older he undertook a series of reforms, the first of which was to repair and restore the Temple in his eighteenth year (22:3-7). In the course of this work, the high priest Hilkiyah discovered the Book of the Law. It was read before the king and had a profound effect upon him, because of its threatening of Divine wrath for na-

tional disobedience (22:8-13). He sent to enquire of the Lord through Huldah the prophetess, and received a message that these judgments would indeed fall upon the nation, but that he himself would be spared from seeing them and would die in peace (22:14-20).

Josiah gathered an assembly of the people to read the book to them and to renew the Covenant with the Lord (23:1-3). He had the Temple cleansed of all vessels that had been used for idolatrous purposes and rid of all idolatrous priests (23:4-14). He went through the land destroying all symbols of idolatry and all places of idolatrous worship, including Jeroboam's sanctuary at Bethel (23:15-20). Then the long-neglected Passover was again observed in Jerusalem (23:21-23). Josiah's reforms were more thorough-going than those of any other king (23:24-25).

But even this reformation, carried out with such great zeal and energy by Josiah, was too late to save the nation. The people were simply following the king's lead without any sense of penitence or any return to the Lord. They were too deeply sunk in depravity, too deeply affected with apostasy (23:26-27). Josiah died in battle at Megiddo (23:28-30), and the kings who followed him went back to the ways of wickedness. His son Jehoahaz, after an evil reign of three months, was removed by the king of Egypt, who put another son, Jehoiakim, on the throne, and exacted a heavy tribute (23:31-37). Judah's doom was at hand.

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY  
(Chs. 24-25)

The strokes of Divine judgment now fell in rapid succession. Jehoiakim submitted to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who had become the supreme world ruler by his defeat of Egypt at Carchemish in 605 B.C. During the evil reign of Jehoiakim the chastening hand of God was upon Judah, and bands of foreign foes kept invading and harassing the land (24:1-7). His son Jehoiachin succeeded him, but after three months Nebuchadnezzar a second time came to Jerusalem and captured the city. The king and ten thousand of the leading citizens, together with the treasures of the Temple and the palace, were removed to Babylon (24:8-16). Nebuchadnezzar left on the throne Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah; but he, too, at length rebelled (24:17-20).

And now the final judgment fell. Nebuchadnezzar came for the third time and laid siege to the city, which fell after a year and a half. The king sought to escape, but was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon (25:1-7). Then followed the complete destruction of the city and the Temple, and the carrying away of the rest of the people, only the poorest being left behind (25:8-21). Nebuchadnezzar made Gedaliah governor of those who remained in the land; but he and his whole court were slain by conspirators, and all the people, in fear, moved down to Egypt (25:22-26). Night had fallen upon the land of Judah.

The book closes with a final glimpse of hope, an account of the favour shown to Jehoiachin after thirty-seven years of captivity in a Babylonian

prison (25:27-30). It was a foreshadowing of the subsequent restoration of the house of David.

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### THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

The Books of Kings carry the history of Israel and Judah along together from the disruption to the fall of the northern kingdom, and then Judah remains alone to the end. There is much uncertainty in the chronology of the early part of this period, and the date of the disruption cannot be exactly determined. According to one method of reckoning, it may be placed at 965 B.C., which is about midway between the earliest and the latest possible dates. From this date the two kingdoms ran side by side till the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. Judah continued for a further period of 135 years till the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

During the two centuries and a half of Northern Israel's history, nineteen kings belonging to nine different dynasties reigned over the ten tribes. During the 380 years of Judah's history, nineteen kings of David's dynasty sat on the throne, and one queen who usurped the throne for a time. The two kingdoms were usually at enmity with each other, but there was one period when an alliance was maintained through several reigns. The relation of the two kingdoms is set forth in the following chronological outline:

I. A period of early antagonism for some sixty years, down to about 900 B.C. (1 Kings 12:1—16:28; 2 Chron. 10-16).

Kings of Israel: Jeroboam (22 years), Nadab (2

years), Baasha (24 years), Elah (2 years), Zimri (7 days), Omri (12 years).

Kings of Judah: Rehoboam (17 years), Abijam (3 years), Asa (41 years).

II. A period of alliance for some eighty years, to about 820 B.C. (1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 11:20; 2 Chron. 17-24).

Kings of Israel: Ahab (22 years), Ahaziah (2 years), Jehoram (12 years), Jehu (28 years), Jehoahaz (17 years).

Kings of Judah: Jehoshaphat (25 years), Jehoram (8 years), Ahaziah (1 year), Queen Athaliah (6 years), Joash (40 years).

Prophets in Israel: Elijah and Elisha.

III. A period of further antagonism for about one hundred years, to the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. (2 Kings 12-17; 2 Chron. 25-28).

Kings of Israel: Jehoash (16 years), Jeroboam II (41 years), Zechariah (6 months), Shallum (1 month), Menahem (10 years), Pekahiah (2 years), Pekah (20 years), Hoshea (9 years).

Kings of Judah: Amaziah (29 years), Uzziah (52 years), Jotham (16 years), Ahaz (16 years).

Prophets in Israel: Jonah, Amos, and Hosea.

Prophets in Judah: Joel, Isaiah, and Micah.

IV. The period of Judah alone for 135 years, to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 18-25; 2 Chron. 29-36).

Kings of the first reformation and subsequent decline: Hezekiah (29 years), Manasseh (55 years), Amon (2 years).

Prophets of the period: Isaiah and Micah.

Kings of the last reformation and final decline: Josiah (31 years), Jehoahaz (3 months), Jehoiakim



(11 years), Jehoiachin (3 months), Zedekiah (11 years).

Prophets of the period: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Jeremiah.

## THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

UP to this point the books of the Old Testament have followed one another in chronological order. They give a continuous history from Adam to the Babylonian captivity. The Books of Chronicles begin the record over again and are complete in themselves. They start with Adam, and carry the story down to the end of the captivity. The period from Adam to David is covered by genealogies, and the period from David onward by extended narrative.

The Books of Chronicles deal with the same period of Israel's history as the Books of Samuel and Kings, but from a different point of view. In Samuel and Kings God is revealed at work in the national life of His people. In Chronicles He is revealed at work in their religious life. This difference explains the omissions and additions in the narrative of Chronicles.

The special design of the Books of Chronicles is to show that, although the nation had failed, the purpose of God with the nation had not failed. The monarchy had been destroyed but the Covenant remained, and God's redeeming purpose was still being carried on to its fulfilment. In First Chronicles this purpose centres in the royal house of David, and in Second Chronicles in the Temple of the Lord.

These books are also interesting because of the things omitted in the earlier books but recorded in these. Twenty whole chapters and twenty-four parts of chapters are occupied with matters not

found in the other books of Scripture. This accounts for the Septuagint title of the books, "Omissions". The title in our English Version is from the Vulgate, which gives a free rendering of the Hebrew title, "Words of Days", or "Diaries".

First Chronicles carries the story down to the death of David, and is in two unequal parts. The first part (Chs. 1-9) contains the genealogies, and the second part (Chs. 10-29) the record of David's reign. On this basis we get the following plan:

I. The Genealogies—Chs. 1-9

1. The Line of Promise (Chs. 1-3)
2. The Tribes of Israel (Chs. 4-8)
3. The Remnant of Israel (Ch. 9).

II. The Reign of David—Chs. 10-29

1. His Throne Established (Chs. 10-12)
2. The Worship of God Established  
(Chs. 13-16)
3. Preparations for the Temple Building  
(Chs. 17-22)
4. Preparations for the Temple Services  
(Chs. 23-27)
5. Final Directions Concerning the Temple  
(Chs. 28-29).

THE LINE OF PROMISE  
(Chs. 1-3)

The line of the promised Redeemer is traced from Adam through Noah and the patriarchs, and on through the tribe of Judah down to David. It is then carried on to the return from exile, and for several generations beyond. Thus it leads onward toward Jesus Christ. These genealogies illustrate the sovereign choice of God in His procedure in

history as He moves on toward the fulfilment of His purpose in the world.

1. The Patriarchs (Ch. 1). By a process of exclusion and elimination the lines are narrowed down to the separated race. The ten generations from Adam to Noah are named (vs. 1-4), and are followed by the descendants of the sons of Noah (vs. 5-23). Shem's line is then taken up, and the ten generations to Abraham are named (vs. 24-27), followed by the descendants of Abraham except those of Isaac's line (vs. 28-33).

The genealogy then returns to Isaac, names his two sons, and traces the descendants of Esau for several generations (vs. 34-42). Then come the names of the kings of Edom, the kingdom which Esau founded before the establishment of the kingdom of Israel (vs. 43-54).

2. The Tribe of Judah (Ch. 2). First, the twelve sons of Israel are named (vs. 1-2); and before proceeding to a survey of the twelve tribes, the record traces the genealogy of Judah, in order to prepare for the line of David which follows in the next chapter. The name used in Chronicles for the founder of the nation is not Jacob but Israel (1:34; 2:1), indicating that it is not the character of the man, but God's purpose in his life, that is in view. The genealogy of Judah as recorded here (vs. 3-55) shows that the tribe was composed of several divisions and that some alien clans were incorporated with it.

3. The House of David (Ch. 3). A survey of David's family is given (vs. 1-9), and then the royal line is traced through Solomon down to Zerubbabel, the leader of the return from Babylon, and for several generations beyond (vs. 10-24). The names

which Zerubbabel gave to his sons (vs. 19-20) indicate that a spiritual revival was taking place in the nation just before the return: Hananiah ("the grace of the Lord"), Berechiah ("the blessing of the Lord"), Hasadiah ("the mercy of the Lord"), and Jushab-hesed ("mercy returns").

#### THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL (Chs. 4-8)

Having traced the line through which the Messiah was to come, the record now gives a general survey of the genealogies of Israel as a nation.

1. The Tribes of the South (Ch. 4). Judah, the tribe to which the promise had been given, is taken up first (vs. 1-23). The list of names is interrupted to tell the significant story of Jabez (vs. 9-10). His name, which means "sorrowful", had cast the shadow of evil over his life, and by his prayer he had been delivered from it. Simeon follows next (vs. 24-43), because this tribe originally occupied part of the land included in the kingdom of Judah. Simeon did not grow like Judah (v. 27), and most of the tribe migrated elsewhere (vs. 42-43).

2. The Eastern Tribes (Ch. 5). The two tribes and a half that settled east of the Jordan are now surveyed. The religious lessons of their history are brought out in several comments (vs. 1-2, 20, 25-26).

3. The Tribe of Levi (Ch. 6). The line of the high priest is traced from Aaron to Jehozadak, who was high priest at the time of the captivity (vs. 1-15). The three branches of the tribe are then given as they sprang from the three sons of Levi (vs. 16-30). There follow the genealogies of the

three leaders of David's Levite choirs (vs. 31-48). The record then returns to the line of Aaron (vs. 49-53), and goes on to give a list of the Levitical cities where the priests and Levites dwelt (vs. 54-81).

4. The Tribes of the North (Chs. 7-8). After a survey of the remaining tribes (ch. 7), the tribe of Benjamin is taken up again (8:1-28), in order to trace the line of Saul, the first king of Israel (8:29-40).

#### THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

##### (Ch. 9)

This chapter begins with a reference to the preceding genealogies and a statement about the Babylonian captivity (v. 1). Then it goes on to give a list of those who dwelt in Jerusalem after the return from captivity (vs. 2-34). With some variations, this corresponds to the list in Neh. 11:3-19. It was the restored community of Israel, with whom God made a new beginning after the Exile.

The prophets had foretold that a remnant should be preserved through the judgments of the Lord upon Judah and would return to the land after her fall and captivity (Isa. 1:9; 6:13; 10:20-23). With this restored remnant the Lord carried on His purpose in Israel till the coming of Christ. The list comprises heads of families, chiefly of Judah and Benjamin (vs. 3-9), priests (vs. 10-13), Levites (vs. 14-16), porters or doorkeepers and other classes of Levites (vs. 17-32), and singers (vs. 33-34). The chapter closes with a repetition of the line of Saul (vs. 35-44), in preparation for the story of the fall of his house in the next chapter and the establishment of the throne of David.

DAVID'S THRONE ESTABLISHED  
(Chs. 10-12)

The record now passes from genealogy to narrative. The narrative begins with David, through whom the Divine purpose was being carried forward. The story of David's reign in Chronicles is almost wholly concerned with what he did to establish the worship of God in Jerusalem and to prepare for the Temple and its services. His great sin and its tragic consequences are passed over. It is the religious, not the political, aspect of his reign that is in view.

The present section tells how his throne was established. It begins with an account of Saul's last battle and death (10:1-12), and the reason why the Lord brought this judgment upon him and "turned the kingdom unto David" (10:13-14). Then comes a brief account relating how all Israel came to Hebron and made David king, and how he took Jerusalem and made it his capital (11:1-9).

Then we are told of the men who helped to strengthen David in his kingdom: his mighty men and their deeds of valour (11:10-47), the men who rallied round him in the days of his persecution at the hands of Saul (12:1-22), and the men who came to Hebron to make him king (12:23-37). The account closes by stating that all Israel "were of one heart to make David king", and describing the universal joy and gladness that marked the occasion (12:38-40).

THE WORSHIP OF GOD ESTABLISHED  
(Chs. 13-16)

These chapters tell how David brought the Ark

up to Jerusalem and established it there as the centre of Israel's religious life.

1. The Ark Removed from Kirjath-jearim (Ch. 13). David first used a human device instead of God's appointed method of carrying this sacred symbol (vs. 1-8). The tragic death of Uzzah was a warning of the holiness of the divine Presence in the midst of Israel (vs. 9-12). For three months the Ark remained in the house of Obed-edom, bringing blessing to it (vs. 13-14).

2. The Progress of David's Reign (Ch. 14). Before the next movement of the Ark is recorded, a survey is taken of David's house and family (vs. 1-7), and of his wars with the Philistines (vs. 8-17). The characteristic feature of David's rule, seeking and following the will of the Lord, is noted again and again (vs. 10, 14, 16).

3. The Ark Brought into Jerusalem (Ch. 15). This time the divine method was followed, and the Ark was carried on the shoulders of the Levites (vs. 1-15). It was brought up from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with manifestations of great joy (vs. 16-29). This account has much more fulness of detail than the parallel account in 2 Sam. 6.

4. Plans for the Worship of God (Ch. 16). When the Ark was set in its place, a service of thanksgiving was held (vs. 1-3), and a psalm of praise was sung by the Levite choir (vs. 4-36), composed mainly of two portions of the Psalter (Psa. 105:1-15 and Psa. 96). Asaph was appointed to minister before the Ark in Jerusalem; and Zadok the high priest was appointed to minister before the altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle at Gibeon, together with Heman and Jeduthun, who were ap-



pointed to conduct the service of song and praise (vs. 37-43). The worship of God in Israel was maintained in this way until the Temple was built and dedicated.

#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE BUILDING (Chs. 17-22)

The presence of the Ark in Jerusalem created a desire in David's heart to provide a worthy dwelling place for it. This led to God's covenant with David regarding a son who should build a house for the Lord. For this Temple David now began to make elaborate preparations.

1. God's Promise to David (Ch. 17). David told Nathan what was in his heart, and through Nathan God revealed His purpose to David (vs. 1-15). The Lord promised to perpetuate the kingdom in David's line, and to raise up a son for him who should build the house of the Lord and whose throne should be established for ever. This covenant with David (vs. 11-14) was the basis of the Messianic predictions of the prophets; it looked forward to the coming and Kingdom of Christ. The humble and adoring prayer with which David responded to this promise (vs. 16-27) shows that he recognized its unique significance and the honour thereby placed upon him and his house (vs. 17-18). The promise to David has been more fully explained in the exposition of 2 Sam. 7, which is parallel with this chapter. See pages 188-189.

2. The Extension of the Kingdom (Chs. 18-20). These chapters give a general view of the wars and the victories by which David's kingdom was extended and its boundaries were made secure. His

victories were the direct result of God's blessing upon him: "Jehovah gave victory to David whithersoever he went" (18:6, 13). During his wars he gathered treasure and material for the house of the Lord (18:8, 11). The expression, "cut them with saws", in 20:3 should be read, "put them with saws", that is, put them to work with saws (cf. 2 Sam. 12: 31, marg.). David placed the conquered Ammonites under this kind of servitude.

3. Choosing a Site for the Temple (Ch. 21). Yielding to a temptation from Satan and moved by pride because of his victories, David ordered a census of Israel that he might glory in the greatness of his kingdom; and he persisted in it notwithstanding the protest of Joab, until he saw that God was displeased (vs. 1-8). As a judgment upon him, David was offered, through the prophet Gad, the choice of three calamities; and he threw himself directly into the hands of the Lord (vs. 9-13).

A three days' pestilence then fell upon Israel, which was stayed just as the angel of the Lord, standing on Ornan's threshing floor, was about to smite Jerusalem with it (vs. 14-17). David, having acknowledged his own sin in the matter, was commanded to build an altar on the spot where the angel stood. He proceeded to purchase the place from Ornan and offer sacrifices there to mark his restoration to the favour of the Lord (vs. 18-27). Then David recognized that this was to be the site for the house of the Lord (21:28—22:1).

When this account of David's purchase is compared with the parallel account in 2 Sam. 24, it appears that there were two stages in it. David first bought the actual threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24:24). After having

erected an altar there and offered the sacrifices, he purchased "the place", the whole hill top, for six hundred shekels of gold (1 Chron. 21:25), that he might secure it as a site for the Temple.

4. Preparing Material for the Temple (Ch. 22). David prepared abundant material for the Temple before his death (vs. 2-5). He gave to Solomon a special and earnest charge concerning the building of it (vs. 6-16), and to the princes of Israel a special command to help Solomon (vs. 17-19).

#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE SERVICES (Chs. 23-27)

In his old age David had Solomon appointed king, and he also had the priests and Levites organized for carrying on the worship of God in the Temple (23:1-2). The Levites were numbered and divided into courses according to the three branches of the tribe (22:3-23), and the duties of their office were prescribed (23:24-32). The two priestly branches of Aaron's family were divided into twenty-four courses for the priest's office (24:1-19). The rest of the sons of Levi were classified by lot (24:20-31).

David also made provision for the service of song and praise by setting apart the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for this purpose (25:1-8). They were divided into twenty-four courses of twelve men each (25:9-31). Other Levites were designated for other duties: doorkeepers (26:1-19), keepers of the treasures (26:20-28), and officers and judges (26:29-32).

Then comes a survey of the military and civil administration of David's kingdom: the twelve divisions of the army and their captains (27:1-15),

the twelve tribes and their rulers (27:16-24), the superintendents of departments (27:25-31) and the state councillors (27:32-34).

FINAL DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE TEMPLE  
(Chs. 28-29)

David assembled the princes of the tribes and the officers and ministers of his kingdom, told them of his own desire regarding the house of the Lord, and of God's purpose regarding Solomon his son, and gave to them and to Solomon a solemn charge to serve the Lord and to carry out His purpose regarding the Temple (28:1-10). He then gave Solomon the pattern of the Temple and a final word of exhortation about it (28:11-21).

David dedicated his own treasures for the Temple, declaring, "I have set my affection on the house of my God", thus showing where the supreme interest of his life lay (29:1-5); and the princes and rulers made their offerings, doing it willingly "with a perfect heart" (29:6-9). David led the assembly in praise and prayer, and the people worshipped the Lord with sacrifices in abundance, "and did eat and drink before Jehovah on that day with great gladness (29:10-22). Solomon was made king anew, and his reign began with such manifestations of royal majesty as had not been seen before in Israel (29:22-25). The book closes with David's death and a general statement about his reign (29:26-30).

## THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

SECOND Chronicles continues the narrative of First Chronicles with the same theme and from the same point of view. It shows how the purpose of God was carried through Solomon's reign, down through the history of Judah, and on to the eve of the return from captivity. The history of Northern Israel is not recorded in Chronicles.

The real centre of Second Chronicles is the Temple, the house of the Lord, the place where He manifested Himself in the midst of His people. Solomon built it and established its services. The kings who repaired it and restored its services are given the largest place in the narrative. The decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple brings the book to a close.

Second Chronicles may be divided into two unequal parts, the shorter part (Chs. 1-9) dealing with the reign of Solomon, and the longer part (Chs. 10-36) with the kingdom of Judah. The history of Judah, as recorded here, may be divided into four periods, each marked by a restoration of the Temple services after a time of apostasy, the last one ending with the final apostasy and the destruction of the Temple. This gives us the following outline of the book:

- I. The Reign of Solomon—Chs. 1-9
- II. The Kings of Judah—Chs. 10-36
  1. From Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat (Chs. 10-20)

2. From Jehoram to Amaziah (Chs. 21-25)
3. From Uzziah to Hezekiah (Chs. 26-32)
4. From Manasseh to Zedekiah (Chs. 33-36)

### THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (Chs. 1-9)

The account of Solomon's reign in this book is almost entirely taken up with his work in building the Temple and establishing its services. There is no reference to the acts of judgment by which he punished offenders at the beginning of his reign, or to the Divine judgment which began to operate against him because of his sin at the end of his reign.

1. The Beginning of His Reign (Ch. 1). This is a much briefer account of the opening events of Solomon's reign than the account in First Kings. It records only his great sacrifice at Gibeon (vs. 1-8), his prayer for wisdom (vs. 7-13), and his royal wealth in horses and chariots (vs. 14-17).

2. The Building of the Temple (Chs. 2-4). These chapters correspond in the main with 1 Kings 5-7. There is no account of the building of Solomon's own house. Everything concerns the house of the Lord.

The preparations for it are first described (ch. 2). These were the enlistment of a vast levy of labourers (vs. 1-2), a treaty with the king of Tyre for timber from Lebanon and for skilled workmen (vs. 3-16), and the organization of the labourers (vs. 17-18).

Solomon built the Temple house on Mount Moriah on the site which David had chosen (ch. 3). He began the building in the fourth year of his reign (vs. 1-2). Its dimensions and materials are de-

scribed: the Holy-place (vs.3-7), the Holy-of-holies (vs. 8-14), and the pillars of the porch (vs. 15-17).

The making of the Temple furniture is described next (ch. 4): the brazen altar and the lavers (vs. 1-6), the candlesticks and the tables (vs. 7-10), the brazen vessels made by Hiram (vs. 11-18), and the golden vessels for the sanctuary, all of which, it is emphasized, were "of pure gold", "of gold, and that perfect gold" (vs. 19-22).

3. The Dedication of the Temple (Chs. 5-7). These chapters correspond in the main with 1 Kings 8:1—9:9, but contain a somewhat fuller account.

(1) The bringing in of the Ark (ch. 5). The treasures dedicated by David were deposited in the Temple (v. 1). An assembly of the elders and rulers of Israel was gathered, and the Ark was brought up from the city of David and placed in the Holy-of-holies (vs. 2-10). Then the praise and worship of the Lord began, and His presence was manifested by the cloud which filled the house (vs. 11-14). The choir of Levite singers organized by David appears here for the first time. From now on the sacrifice of praise occupies a prominent place in the worship of God.

(2) Solomon's address and prayer (ch. 6). After his opening address to the people (vs. 1-11), he offered a solemn dedicatory prayer (vs. 12-42). The three closing verses of the prayer are not found in Kings. They express the idea that is most prominent in Chronicles of the Temple being the Lord's abode in the midst of His people and the source of all blessing for them.

(3) The sacrifices and the feast (ch. 7). The dedication of the Temple was confirmed by fire from heaven (vs. 1-3). The sacrifices followed (vs. 4-7),

and the feast of dedication, which lasted seven days (vs. 8-10). When all was finished, the Lord revealed Himself to Solomon with a promise of blessing for obedience (vs. 11-18), and a solemn warning of the destruction of the Temple for disobedience (vs. 19-22).

4. The Close of Solomon's Reign (Chs. 8-9). No reference is made in Chronicles to Solomon's fall. The account of his reign is brought to a close with a summary of his doings (ch. 8), the visit of the Queen of Sheba (9:1-12), and a description of the glory of his kingdom (9:13-31).

#### FROM REHOBOAM TO JEHOSEPHAT (Chs. 10-20)

After giving an account of the disruption of the kingdom which followed Solomon's death, the narrative leaves the ten tribes and proceeds to deal with the history of Judah alone. Chronicles is concerned only with the kings of David's line, for down this line the purpose of God was moving. The present section takes us from 965 to about 890 B.C.

1. The Reign of Rehoboam (Chs. 10-12). He began with an act of folly in taking the advice of his young companions instead of the mature counsel of his father's advisers, and so causing the revolt of the ten tribes and the disruption of the kingdom (10:1—11:4). Rehoboam then fortified the limited territory that was left to him (11:5-12). The priests and Levites throughout all Israel adhered to the house of David and settled in Judah and Jerusalem (11:13-17).

King Rehoboam married many wives and placed his many sons in fortified cities (11:18-23). He



forsook the Lord and brought Divine punishment upon the nation through an invasion by Shishak king of Egypt and the loss of the treasures of the Temple (12:1-12). When the king and the princes humbled themselves at the preaching of the prophet Shemaiah, the Lord gave them some deliverance. Throughout Rehoboam's evil reign of seventeen years there was continual civil war between the two kingdoms (12:13-16).

2. The Reign of Abijah (Ch. 13). It lasted three years. He went to war with Jeroboam, appealing to the children of Israel to return to the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem (vs. 1-12). The men of Judah were ambushed by Jeroboam but were delivered by a Divine intervention (vs. 13-17). They prevailed, "because they relied upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers" (v. 18). Abijah enlarged and strengthened his kingdom by taking territory from Jeroboam, but he followed in the ways of his father (vs. 19-22).

3. The Reign of Asa (Chs. 14-16). He started well, cleared the land of idolatry and led Judah back to the Lord, with resulting peace and prosperity (14:1-8). In his days Judah was invaded by a great host under Zerah the Ethiopian; but in answer to Asa's prayer and appeal to the Lord for help, there came a Divine intervention and Judah was given a great victory (14:9-15). Encouraged by the preaching of Azariah (15:1-7), he restored the altar of sacrifice in the Temple and renewed the Covenant with the Lord (15:8-19).

Asa made a league with Ben-hadad king of Syria against an attack by Baasha king of Israel (16:1-6), and was rebuked by the prophet Hanani for not relying on the Lord, whose eyes "run to and fro

throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (16:7-9). He resented the rebuke, and changed for the worse at the end of his reign of forty-one years (16:10-14).

4. The Reign of Jehoshaphat (Chs. 17-20). He sought the Lord and sent teachers of the Law throughout Judah (17:1-9), and established the kingdom in great power (17:10-19). He made an unhappy alliance with Ahab, the apostate king of Israel, and took part in the war against Syria at Ramoth-gilead, where Ahab was slain (ch. 18). On his return to Jerusalem he was rebuked by the prophet Jehu (19:1-3), and afterwards gave himself to the task of turning the people to the Lord throughout the land (19:4-7) and reforming the worship and service of the Lord in Jerusalem (19:8-11).

A great host of Moabites and Ammonites having threatened to attack Judah, Jehoshaphat led his people in seeking the help of the Lord (20:1-13). An assurance of Divine deliverance being given by Jahaziel, the king led his people in praise and thanksgiving, and immediately the Lord wrought a mighty overthrow of the foe (20:14-30). The mistake of Jehoshaphat's righteous reign was his continued alliance with the wicked house of Ahab (20:31-37).

#### FROM JEHORAM TO AMAZIAH (Chs. 21-25)

Jehoshaphat's alliance with Israel bore its evil fruit in the introduction of Baal worship into Judah. The disastrous result of this apostasy upon the

southern kingdom appears again and again in the history contained in these chapters, which take us to about 800 B.C.

1. The Corruption of the House of David (Chs. 21-22). Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. When he came to the throne he murdered all his brothers and many of the princes (21:1-7). In his days the kingdom of Edom, which had been brought into subjection by David, revolted from Judah (21:8-10). Jehoram introduced idolatry into Judah, and received a written message from Elijah foretelling a Divine judgment upon him (21:11-15). This is the only mention of Elijah in Chronicles, and it is an evidence of the prophet's influence in the southern kingdom. The judgment came to pass when foreign foes overran the land, and after a reign of eight years Jehoram came to a miserable end (21:16-20).

He was followed by Ahaziah, who reigned for one year, and was slain in Samaria in the judgment which Jehu was executing upon the house of Ahab (22:1-9). Then came the usurpation of Athaliah and her attempt to destroy the royal house of David, and the hiding of the infant Joash from her by his aunt Jehoshabeath (22: 10-12).

2. The Reign of Joash (Chs. 23-24). The high priest Jehoiada organized a movement among the Levites and the military captains, which resulted in putting Joash on the throne (23:1-11), and in slaying Athaliah and destroying her Baal worship (23: 12-21). Joash was only seven years old when his reign of forty years began. He started well, and had the Temple repaired under Jehoiada by means of the renewal of the tax which Moses had laid upon the Israelites for the services of the sanctuary (24:

1-14; Exod. 30:12-16). After the death of Jehoiada, the aged high priest, Josiah was led away from the Lord by the princes, who stoned Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, when he rebuked them (24:15-22; Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51). This apostasy was followed by the disastrous invasion of a Syrian army and the assassination of the king at the hands of his own servants (24:23-27).

3. The Reign of Amaziah (Ch. 25). He followed the Lord at first, but "not with a perfect heart" (vs. 1-4). He carried on a successful war against the Edomites (vs. 5-13); but he brought back their idols and worshipped them, and brought upon himself a Divine warning through a prophet whom he refused to hear (vs. 14-16). He went to war with the king of Israel and met with a shameful defeat (vs. 17-24). His reign ended with his assassination as the result of a conspiracy against him (vs. 25-28).

#### FROM UZZIAH TO HEZEKIAH (Chs. 26-32)

Judah now entered a long period of prosperity, during which the southern kingdom reached the height of its power. For the most part the nation was loyal to the Lord; only one of the four kings of the period turned to idolatry. The period extended throughout the eighth century B.C. and into the early years of the seventh.

1. The Reign of Uzziah (Ch. 26). He began his long and prosperous reign of fifty-two years by doing "that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah" under the guidance and counsel of Zechariah, a prophet otherwise unknown (vs. 1-5). He restored the military power of Judah, "and his name spread

far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong" (vs. 6-15). "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly". He usurped the priestly office by burning incense in the Temple in presumptuous defiance of the high priest's warning, and was smitten with leprosy (vs. 16-20). His son Jotham became co-regent until his death (vs. 21-23).

2. The Reign of Jotham (Ch. 27). He reigned with his father's equity, and refrained from his father's sin. He maintained the power and prosperity of Judah during the sixteen years of his reign. But a moral corruption which followed the prosperity of the previous reign was sapping the strength of the nation.

3. The Reign of Ahaz (Ch. 28). "He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel", during his reign of sixteen years, and introduced the worst abominations of idolatry (vs. 1-4). He was punished by a severe defeat at the hands of the kings of Syria and Israel (vs. 5-7). The captives who were taken from Judah to Samaria were restored at the command of the prophet Oded (vs. 8-15). Sending to Assyria for help, Ahaz only brought more trouble upon himself, and trespassed still more against the Lord (vs. 16-27).

4. The Reign of Hezekiah (Chs. 29-32). The best of the kings of Judah, he reigned twenty-nine years. He began a course of reformation in the first month of his reign, by calling the priests and Levites together and commanding them to cleanse the Temple (29:1-19). Then he had the Temple rededicated and its worship restored (29:20-36). He sent a proclamation throughout all Israel and Judah summoning the people to keep the Passover

(30:1-12); and a great assembly gathered in Jerusalem and kept the feast with great joy (30:13-27). This was followed by other reforms, the destruction of all heathen altars and idols throughout Judah, the reorganization of the Levitical services and the restoration of the tithes and offerings (ch. 31).

After this came Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, his threatened attack on Jerusalem, and his blasphemous defiance of the Lord (32:1-19), followed by the Lord's judgment on the Assyrian and His deliverance of Jerusalem (32:20-23). Hezekiah's heart was lifted up because of the honour and prosperity that came to him, and he incurred the displeasure of the Lord. When a deputation came from Babylon to visit him, "God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart". He was honoured by his people at his death, for he was a great and good king (32:24-33).

#### FROM MANASSEH TO ZEDEKIAH (Chs. 33-36)

Hezekiah's good reign was followed by a long period of apostasy and sin; and the decline of Judah set in, from which the reign of Josiah, its last good king, could not save it. The period dealt with in this section begins in 695 and ends with the overthrow of the kingdom and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.

1. The Reign of Manasseh (Ch. 33). One of the worst of the kings of Judah, he introduced every form of idolatrous abomination, and his long reign of fifty-five years brought the nation into the depths of corruption and wickedness (vs. 1-9). He was punished by being taken in chains to Babylon, where he repented (vs. 10-13). He was restored to

his kingdom, and attempted to bring back Judah to the worship of the Lord (vs. 14-20). But his son Amon, who followed him upon the throne for two years, went from bad to worse (vs. 21-25).

2. The Reign of Josiah (Chs. 34-35). Coming to the throne when he was only eight years old, Josiah began to seek the Lord in the eighth year of his reign; and in the twelfth year he began to purge the land of idolatry (34:1-7). In the eighteenth year he set about repairing the Temple, and in the process of this work Hilkiyah the high priest found the Book of the Law (34:8-21). He consulted the prophetess Huldah about it, and she sent a message, both of judgment and of comfort, back to the king (34:22-28), who gathered an assembly of elders and people, and renewed the Covenant with the Lord (34:29-33). Then Josiah kept a great Passover, the greatest of all in the history of Israel (35:1-19). His death at the battle of Megiddo was greatly lamented by all the people (35:20-27).

3. The Last Kings of Judah (Ch. 36). The reigns of Jehoahaz (vs. 1-4), Jehoiakim (vs. 5-8), Jehoiachin (vs. 9-10), and Zedekiah (vs. 11-14) are briefly recorded. It is a story of rebellion and doing evil against the Lord all through. Judah had despised the warnings of the prophets and was ripe for judgment (vs. 15-16). God brought upon them the terrible scourge of the Chaldeans, who destroyed the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem, took the people away to Babylon, and left the land to enjoy its Sabbaths for the seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy (vs. 17-21; Jer. 29:10; Lev. 26:34). The book closes with the decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple, which prepared the way for the Jews to return from their exile (vs. 22-23).

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The fact of God's presence in the history of Judah is emphasized in Second Chronicles by the prominence given to the religious reformations carried on by its good kings, and by the record of several Divine interpositions which took place in the southern kingdom.

There were four periods of reformation in Judah, and the main feature in every case was a return to the worship of the Lord in the Temple by the restoration of the Levitical services. After backsliding and sin, the people were brought back to God by the way of the altar of sacrifice. Righteousness in Israel rested upon the worship of God as prescribed by the Law. Ethical conduct went hand in hand with the fear of the Lord.

The four reformations belonged to the reigns of the following kings: (1) Asa and his successor Jehoshaphat. In both reigns there was not only a renewal of the Temple services, but also a revival of interest in the Law. (2) Joash, who had the Temple repaired by the renewal of the original Mosaic tax. (3) Hezekiah, who had the Temple purified, repaired, and rededicated, and all its services of worship restored. He also had all Israel and Judah observe the Passover. (4) Josiah, in whose reign the Book of the Law, long neglected and forgotten, was discovered in the course of repairing and reopening the Temple. The king had the Covenant renewed and a great Passover kept. It was the last attempt at reform, but too late to avert the judgment which had long been threatened.

On five occasions of great peril in the history of



Judah, Divine deliverances are recorded in the narrative of Second Chronicles. They are all said to have occurred in answer to prayer, or because the people turned to the Lord and relied upon Him. (1) In the reign of Rehoboam, the Lord gave "some deliverance" from Shishak's invasion, when the king and the princes "humbled themselves" (12:6-7). (2) In the reign of Abijah, the men of Judah were delivered from an ambushment of the Israelites, when "they cried unto Jehovah", and "because they relied upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers" (13:13-18). (3) In the reign of Asa, the huge army of Zerah the Ethiopian was smitten before the army of Judah, when the king cried unto God for help (14:11-12). (4) In the reign of Jehoshaphat, an invading host of Moabites and Ammonites was completely discomfited, after the king "set himself to seek unto Jehovah" and Judah "gathered themselves together, to seek help from Jehovah" (20:3-4). (5) In the reign of Hezekiah, Jerusalem was delivered from the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, when the king and the prophet Isaiah "prayed because of this, and cried to heaven" (32:20-21). All this is in line with the evident purpose of the Books of Chronicles to magnify the Lord in the history of His people.

## THE BOOK OF EZRA

THE Book of Ezra continues the history of the Books of Chronicles, the last two verses of Second Chronicles being identical with the opening verses of Ezra. It tells the story of the return from the Babylonian captivity, and deals with the restored remnant of Israel.

A new historical background comes into view in this book. The Jews had now passed under the power of Persia, which had taken the place of Babylon as the great world empire of the time. Cyrus had captured the city of Babylon in 538 B.C., and had thus securely founded the Persian Empire. One of his first acts, after he became the supreme ruler in the Asiatic world, was to publish a decree giving the Jews liberty to return and rebuild their Temple. With this decree the book of Ezra opens.

The return and restoration of the Jews took place in two stages, and the narrative is confined to the work of these two periods. The first band of exiles returned in 537 B.C. under Zerubbabel, who belonged to the line of David; and in their time the Temple was rebuilt. Nearly eighty years later (458 B.C.), the second band returned under Ezra, who belonged to the line of Aaron; and under him the congregation was restored and purified. The book thus falls into two parts, one dealing with the restoration of the Temple (Chs. 1-6), and the other with the restoration of the congregation (Chs. 7-10). This gives us the following outline:

- I. The Restoration of the Temple—Chs. 1-6
  1. The Return of the Exiles (Chs. 1-2)
  2. The Beginning of the Temple (Chs. 3-4)
  3. The Completion of the Temple (Chs. 5-6)
- II. The Restoration of the Congregation—  
Chs. 7-10.
  1. Ezra's Expedition (Chs. 7-8)
  2. Ezra's Reformation (Chs. 9-10)

### THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE (Chs. 1-6)

This section of the book deals with the return from the captivity of the first band of exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel, one of the princes of Judah, and their work of rebuilding the Temple. It reveals God at work in history proceeding to fulfil His own word (Jer. 29:10; 33:7).

1. The Return of the Exiles (Chs. 1-2). The book opens with the decree of Cyrus, which is remarkable for its recognition of the Lord God of Israel as the true God (1:1-4). The immediate result of the decree is then recorded (1:5-11). Many heads of families were stirred up belonging to Judah and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem together with a large number of priests and Levites. They took with them treasures that were given them and the sacred vessels of the Temple, which Cyrus had put in the hands of Zerubbabel, the leader of the expedition, whose Babylonian name was Sheshbazzar.

The register of those who returned is given next (2:1-63). The list follows a definite order: First the leaders associated with Zerubbabel (vs. 1-2), then the people (vs. 3-35), the priests (vs. 36-39),

the Levites (vs. 40-42), the Nethinim, who were probably descendants of foreign slaves, and other servants (vs. 43-58), and finally those who had lost the records of their lineage (vs. 59-63). The list is followed by a summary of the whole company, which numbered less than 50,000 altogether, and a statement of their arrival in Jerusalem and their voluntary gifts for the rebuilding of the Temple (2:64-70).

2. The Beginning of the Temple (Chs. 3-4). The returned exiles first settled in their own cities, and when the sacred seventh month approached they assembled with one accord in Jerusalem. They rebuilt the altar of God and restored the daily burnt offerings; "for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries" (3:1-3). This was their declaration of trust in the Lord in the face of their foes. The captivity had cured them of all hankering after idolatry, and they had returned to the land with the fear of God in their hearts. They observed the Feast of Tabernacles, and after that they restored the sacrificial system and the other set feasts of the Lord (3:4-6). Then they began to prepare material for the Temple with the grant that Cyrus had given them (3:7).

In the second year of the return the foundation of the Temple was laid with appropriate ceremonies and with praise to the Lord (3:8-11). But the joy of the people was mingled with weeping on the part of the old men, who had seen the glory of the former house (3:12-13). The adversaries of the Jews now began to show their hostility. They first appealed to Zerubbabel, seeking a share in the work. When this was refused them they began to hinder it in every way, attempting to frustrate the purpose of

the Jews (4:1-5). The building of the Temple was discontinued for sixteen years (4:24).

These "people of the land" were a mixed race descended from the foreigners who had been settled upon the country by the Assyrians after the fall of the northern kingdom and had mingled with the Israelites left behind (2 Kings 17:24). They came to be known as Samaritans from the former capital of the land. At this point in the narrative an episode is inserted showing how they continued their opposition long after the Temple was built and attempted to stop the building of the walls of the city in the days of Nehemiah (4:6-23). The Persian kings mentioned in this section reigned after Darius. The thread of the narrative which was dropped at v. 5 is resumed in v. 24.

3. The Completion of the Temple (Chs. 5-6). In the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), under the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the work was resumed (5:1-2; Hag. 2:1-9; Zech. 4:1-10). Opposition was raised again, but it did not make the Jews cease. "The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews", and He wrought in their behalf (5:3-5).

The Persian governor wrote a letter to Darius, referring the matter to him (5:6-17). Darius had the archives searched and found the original decree of Cyrus (6:1-5). He sent back instructions that the Jews were to be allowed to go on with the building of the house of God, and were to be assisted in doing so (6:6-12). Then the work went on and prospered under the continuous preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, and the Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius (6:13-15).

The dedication services were observed with great

joy (6:16-18), and after this the Passover was kept by the restored and rejoicing exiles (6:19-22). This is the last of six Passovers recorded in the Old Testament. The others took place in Egypt (Exod. 12), in the wilderness (Num. 9), at Gilgal in Canaan (Josh. 5), in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30), and in the reign of Josiah (2 Chron. 35). The Passover at which the Lord was crucified was the seventh notable observance of this feast in the history of Israel.

#### THE RESTORATION OF THE CONGREGATION (Chs. 7-10)

This section of the book deals with the return of the second band of exiles under the leadership of Ezra, and with the reformation carried on by him in restoring and purifying the congregation of Israel. Ezra was a priest of the line of Eleazar, and "a ready scribe in the law of Moses", who "had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it" (7:6, 10). His characteristic expression was "the good hand of Jehovah our God upon us".

1. Ezra's Expedition (Chs. 7-8). There is a gap of nearly sixty years between chs. 6 and 7. Ezra led a company of returning exiles in a four months' journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (7:1-10). The commission he received from the Persian king gave him authority to lead back to Jerusalem all who wished to go, to establish the observance of the Law of God in the land, to draw upon the king's treasury for supplies, and to appoint judges in Judah (7:11-26); and for this Ezra gave praise to God (7:27-28). A register of the heads of the families who returned with him is given, the whole company

numbering about 1,500 men besides the other members of their households (8:1-14).

Ezra gathered them at Ahava to review them and prepare for the journey, and sent for the Levites and other servants of the Temple (8:15-20). He would not compromise the honour of God by asking an escort of soldiers from the king, but instead he proclaimed a fast to wait upon God for His guidance and protection (8:21-23). The gifts for the Temple were committed into the hands of the priests and Levites (8:24-30). The journey was made in safety—"the hand of our God was upon us". When they arrived in Jerusalem, they offered burnt offerings and sacrifices for all the twelve tribes of Israel (8:31-36).

2. Ezra's Reformation (Chs. 9-10). When Ezra arrived, he was informed that the people of Israel had been intermarrying with their heathen neighbours and had become corrupted with idolatry, and that the rulers were the chief offenders. He was greatly distressed and confounded (9:1-4). He poured out his soul to God in a prayer on behalf of the people (9:5-15). It is one long, impassioned confession. Ezra completely identified himself with the people, although not personally guilty.

The sincerity of his prayer produced an immediate result. The people gathered in a great assembly before the Temple, confessed their sin, and undertook to make a covenant with God to put away their foreign wives (10:1-4). Under Ezra's energetic leadership this reform was carried out, and the congregation of Israel was purified by complete separation from the heathen people of the land (10:5-15). Three months were occupied in examining the matter, which shows the care taken to do justice to the claims of the women put away (10:16-17).

The book closes with a list of the transgressors. They numbered only a hundred and thirteen, but they belonged to all classes—priests and Levites as well as the people generally (10:18-44). The significance of this feature of the reformation lay in the necessity for keeping the remnant of Israel free from defilement in order to preserve the holy seed. Through it God was working out His redeeming purpose, and from it the Messiah was to come.



## THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

THIS book continues the story of the restoration which was begun in Ezra, and brings it to an end. It contains an account of the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and completing the reformation begun by Ezra. It covers a period of twelve years (444-432 B.C.), from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of king Artaxerxes of Persia (2:1; 13:6). It is the last in chronological order of the historical books and brings the Old Testament history to a close. It is written in the first person, and is obviously composed of memoirs left by Nehemiah, who occupied a high position in the Persian court.

The book is in two parts. The first part (Chs. 1-7) describes the restoration of the city, and the second part (Chs. 8-13) the restoration of the Covenant. From this we get the following outline:

- I. The Restoration of the City—Chs. 1-7
  1. Nehemiah's Commission (Chs. 1-2)
  2. The Building of the Walls (Chs. 3-5)
  3. The Completion of the Walls (Chs. 6-7)
- II. The Restoration of the Covenant—Ch. 8-13
  1. The Reading of the Law (Ch. 8)
  2. The Renewing of the Covenant (Chs. 9-10)
  3. The Dedication of the Walls (Chs. 11-12)
  4. The Last Reforms (Ch. 13).

THE RESTORATION OF THE CITY  
(Chs. 1-7)

1. Nehemiah's Commission (Chs. 1-2). Nehemiah inquired of a party of Jews from Jerusalem who were visiting Shushan, the principal residence of the Persian court, and learned from them of the affliction and depression under which the remnant of Israel in Judah were living, and of the ruined state of the city walls (1:1-3). Greatly grieved about it, he fasted and prayed to the Lord (1:4-11). He confessed the sins of the people, pleaded the promise of God to Moses, and asked for favour in the eyes of the king.

Nehemiah's office of cup-bearer brought him into close personal contact with the king. Artaxerxes, noticing his sadness, inquired the reason of it; and Nehemiah told him of the desolate condition of Jerusalem (2:1-3). Asked by the king what request he had to make, Nehemiah "prayed to the God of heaven", and then asked and received from the king a commission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city (2:4-8). Nehemiah's characteristic habit of ejaculatory prayer is noted here for the first time.

When he arrived there and found that he would encounter opposition from the foes of the Jews in the land, he began cautiously and made a private inspection of the walls by night (2:9-16). Having ascertained the true state of affairs, he proceeded to arouse the people and encourage them to the good work of building up the walls of the city (2:17-20).

2. The Building of the Walls (Chs. 3-5). The work was thoroughly organized (ch. 3). Different

groups of people built different sections of the wall, the general principle being, "every one over against his own house" (v. 28).

Opposition arose from their enemies without (ch. 4). First it was mockery and ridicule (vs. 1-6), then anger and plotting and open hostility (vs. 7-14). But the work went on, for "the people had a mind to work", and "we made our prayer to our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them". Nehemiah made careful plans for combining energetic work with vigilant defence (vs. 15-23). While some wrought in the work, others "held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared".

Difficulty then arose from within (ch. 5). The rich were oppressing their poorer brethren by usury (vs. 1-5). Nehemiah dealt with this in the same energetic fashion. The injustice was remedied, and the property of the poor was restored (vs. 6-13). Nehemiah himself set a noble example. For the twelve years during which he was governor he did not draw the official salary to which he was entitled (vs. 14-18). After recording this he adds a prayer that is characteristic of him: "Remember unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people" (vs. 19; 13:14, 22, 31).

3. The Completion of the Walls (Chs. 6-7). As the building of the walls proceeded, the enemies of the Jews resorted to stratagem, and made repeated proposals to Nehemiah to come out and meet them in a conference, but he resolutely declined (6:1-4); "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down". Then they sent an open letter slandering him and threatening to accuse him to the king. He denied the slander and turned to God for strength

to go on with the work (6:5-9). Next they tried to terrify him by threats against his life. He scorned these threats and turned again to God. (6:10-14).

Thus Nehemiah went on with the work, and, under his energetic and inspiring leadership, the walls were finished in fifty-two days, with the result that fear came upon the nations around, "for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (6:15-16). This was achieved in spite of the fact that intrigues had been going on all the time between the nobles of Judah and the enemies of the Jews (6:17-19).

When the wall was completed and the gates were set up, Nehemiah organized the inhabitants into watchers for the safety of the city and for guarding the gates, "every one to be over against his own house" (7:1-3). But the city was very thinly populated (7:4). Nehemiah's first step toward increasing the population of the city was to get the register of the exiles who had returned at the first, and the list recorded in Ezra 2 is repeated here (7:5-73). Nehemiah begins this part of the record by saying, "My God put into mine heart". The step he took was decided upon because of what he recognized as a suggestion coming from the Lord (cf. 2:12). In the meantime the seventh month had come and, as they had done before (Ezra 3:1), the people gathered with one accord in Jerusalem for its sacred services (7:73-8:1).

#### THE RESTORATION OF THE COVENANT (Chs. 8-13)

1. The Reading of the Law (Ch. 8). The narrative here goes on to tell the story of the reformation that followed the building of the walls. The seventh

or sacred month of the year had come (7:73), and now Ezra appears in the book for the first time. Under his supervision the Law was read and expounded to a great assembly of the people which had gathered for the purpose (8:1-8). The Levites "read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading".

This produced both grief and joy—grief on account of Israel's failure which the Law revealed, and joy on account of their return to the Law which they now understood (8:9-12). On the next day, the rulers and the priests and Levites gathered together to Ezra, "to give attention to the words of the law"; and they proceeded to put it into practice by observing the Feast of Tabernacles which they found enacted therein (8:13-18).

2. The Renewing of the Covenant (Chs. 9-10). Soon after the feast, in the same month, the people observed a day of fasting and humiliation, and separated themselves from all the heathen in the land (9:1-4). They were led by the Levites in a comprehensive prayer of confession and consecration (9:5-38), which included praise to God for His goodness to Israel in delivering the people from Egypt and revealing Himself to them in the wilderness (vs. 5-15), confession of their persistent sin against Him in the wilderness and in Canaan (vs. 16-31), and engagement to renew their covenant relation with Him (vs. 32-38).

The Covenant was then sealed by the people's representatives, whose names are given (10:1-27). The rest of the people all promised to walk in God's law, and to keep His commandments and ordinances (10:28-31), and also to maintain the services of the

Temple, and bring in the first-fruits and the tithes (10:32-39).

3. The Dedication of the Walls (11:1—12:43). Arrangements were now made for occupying the vacant spaces in Jerusalem, by transferring one tenth of the people from the other cities (11:1-2). Some volunteered to dwell in Jerusalem and were specially honoured by the people for doing so. It is called here for the first time "the holy city". The separation recorded in ch. 9, and the new consecration of ch. 10, gave it solemn significance.

The distribution of the population of Judah is then given: the rulers and officers who dwelt in Jerusalem (11:3-9), the priests and Levites and other ministers of the Temple who dwelt in Jerusalem (11:10-24), the people of Judah and Benjamin who dwelt outside Jerusalem (11:25-36). This is followed by a list of the priests and the Levites, arranged by periods from the first return to the days of Nehemiah (12:1-26).

After this the service of dedicating the walls was carried out with gladness and thanksgiving (12:27-30). Nehemiah organized two processions to go in opposite directions round the city walls (12: 31-42). The rejoicing of the people that day was so great that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (12:43).

4. The Last Reforms (12:44-13:31). The walls having been built and dedicated, Nehemiah went back to the king in Babylon and remained there for some time (13:6). During his absence some abuses crept in, and when he returned he corrected them in his own energetic fashion. In the meantime certain men had been appointed to take charge of the portions prescribed by the Law for the priests and

Levites (12: 44-47), and all the mixed multitude had been separated from the congregation of Israel according to instructions found in the book of Moses (13:1-3).

During Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem, Eliashib the high priest had given one of the chambers in the Temple to Tobiah the Ammonite (2:10) who was a connection of his. On his return Nehemiah cast out all Tobiah's belongings and had the chamber cleansed and restored to its proper use (13:4-9). He also found that the portions appointed for the Levites had not been given to them, and they had left their duties in the Temple in order to work upon their fields for their support. He had the payment of the tithes renewed and treasurers appointed to see that they were properly distributed (13:10-14). The Sabbath was being profaned by people working on that day, and also by self-seeking merchants who brought their wares to the gates of the city on that day. Nehemiah took measures to have the Sabbath properly observed (13:15-22).

He then condemned the mixed marriages which he saw some of the Jews had formed, drawing a warning from the fact that even the great king Solomon had been led into sin by his foreign wives. He proceeded to purify both the congregation and the priesthood of all heathen alliances (13:23-29). The book closes with a statement in which Nehemiah summarizes his work and utters his characteristic prayer: "Remember me, O my God, for good". It was thus he committed himself and his work to God, with no thought of personal fame (13:30-31). With these words Old Testament history ends, for the next book belongs to an earlier date.

## THE BOOK OF ESTHER

THE Book of Esther has to do with the Jews who did not return to Judah at the time of the restoration. The great majority of the exiles had settled down in the land of their captivity, and were prospering in business and agriculture. The call to return found no response in their hearts. They were content to live outside of their land, away from their Temple, and apart from fellowship with the Lord their God. In this state the Book of Esther finds them. While Ezra and Nehemiah show how the Lord dealt with the Jews of the restoration, this book shows how He dealt with the Jews of the dispersion.

The Book of Esther is peculiar because the name of God does not appear in it. But this very fact helps to account for its place in the sacred Canon. It illustrates God's care of His people in the midst of the world. As in the providential government of the world God hides Himself, but rules and operates everywhere, so in this book His name is never used, but His hand is seen throughout. It contains the story of a great peril with which the Jews were threatened and a great deliverance that was wrought for them.

The events recorded in the book occurred in the interval between the time of Zerubbabel and the time of Ezra. They stretched over a period of ten years in the reign of Ahasuerus king of Persia (1: 3; 2:16; 3:7), who is known as Xerxes in Greek history (485-465 B.C.). The whole story turns on a



night when the king could not sleep (6:1), and the book may be divided at this point into two equal parts. The first part (Chs. 1-5) tells of the great peril, and the second part (Chs. 6-10) of the great deliverance.

### THE GREAT PERIL (Chs. 1-5)

These chapters show how a plot was laid to destroy all the Jews throughout the empire of Persia. As the story unfolds, the chief characters in the book come one by one into full view.

1. Ahasuerus the King (Ch. 1). The opening statement brings before us the vast extent of the Persian Empire and its great wealth and splendour (vs. 1-4). Then the first scene is presented. It is a public feast given by the king amid the gorgeous surroundings of his court and with all the license of a drunken revel (vs. 5-8). In the course of it he sends for Vashti the queen to be brought in, and her refusal to debase her womanhood at his command is the redeeming feature in this picture of Persian life and custom (vs. 9-12). In his drunken rage Ahasuerus appeals to his courtiers, and they incite him to depose the queen and put another in her place, because of this insult to his royal authority and to the honour of Persian husbands (vs. 13-22).

This feast, which he gave in the third year of his reign, was probably connected with the vast preparations Ahasuerus was making for his invasion of Greece which took place in 480 B.C. It reveals the real nature of the world empire throughout which the Jews were dispersed, and the vain and weak character of the king. Ahasuerus is mentioned

by his title "king" nearly two hundred times in the book, but it is God who really reigns. He uses the drunken whim of Ahasuerus to prepare the way for making a Jewess queen.

2. Mordecai the Jew (Ch. 2). In the midst of the story in this chapter, which tells how Ahasuerus proceeded to choose a queen in the place of Vashti, Mordecai comes upon the scene (vs. 1-7). His cousin and adopted daughter, Esther, was finally chosen; but the fact that she was a Jewess was not made known (vs. 8-15). Esther was made queen in the seventh year of Ahasuerus (vs. 16-18). The occasion was probably in line with the way the king consoled himself after his humiliating defeat in Greece the previous year.

Mordecai's love and concern for Esther are shown in his daily frequenting the precincts of the palace. While sitting in the king's gate one day, he discovered a plot against the king's life, and revealed it to the king through Esther (vs. 19-23).

3. Haman the Agagite (Ch. 3). And now the enemy of the Jews comes upon the scene. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites upon whom the curse of God had fallen for their enmity to Israel (Exod 17:14; 1 Sam. 15:8). Ahasuerus promoted him to the highest position in the realm and commanded all to do him reverence. This reverence Mordecai persistently refused to give (vs. 1-3). Probably it involved an act of divine worship which Mordecai as a Jew would not give to any man.

The malice of Haman was so deep and bitter that he conceived a plot for the destruction, not only of Mordecai, but of all Mordecai's people (vs. 4-6). In the first month of the twelfth year of Ahasuerus,

by the casting of the lot, Haman fixed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month for the execution of his plot. He secured the king's consent by promising a great contribution to the royal treasury (vs. 7-11). The bribe was doubtless in line with the king's effort to replenish his treasury, which must have been exhausted by the Grecian expedition. A royal edict was accordingly issued and posted throughout all the provinces of Persia, that on that day the Jews were to be destroyed and their property was to be seized (vs. 12-15). A vivid light is cast upon the character of the two men and upon the bewilderment of the people by the last statement in the chapter.

4. Esther the Queen (Chs. 4-5). When this decree was published, Mordecai and the Jews throughout the provinces were filled with grief and dismay, and gave outward evidence of their sorrow (4:1-3). The news of this reached Esther in the palace, and she sent to Mordecai to learn the cause of it, and he sent back word charging her to supplicate the king on behalf of her people (4:4-8). The urgency of the case appealed to her, but the law of the court forbade her approach to the king except at his call, and she had not been called for a month (4:9-12). At the earnest request and warning of Mordecai she decided to make the venture, and appealed to her people to fast with her in preparation for it (4:13-17). "So will I go in unto the king . . . and if I perish, I perish".

When Esther approached the king, he received her graciously, and promised to give her whatever she asked. Her first request was to invite the king and Haman to a banquet (5:1-4). When they came, she invited them to another banquet on the next

day, saying that she would present her petition then (5:5-8). Haman was inflated with pride, and boasted of his wealth, advancement, and honour to his friends and his wife; but all this did not satisfy him while Mordecai remained in his way at the king's gate. On their advice, he had a gallows erected, intending to get the king's permission the next morning to hang Mordecai thereon (5:9-14).

### THE GREAT DELIVERANCE (Chs. 6-10)

The plot against the Jews had been perfected. By the laws of the Medes and Persians the king's decree could not be changed. Mordecai was in imminent peril. Haman was apparently on the eve of his triumph. But now, other forces, which Haman could not foresee or control, came into operation. Events began to move rapidly. The plot was frustrated; and instead of the Jews, it was their foes, who were destroyed. These chapters tell how all this took place.

1. The Elevation of Mordecai (Ch. 6). The king's sleepless night is the turning point of the story. To while away the time he had the records of the kingdom read to him, and there he discovered the forgotten service that Mordecai had rendered him, for which he had never been rewarded (vs. 1-3). As Haman came into the court next morning to request the hanging of Mordecai, Ahasuerus asked him what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour. Supposing that he himself was meant, Haman laid out a program of royal honours (vs. 4-9). At the king's command, Haman was obliged to proceed at once and bestow

all these honours upon Mordecai (vs. 10-11). Leaving Mordecai again at the king's gate, he hurried back to his wife and friends in shame and consternation (vs. 12-14).

2. The Downfall of Haman (Ch. 7). In this state of mind he was called to the queen's banquet. There Esther presented her petition, pleading for her own life and the life of her people, and exposing Haman as their adversary and enemy (vs. 1-6). The king's wrath was roused. Haman's ruin came on apace. He was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (vs. 7-10).

3. The Rescue of the Jews (8:1—9:19). The mischief which Haman had wrought still remained. The day set for the destruction of the Jews was coming on. Esther now interceded with the king to have this device of Haman's frustrated. The king could not change his edict, but he gave authority to Mordecai, who had been promoted to Haman's place, to issue a counter-edict on the Jews' behalf (8:1-8). Accordingly a royal decree was prepared in the third month and published throughout all the provinces of the kingdom, granting the Jews the right to defend their lives and slay their enemies (8:9-14). The Jews everywhere were filled with gladness and joy, and many of the other people joined the Jews (8:15-17). A vivid light is cast upon the new situation by the statement: "The city of Shushan shouted and was glad". The people as a whole were evidently favourably disposed to the Jews.

When the fateful day arrived, the plot of Haman was completely reversed. The fear of the Jews was fallen upon all the other races in the empire, and the Jews smote their enemies, including the sons of Haman (9:1-10). By the king's permission they

continued to carry out his decree during the next day, until the Jews "had rest from their enemies" (9:11-16). The restrained spirit in which the Jews executed this judgment on "them that hated them" is indicated by the thrice repeated statement: "But on the spoil they laid not their hand" (vs. 10, 15-16). The Jews celebrated their deliverance with a day of feasting (9:17-19).

4. The Feast of Purim (9:20—10:3). Mordecai urged the Jews to make this a yearly celebration (9:20-25). They accordingly established the Feast of Purim, or Lots, to commemorate their great deliverance from Haman's plot (9:26-28), and this was confirmed by Esther the queen (9:29-32). The book closes with an account of the greatness of Mordecai the Jew, under whose beneficent rule as the chief minister of king Ahasuerus the Jews continued to enjoy prosperity and peace (ch. 10). This is the ultimate end of the story: God's providential ways have a benevolent end.

The annual feast that Mordecai established, which the Jews still celebrate, marks the victory of God's providential government in a world which seems to be governed by chance. The whole book is a historical commentary on the text: "The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah" (Prov. 16:33). Haman trusted in chance and worshipped the god of the Lots. Mordecai trusted in Providence and put his faith in the Lord God of Israel.

## ISRAEL UNDER GENTILE RULE

In the last three historical books we see Israel occupying the position which the people were to hold, both in Palestine and in the Dispersion, until the coming of the Messiah. The nation was now definitely under the subjection of the Gentiles. Even in their own land, national independence was gone and Gentile power was in full control. The times of the Gentiles had begun (Luke 21:24).

The remnant that returned from Babylon had been cured of idolatry in the captivity, but the Restoration did not give them back all they had lost. There was no Ark in the Temple now, and no symbol of God's presence there. No miracle or miraculous intervention of God took place in Israel's history after the Exile. His presence and power were no longer manifested in any visible way. The dispensation was already waxing old and preparing to vanish away (Heb. 8:13).

Decrees of Gentile kings occupy considerable space in Ezra and Nehemiah. It was by such indirect means as these that God was now exercising His government over His people. When the New Testament opens, the same conditions remain. It was the decree of a Roman Emperor that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of the promised Redeemer there.

The Book of Esther shows that the Israelites had become known throughout the Gentile world as "Jews" (people of Judah). The name is used in the Scriptures only five times before the Exile (2 Kings 16:6; 18:26, 28; 25:25; 2 Chron. 32:18). In Ezra it occurs eight times, and in Nehemiah ten

times. In Esther it is found throughout, occurring forty-five times. Evidently it was the name commonly applied to the Israelites among the other peoples of the world. It is the predominant name for the descendants of Abraham and Jacob throughout the whole New Testament.



